

Friday Seminar on Emerging Issues ‘Open data: “Adding value by matching access with privacy and security”

3 March 2017

Summary note of the outcome

Friday Seminar on Emerging Issues: Open Data - adding value by matching access with privacy and security

This note presents to the Statistical Commission the outcome of this year’s Friday Seminar, which was prepared in consultation with the moderators of the various sessions. It brings to the attention of the Commission the main conclusions of the Seminar and relevant follow-up actions that have been proposed for consideration by the Commission.

At the event four substantive panels dealt with various aspects of the emerging issue of the development and use of open data platforms namely, legislation and institutional setting; technology; partnerships; and capacity building and resource mobilization. Each block of topics was introduced by presentations followed by discussion with the audience and facilitated by a moderator.

The Seminar recognized the close connection and interrelationships between the emerging issue of open data platforms and other relevant, new initiatives that are on the agenda of the 48th session of the Commission. Those include primarily the items Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Big data for official statistics, Transformative agenda for official statistics and Quality assurance in the global statistical system. In order to create synergies and improve coordination across these interconnected activities, it has been proposed to reflect the conclusions of the Friday Seminar under the relevant agenda items.

The closing panel session concluded that the Seminar had showcased the best practices of the open data initiatives successfully and had contributed to taking stock of progress on open data in countries around the world. The benefits of the open data platforms in providing free access and use of data for purposes of transparency, accountability and daily decision making were recognised along with the important role national statistical offices can play in those open data initiatives. It was concluded that the Commission may encourage national statistical offices to embrace open data initiatives and explore ways to utilize the benefits of open data platforms for improving the access and use of official statistics and to support the

various levels of government and other partners in their contributions to the national open data initiatives.

With respect to the **legislation and institutional setting** aspect of open data initiatives, the Seminar emphasized the importance of ensuring that the principles of data rights and access are matched with strict ethical and security protocols as well as secure technology platforms. The Seminar supported that the Commission take into due consideration the relevance and implications of open data initiatives by appropriately adjusting and extending the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to foster collaboration and partnerships between government, private sector and civil society for unlocking the transformative potential of technology and data in an open platform environment in support of sustainable development and good governance. It held equally important asking the Commission to support efforts and strengthen capability at the country level to ensure that appropriate statistical legislation is in place, Codes of Practice for official statistics are followed to facilitate data right and access while to protect data confidentiality and the privacy of persons, private and public sector and civil society organizations.

Regarding the **technology** aspect of open data, the Seminar recognized the need to promote innovative tools and information technology solutions, open source applications, and advanced computing capability. These innovations should supplement existing statistical methodology and contribute to the availability and sharing of latest technologies for data storage, processing, analytics and dissemination at country level, including through cloud based platforms. An emerging theme across the presentations was that some of the more emergent technologies and approaches to data architecture and management were supportive to making data more open.

The Seminar proposed to continue under the aegis of the Commission the strategic dialogue on developing and maintaining open data initiatives through **partnerships** and collaboration between national statistical offices, regional and international statistical organizations, private sector, academia and civil society partners. In this context, collaboration with civil society is critical in such areas of principles, readiness and evaluation of openness of data; and collaboration with academia and technology companies is essential for building portable and interoperable common technology infrastructure as a public good.

The Seminar concluded that **capacity building and resource mobilization** require increased attention as core elements of building knowledge and elevating professional skills for efficient open data operations. It may be proposed to the Commission to raise awareness of the official statistical community about the available latest legislative, technological and capacity building expertise and to support resource mobilization through traditional and innovative financing mechanisms, including public-private partnerships.

Way forward

In the concluding session of the Friday seminar, it was suggested to recommend a two-pronged approach to the Commission to advance the open data agenda: i) through the work programs of existing working groups and ii) a report on Open Data prepared by the Secretariat for discussion by the Commission at its 49th session in 2018. More specifically the Seminar concluded to:

1. encourage groups working under the aegis of the Commission on horizontal initiatives like on big data, transformation and modernization of the organization and management of statistical systems, Fundamental Principles and related quality framework, to consider how their endeavours can act to make data more open. The Commission may require the Secretariat to request those Groups to report on this aspect of their work to the Commission in its 49th session in 2018
2. prepare a report on Open Data to the Commission in 2018. This report should consider:
 - a. the desirability of the Commission to expand its base of interest and functioning to open data as well as official statistics; and
 - b. mechanisms by which this might be accomplished through a stand-alone programme and/or deliberate and required integration into existing and emerging programmes