

Concept note and agenda

(as of 17 February 2026)

AI-readiness for Official Data and Statistics

Friday Seminar on Emerging Issues

Friday, 27 February 2026 | 10:00 am – 6:00 pm | UN Headquarters, New York

Background and Rationale

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and an abundance of data sources, the role of official statistics is essential. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in data analysis, policymaking, accessing information, and service delivery, the readiness of official data and statistics for AI consumption is a growing priority.¹

The objective of AI-readiness of official data and statistics is to provide users who search for and access data and statistics through AI with correct, timely, coherent, human-understandable, and contextually relevant official data and metadata, with a clear indication of their provenance and vintage. It encompasses data and metadata quality, discoverability, accessibility, semantic interoperability, and platform architecture across the entire data and statistical business process, including dissemination and governance.²

Making data and statistics AI-ready is a challenge that involves important foundational technical steps, such as ensuring data and metadata quality, making them machine-readable, and fully interoperable. However, NSOs must also take an active stewardship role over the AI ecosystem itself. This active role requires them to understand how AI models and tools work and to keep pace with their rapid evolution and applications (and even learning to build their own trusted AI applications). It also entails establishing appropriate guardrails for the use of official data and statistics in AI applications, including the provision and enforcement of clear licensing agreements for use and re-use, and the development of standards for testing AI-mediated results. Only by embracing both their technical and stewardship roles will official statistics effectively support policy and decision-making and secure their continuing relevance as a public good.

¹ AI-readiness applies to official statistics, as well as government data in general.

² The Friday seminar focuses on AI-readiness (“data for AI”), including addressing the needs of end-users. It is planned to hold a High-level webinar on AI use within NSOs (“AI for data”) before the Statistical Commission, to complement the Friday seminar.

Agenda and speakers

- **Opening session:** The challenge and opportunity for the use of official data and statistics in the AI-age (10:00 am – 11:30 am)
 - *Moderator: Rachael Beaven (UNESCAP)*
 - *Keynote address 1: Dr. Eng Chuan Koh, Chief Statistician, Singapore Department of Statistics (DOS)*
 - *Keynote address 2: Dr. Julia Stoyanovich, Director of NYU Center for Responsible AI*

The opening session will discuss the risks and challenges, as well as the opportunities for official statistics, arising from increased access to and use of official data and statistics by AI agents. It will explain how artificial intelligence can read, consume, process, and use official data and statistics, and how to ensure their integrity and relevance in the AI age. It will also highlight key developments of the use of AI in official statistics based on a preceding virtual side event on 18 February 2026.

- **Second session:** Making data and metadata machine-readable, and machine-understandable (11:30 am – 1:00 pm)
 - *Moderator: Rohit Bhardwaj (National Statistical Office of India) (tbc)*
 - *Panelists: Prem Ramaswami (Google), Andrew Turner (ESRI), Jim Tebrake (IMF), Kathryn Stevenson (Statistics Canada)*

The second session will discuss the technical perspective of AI-readiness for official statistics across four interconnected layers: semantics, delivery, discovery, and integration. It will explore how metadata standards, APIs, and emerging machine-to-machine protocols can ensure that AI systems access the correct data and the necessary context for correct interpretation. Through practical case studies, the session will highlight implementation lessons, common failure points, and actionable design patterns to support reliable use of official data by AI systems.

- **Third session:** Data governance, data governance tools, and capacity (3:00 pm – 4:30 pm)
 - *Moderator: Maria do Carmo Dias Bueno (IBGE, Brazil)*
 - *Panelists: Joao Pedro Azevedo (UNICEF), Osama Ramen (ONS, UK), Roy Kaufman (Copyright Clearance Center), Johannes Juetting (Paris21), Dr. Sarah Bird (Microsoft)*

This session will discuss AI readiness from a data governance perspective, focusing on licensing frameworks and arrangements, technological guardrails, and human and institutional capacity. It will explore standards for testing and evaluation, and the possibility of collaboration and institutional arrangements with AI system providers. It will also address the human and organizational capacity and cultural changes needed to strengthen the responsible use of AI in official statistics.

- **Concluding session** (4:30 pm – 6:00 pm)
 - *Moderator: Shantanu Mukherjee (UNSD)*
 - *Panelist: Mariana Kotzeva (Eurostat), George-Simon Ulrich (UNSC Chair, FSO Switzerland), Risenga Maluleke (CEBD Chair, Statistics South Africa), Haishan Fu (World Bank)*

The concluding session will outline priority capacity needs across diverse national contexts and focus on how to sustainably finance and operate AI-readiness for official data and statistics. The roundtable will consolidate key messages from the day into a small set of clear priorities and decision points for heads of NSOs, international agencies, and the Statistical Commission, and discuss arrangements on the way forward.
