



Report of the ISI Side Event at the 49th Session of the UN Statistical Commission

STATISTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING: HOW STATISTICS OFFICES CAN WORK WITH STATISTICAL SOCIETIES

Wednesday 7 March, 8.15-9.30

The ISI is in a unique position as worldwide body of statisticians that is not part of any inter-governmental system, and reaches out to statisticians across all areas of statistics and all types of workplaces, including those who are part of the official statistics community. As part of the mission to lead, support and promote the understanding, development and good practice of statistics worldwide, the ISI includes striving to support the establishment and growth of national statistical societies. The ISI organised a side event 'Statistical Capacity Building: How Statistics Offices can work with Statistical Societies', during the 49th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in NY. This event was attended by approx. 40 delegates.

The programme of the side event was as follows:

Panel discussion:

Chair: **Stephen Penneck**, Vice president, ISI

Panellists:

John Pullinger National Statistician, former President of the Royal Statistical Society, UK

Heli Mikkela Deputy Director General, Statistics Finland

Helen MacGillivray President of the ISI and former President of the Statistical Society of Australia

Members of the panel each spoke for 10 minutes, outlining the experience in their countries and internationally and highlighting the benefits for official statistics of good collaboration between statistics offices and professional societies. This was followed by a question and answer session.

John Pullinger spoke about his experience as President of the RSS as well as currently as National Statistician of the UK. He reflected on the stronger role of statisticians in the 19th century as campaigners and of the need to present statisticians with a stronger voice – and the role of professional societies in this. The RSS was key in making the case for statistical legislation in the UK. Working together, NSOs and NSSs can make the case for the statistician's role in areas such as data science. Official statisticians have a lot to give to professional societies and a lot to gain from them.



From left to right: Heli Mikkela, John Pullinger, Stephen Penneck (chair) and Helen MacGillivray.

Heli Mikkela spoke of the long history of collaboration with the statistical society of Finland on meetings and seminars. The International Statistical Literacy Programme (ISLP) has recently provided additional co-operation. There has also been co-operation, for example, on jury panels for statistical prizes, which have included representatives from other professions. Statistics is a tool, and statistical societies help build skills in these tools.

Helen MacGillivray acknowledged the role of Statistics Finland in supporting the ISLP project. She also, in the absence of Risenga Maluleke from South Africa, spoke of the outstanding example of collaboration of StatsSA and the South African Statistical Association in their Maths4Stats initiative, which aims to raise statistical literacy in the country by training the trainers. In New Zealand the statistics office has been involved with the NZ Statistics Association in developing the new national curriculum, development of a national statistics certificate available to non-statisticians in government, and a remote access MSc course. In Australia, the ABS sponsors academic chairs in official statistics.

Helen spoke of the unique position of the ISI in bringing diverse statistical areas together, through its international Congress, and through its outreach committees and networks.



In discussion from the floor, the following areas were discussed:

- Statistical societies and statistical offices have a common interest in developing statistical skills in statistical offices and more widely
- Particularly as the skills needed are changing
- Societies needing support can look to regional networks and partners
- Many countries gave examples of bilateral help in their region
- Also examples of statistics offices helping to develop and support the curriculum in schools and having MOUs with universities
- The need for access to data through data archives
- People love statistics presented simply, simple charts on social media can drive users towards statistics
- The opportunities that GIST will provide

The panel stressed the strong links between official statistics and statistical education – ‘we must all be teachers now’, and the value that statistical offices can bring to the development of statistical societies and statistical systems across the world.