**IAOS Presidential Address**

(A shortened version was given at [the IAOS General Assembly, Dublin, 23 August 2011](http://isi.cbs.nl/iaos/aboutus/GeneralAssemblyDublin.htm))

In taking up this office for the next two years I want to set out some of the themes I will be developing and what I want to achieve. I want to begin by thanking Irena Krizman for all she has done as President to give a foundation on which to build.

IAOS was founded over 25 years ago. Its objectives are to promote the understanding and advancement of official statistics; and to foster their development, particularly in developing countries, through international contacts among individuals and organizations.

We work mainly through our international meetings: partly through the IAOS sessions planned here and in Hong Kong at the next World Statistics Congress, and partly through our own biennial and other conferences. I want to specifically thank the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for their work organising the IAOS Conference on the Demography of Ageing and Official Statistics; see <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/iaos/IAOS2011.html>. It was a very successful conference stimulating good discussions between official statisticians, researchers and policy practitioners.

In Dublin we have organised nine invited paper sessions, covering topics as wide as ethical issues arising from administrative data to the use of the internet for data collection. Members are also active in the Special Topics sessions with contributions on house price indices and migration statistics. Work has already begun on the IAOS programme for Hong Kong 2013, and I am pleased that Hilkka Vihavainen from Statistics Finland has agreed to co-ordinate this.

SCORUS, the Standing Committee on Regional and Urban Statistics, incorporated into IAOS more than twenty years ago, has played a very active part in IAOS activities and will continue to do so for the future contributing to our sessions at the WSC, to our biennial conferences, and attracting researchers from outside official statistics to these meetings.

The focus of the next year will be on the IAOS 2012 conference in Kiev. The conference will be on 12 to 14 September on the subject of 'getting our messages across'. See <http://iaos2012.ukrstat.gov.ua/>. My successor, Shigeru Kawasaki (the new President-elect), will have the task of proposing the topic and the venue for our 2014 conference.

 So the international conferences are our main activities, but there are other things we do as well. We have had a Young Statisticians' prize, awarded at the WSC sessions in recent years, and are now beginning to run the competition at our biennial conference as well. We are looking at the possibility of organising training events for statisticians in conjunction with the Kiev conference. And following on from the successful governance workshop we held for Directors General in Latin America in conjunction with our last (Santiago) conference, we are hoping to run something similar for DGs in eastern Europe at Kiev. This may become part of our regular pattern of events.

 We have made good progress to develop our Statistical Journal which is increasingly looking to pick up from these conferences and to publish special topic editions.

 There are two important points to note about the IAOS. First is that it is the International Association for Official Statistics, not the International Association of Official Statisticians. As such it is a unique opportunity for all those who have an interest in official statistics to come together and discuss issues of interest and concern. Second, it is a professional organisation, outside the governance of international organisations. There are benefits for all from this:

For official statisticians, the opportunity to:
• debate outside the agendas of international organisations, which naturally focus on their work programmes and priorities;
• be innovative, look further ahead, and be collaborative;
• reflect, be stimulated by and engage with the wider statistical community.

For others, the opportunity to:
• debate with official statisticians;
• contribute to developments and thinking and bring new approaches.

For all, to:
• work within the ethical framework developed by the ISI.

For all that the IAOS brings together official statisticians and the wider statistical community, the leadership of the IAOS has tended to be drawn from the official statistics community. I, my predecessor and my successor are all (or were) Directors General of NSIs. The IAOS needs to reach out to a wider membership and begin to draw leadership from others in and outside NSIs. In my term of office I will be looking to use the opportunities of our conferences and the next Nominating Committee to broaden our membership and leadership. Where people have volunteered to help IAOS with projects - as Hilkka Vihavainen has done for the WSC 2013 programme committee - I will be asking them to join our Executive Committee meetings. I will be looking for other ways to co-opt volunteers to help us.

In other ways I hope to build on and consolidate the work of my predecessors. The IAOS Young Statisticians prize is now developing as an annual event - for the WSC and IAOS conferences. The procedures for this need to be as effective and sustainable as we can. Similarly I want the Executive Committee to review our statutes and ensure they are in line with how we want to run the organisation. I want the statutes and the way we run the Association to reflect an open and transparent approach, using our web site to communicate with our members.

We need to look carefully at our income and develop a budget strategy that improves our effectiveness and delivers our mission.
We had a full debate on ethics and policy on country interventions at the General Assembly. I recognise that there are deeply held feeling on these issues which cannot easily be reconciled. We need to work closely with ISI on these issues, and within their emerging framework. I will bring back a specific proposal for an IAOS ethics committee or panel to the membership.

Stephen Penneck