

September 14, 2011. Draft: RP Parker

Summary of the IAOS 2011 General Assembly meeting, which was held on August 23 at 1:30 PM at the Convention Centre in Dublin, Ireland.¹

1. The meeting began with the report of the President of the IAOS, Irena Krizman, Director General of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.² In the period 2009 – 2011, the IAOS sponsored or co-sponsored several conferences, including the IAOS 2010 Conference in Santiago, Chile on “Official statistics and the environment: approaches, issues, challenges and linkages,” and also in Santiago, a Workshop on governance of statistical systems. For the ISI World Statistics Congress in Dublin, the IAOS was very active organizing over 10 sessions and 2 short courses, as well as helping with the Young Statisticians Meeting. The IAOS also co-sponsored the Belfast satellite conference, on population aging, and held a competition for the best paper on official statistics by a young statistician. The winners were honored in a special presentation at the WSC, and the winning paper was presented in one of the technical sessions.

For the 2012 IAOS Conference to be held in Kiev, Ukraine (see item 8 below), Krizman reported that preparations for the conference, which will be hosted by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, are progressing well. The conference, “Getting Our Messages Across” will focus on how statistical offices are ensuring that the key messages in their statistics are getting through to users and are adding value to decision making. The IAOS is also planning a workshop for Directors/Generals of National Statistical Institutes from the region, a training event, and a competition for a Young Statistician Prize, in addition to the main conference.

For the 2013 WSC to be held in Hong Kong, Krizman reported that the Executive Committee had appointed Hilikka Vihavainen, of Statistics Finland, as the IAOS member of the Scientific Programme Committee and that a draft of IAOS proposals for invited papers has been prepared and will be discussed by the new Executive Committee.

Other activities of the IAOS during 2009-2011 included a World Bank/Eurostat/IAOS conference on residential property prices, as well as cooperation on the International Statistical Literacy Project with the International Association on Special Education, the International Conference on Establishment Surveys, and the future role of the ISI Committee on Agriculture Statistics.

Krizman reported that another major activity of the executive committee had been its involvement in the current discussion on professional ethics for statisticians. The IAOS cooperated with the ISI in revising and promoting the ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics for Statisticians and other common activities. The revised Declaration was presented on World Statistics Day during the IAOS 2010 Conference in Santiago. The committee also prepared a document (discussed as a separate agenda item) to stimulate discussion within the IAOS about whether and how the ISI and

¹ Additional details for most of the agenda items are posted on the IAOS web site.

² Other members of the Executive Committee are Stephen Penneck, Director-General, ONS, United Kingdom (President-Elect); Nancy Gordon, Associate Director for Strategic Planning and Innovation U.S. Bureau of the Census; Zulma Sosa de Servin, Director General National Institute of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses of Paraguay; Haishan Fu, Director of Statistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; Dominic Leung, Hong Kong (SCORUS representative), and Ada van Krimpen, Director of the ISI.

the IAOS should respond when the ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics seems to have been violated. The Executive Committee has not decided how to proceed, and is seeking the views of IAOS members. On the other hand, Krizman reported that, with regard to recent developments in countries such as Argentina and Canada, the Executive Committee decided not to react because there are no clear guidelines on how to react and not enough reliable information was available on these developments. She observed that possible reactions to such cases also will be discussed at the ISI General Assembly the next day.

She noted that although much had been accomplished in the past two years, further improvements were needed to the web site and to better communicate with ISI partners, such as the Bernoulli Association, the International Society for Business and Industrial Statistics, and the International Association of Survey Statisticians.

In conclusion, Krizman expressed her appreciation to the many people inside and outside the ISI family for their valuable contributions to the IAOS. She especially thanked the IAOS Executive Committee, her colleagues from Chile for their help in organizing the 2010 Conference, and the ISI Permanent Office for their assistance.

2. Stephen KC Leung, in-coming Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Urban and Regional Statistics (SCORUS), presented their report for 2009-2011. He noted that the IAOS has cooperated closely with SCORUS in preparing for SCORUS biennial conferences – its 27th Biennial Conference was held in August 2010 in Riga under the sponsorship of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia – and for their role at the WSC. SCORUS prepared IAOS invited sessions at the 2009 WSC in Durban and at the 2011 WSC in Dublin and also organized sessions for the 2010 IAOS Conference in Santiago. He also reported on SCORUS regional efforts including the continuing work by the Regional Group for Asia, as well as increasing their involvement in non-Asian based conferences.

Leung indicated that future cooperation and financing for SCORUS will be on the agenda for the new IAOS Executive Committee.

3. Olav Ljones reported that the IAOS Audit report for 2009-2010 showed that the financial situation for IAOS is good and that all financial records were in accordance with auditing standards. He reported that income, from both individual and institutional dues had declined, and that expenses reflected several extraordinary items. He expressed some possible concerns about income from sponsorship linked to one project since the expenses seemed to be less the funding:
There was some floor discussion as to whether more spending on meritorious projects was appropriate as not spending these funds implied a profit for the organization. There was no consensus on this topic. In response to a question on membership, Ljones reported that as of July 2011, membership in the IAOS was 294 individual members (up from 277 in 2009) and 36 institutional members (down five from 2010 but unchanged since 2009).
4. Stephen Penneck next reviewed the topic of possible ISI/IAOS interventions on ethical issues, which Krizman had noted in her President's report. He began with a summary of a detailed paper on this topic that had been posted to the IAOS website. He also noted that Monday morning there

had been a special WSC session on a potential ISI resolution on issues related to recent developments with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Argentina.

Penneck reviewed recent IAOS actions on this topic, including the establishment by the Executive Committee of a small group to prepare the report for today's General Assembly meeting. Based in part on recommendations of the 1999 Malaguerra Report, the IAOS instituted a new program to organize regional workshops on governance and the sustainability of modern statistical systems. In 2009, such a workshop was held in South Africa. It was followed by one in Chile at the time of the 2010 IAOS Conference, and most likely by a workshop at the 2012 IAOS conference in Kiev. Looking ahead, he suggested it would be worthwhile for the IAOS to review all of the recommendations of Malaguerra Report. In addition, he noted a suggestion that the ISI/IAOS establish a website to offer members a platform to report possible violations of statistical ethics. Such communications might allow the ISI/IAOS to obtain reliable information with which to monitor specific situations. However, he noted that establishing such a website might require content control and/or limitations on access, and he did not address what actions the ISI/IAOS might decide to take.

Most of the floor discussion on this topic focussed on the Argentine CPI issue. First, strong concern was expressed that the agenda for the ISI General Assembly did not include the resolution discussed at the Monday WSC special session, and that no resolution had been distributed in advance of that meeting. Second, there was strong disagreement as to whether the IAOS should support any action regarding the methodology now used by Argentina to prepare their official CPI. Several members noted that Argentina was not the only country whose methodologies were not transparent and did not follow international statistical guidelines. Other members urged the IAOS to focus its effort on getting the International Monetary Fund and/or the International Labour Organization to take direct action in response to the situation in Argentina. Third, there was considerable discussion about what the IAOS meant by "ethics" and that the biggest concern to the IAOS should be the threats of fines or other legal actions against individual statisticians.

Given the diversity of views expressed on both the specifics of the situation in Argentina and the general concerns on ethics and responsibilities, Penneck thought that the best course for the IAOS would be for the IAOS Executive Committee to continue its efforts to work with the ISI Ethics Committee to develop a coherent strategy on this important topic.

5. Siu-Ming Tam of the Australian Bureau of Statistics presented the report on the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJIAOS), which he and Frank Nolan had prepared. Nolan succeeded Tam as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal at the beginning of 2011. Tam reported that since the WSC in Durban, three editions of the SJIAOS have been published – on Official Statistics and Microdata, on Official Statistics and Ethics and on Statistical Literacy. In addition, another edition – on Reshaping Health Statistics – is expected to be published by the end of 2011. He expressed his thanks to guest editors for their excellent work – Jim Ridgway and Neville Davies for the edition on Statistical Literacy; William Selzer for the edition on Official Statistics and Ethics; and Jane Gentlemen for the edition on Reshaping Health Statistics.

Tam reported that although there continues to be a small flow of contributions for the Journal, he expressed the view that the best options for papers is through conference meetings relevant to official statistics and especially through volumes dedicated to special topics.

He concluded his report by thanking three retiring Associate Editors – Heinrich Brünger, Nancy Gordon, and Frank Nolan and welcomed the following new Associate Editors – Denise Silva, Lidia Bratanova, Natalie Shlomo, Don Royce, Philippe Eichenberger, and Peter Hackl.

6. Edward Spar presented the report of the Nominating Committee, which made the following nominations: President – Stephen Penneck; President-Elect – Shigeru Kawasaki; Vice Presidents (4) – Albina Chuwa, Nancy Gordon, Laura Nalbarte, and Petra Kuncova. The nominations were approved unanimously by the Assembly.
7. Penneck, the new IAOS President, thanked Krizman for the outstanding job she had done in leading the IAOS for the past two years and welcomed the opportunity to continue to improve its role in international statistics. He reported that his major areas of focus would be: the 2012 IAOS conference and IAOS participation in other conferences, such as the 2013 WSC; broadening the base of the Executive Committee by increasing involvement by others, such as the IAOS representative on the 2013 WSC Scientific Programme Committee and the editor of the SJIAOS; and continuing the work of making the operations of the IAOS more transparent, primarily through its website.
8. Penneck then moved to the report on the upcoming IAOS 2012 Conference to be held in Kiev, Ukraine from 12-14 September 2012 and will be hosted by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine. The conference “Getting Our Messages Across” will focus on how statistical offices are ensuring that the key messages in their statistics are getting through to users and are adding value to decision making. It will cover topics such as the following: Standards for statistical reporting and commentary writing; Statistical and graphical presentation techniques including the use of trend analysis and data visualisation; Developments in the use of IT; Using the web to provide on-line analysis facilities for users; How third parties can add value; Marketing our statistics; and Building relationships with customers, monitoring feedback, and setting priorities.

He also reported that a Program Committee headed by Tam has been established to develop the scientific program for the Conference, and that calls for submission of papers are expected to be made before the end of 2011. Decisions on the acceptance (or otherwise) of the abstracts will be made before the end of March 2012. To advertise the Conference, a brochure has been prepared and will be distributed at the WSC General Assembly meeting. A video promoting the Conference also will be shown at the meeting.

9. There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned.