Aide Memoire

24th UN/INTOSAI Symposium

Digitalization, Open Data and Data Mining –
Relevance and implications for the audit work of SAIs
and a follow-up on the contribution of SAIs to the SDGs

Vienna, Austria
31 May to 2 June 2017

United Nations   INTOSAI

Table of contents

No table of contents entries found.

1   Background

Since 1971, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), through its Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) have organized twenty-three interregional seminars and symposia.

The UN General Assembly Resolutions A/66/209 (22 Dec. 2011) and A/69/228 (19 Dec. 2014) recognized the work of INTOSAI and its member supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in promoting greater accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration, which is conducive to the achievement of national development objectives and priorities as well as the internationally agreed development goals. Resolution A/69/327 (6 Oct. 2015) also encouraged Member States and relevant United Nations institutions to continue and to intensify their cooperation, including in capacity building, with INTOSAI in order to promote good governance by ensuring efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency through strengthened Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs).

Against this backdrop, INTOSAI and UNDESA will organise the joint 24th UN/INTOSAI Symposium in Vienna, Austria, from 31 May to 2 June 2017. The Symposium is a continuing joint activity and an occasion to better focus the collaboration of the two institutions.

This Aide Memoire was prepared by UNDESA and INTOSAI to support preparations for the 24th UN/INTOSAI Symposium (hereafter referred to as "the Symposium").

2   Topic of the 24th UN/INTOSAI Symposium

The participants of the Symposium will deliberate on the following topic:

"**Digitalization, Open Data and Data Mining –
Relevance and implications for the audit work of SAIs and a follow-up on the
contribution of SAIs to the SDGs**".

During the Symposium, representatives from UNDESA and INTOSAI, its participating members as well as additional participants will have the opportunity to reflect on the topic above. The discussions on the relevance and implications of digitalization, open data and data mining for SAIs as well as on the contribution of SAIs to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs)[1] will recognize and consider the different regional points of view as well as the difference of national realities, levels of development, capacities and priorities.

The main sub-themes will be as follows:

Sub-theme 1: Open data, digitalization and data mining for sustainable development

Data bring new opportunities to improve lives, preserve the planet and guarantee peace and prosperity for all. SAIs can leverage data to improve their audit work and their contribution to an effective, transparent and accountable public administration. Access to publicly available data without additional costs and legal restrictions enables SAIs to get a much more comprehensive picture of governments' activities. However, large amounts of data also entail considerable challenges for SAIs, as various data repositories have to be integrated in order to filter and analyse the available information. Also, as data tools and big data gain importance, SAIs face a slew of new challenges related to analytical capacities, data security and reliability.

Good practices of how SAIs can harness the potential of data are already emerging. Sharing these practices will allow participants to learn from each other through the exchange of experiences and lessons learned. The Symposium will discuss the relevance and implications of open data, digitalization and data mining for SAIs' audit work and contribution to sustainable development by addressing topical issues such as the potential of open data for monitoring the SDGs, data mining and fraud investigation, digital forensics and corruption, and the application of data analytics in financial, compliance and performance audits, among others.

Sub-theme 2: SAIs' contribution to reviewing progress in the implementation of the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda encouraged countries to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress towards the SDGs at the national and subnational levels. National country-level reviews and reports will also feed into regional dialogues and voluntary national reviews of progress to be carried out at the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF). In order to review progress towards the SDGs, countries will require high-quality, accessible and timely disaggregated data and information.

---

[1] In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted a new agenda to guide development efforts for the period from 2015 to 2030 (Resolution A/RES/70/1: Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets which jointly constitute a comprehensive plan of action to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. The Agenda is universal, applicable to all countries, and takes into account "different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities". The goals and targets are "integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development". The 2030 Agenda provides for a dedicated follow-up and review framework to ensure implementation. This framework is expected to operate at national, regional and global levels and to comprise review processes that draw on country-led monitoring, evaluations and data.

Through their audits, and tapping into the data revolution, SAIs can make valuable contributions to national efforts to track progress, monitor implementation and identify improvement opportunities across the full set of the SDGs. INTOSAI's Strategic Plan 2017-2022[2] identifies four approaches through which SAIs can contribute to "supporting and contributing to the follow-up and review of the SDGs": (i) Assess the readiness and audit national systems to follow-up and review progress toward the SDGs; (ii) Conduct performance audits of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government programmes which contribute to the SDGs; (iii) Assess and support the implementation of SDG 16; (iv) Be models of transparency and accountability in their own operations.

The Symposium will discuss how SAIs can contribute in innovative ways to the review of progress on the SDGs, including through the use of data and collaboration with other stakeholders. Special attention will be given to the necessary capacities, information and emerging challenges for SAIs to make this contribution. The session will follow up on the results and commitments of Theme I ("How INTOSAI can contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including good governance and strengthening the fight against corruption?") of the XXII INCOSAI, as set out in the Abu Dhabi Declaration (Dec. 2016). Participants will have an opportunity to take stock and share information on ongoing SAI initiatives to contribute to the SDGs and to discuss the way forward.

3   Programme

Keynote speeches by a high-level representative of UNDESA and the Secretary General of INTOSAI are foreseen to initially frame the topic and the subthemes of the Symposium.

Determined by the time available, INTOSAI members, representatives of international organizations, resource experts and other participants are invited to make short presentations or interventions on concrete topics related to the themes of the Symposium and to provide more complete contributions also in written form. The speakers will represent relevant regional working groups and a balance will be ensured between regions and INTOSAI working languages.

The 24th UN/INTOSAI Symposium aims to allow a balanced view of the various starting situations and different points of view of the participants. Participants will be able to fully engage in the deliberations. There will be ample space for free-flowing discussions, where the participants can react spontaneously to the topics and contribute to the output of the Symposium.

---

[2]

http://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/downloads/1_about_us/strategic_plan/EN_INTOSAI_Strategic_Plan_2017_22.pdf

4   Date and Premises

The Symposium will be held at the UN International Conference Centre in Vienna from 31 May to 2 June 2017.

5   Languages

The working languages of the Symposium will be Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish. Simultaneous interpretation and translation will be supplied by INTOSAI.

6   Targeted Output

An official report of the Symposium, summarizing the main contributions, conclusions and recommendations, will be prepared under the leadership of INTOSAI with the collaboration of UNDESA. The report will be prepared and published in the five working languages of the Symposium. The report will be available on the INTOSAI website and linked to DPADM's website.

7   Documentation

INTOSAI will prepare substantive documentation for the Symposium in consultation with UNDESA. The documentation will comprise:

1.   Summarized contributions prepared by international and national experts;

2.   Summarized contributions presented by SAIs.

Concise contributions will be prepared by the SAI representatives and experts at their own expense. By submitting their contributions to the Symposium, they will authorize INTOSAI and UNDESA to reproduce these works in related publications.

8   Participants

Approximately 150 participants are expected to attend the Symposium. The target audience are primarily heads and senior staff of SAIs. Other participants may include representatives of the United Nations, international organizations, resource experts and relevant organizations.

Funding is available to support the participation of selected SAIs from developing countries. High ranking representatives of other SAIs are encouraged to attend at their own expense.

All participants should have excellent technical qualifications, professional experience and good knowledge of at least one of the working languages of the Symposium.