Resilience and Trust in Turkey & Syria
Why data matters in the face of human tragedy
A CODATA statement of support

Paris, 1 March 2023

As members of the International Science Council (ISC)'s Committee on Data (CODATA), we express our heartfelt support for the people of Turkey and Syria as they confront the devastation of the earthquakes that wrecked tragedy on their families, homes, communities, and nearly every aspect of their lives. Our colleagues of data scientists from around the world are saddened as we see the impact of this disaster on so many innocent lives. We expressed our condolences to all those who lost loved ones, suffered injury, or otherwise saw their lives torn asunder.

Science – with its objective and descriptive approach to the world – would not appear to be the most compassionate or even most needed activity when responding to such events that first awaken our deepest feeling regarding the value of humanity and the need to alleviate suffering. Perhaps the cold, indifferent and calculating world of data appears far distant to what is truly of importance and most to be cherished in our human lives.

However, not only the international community of scientists, but science itself is hardly indifferent; its role in preventing suffering and restoring health and prosperity as much as the rescue worker or the paramedic is engaged in saving lives on the scene of disaster. Our work is different, though perhaps no less vital. The inherent value of science lies in benefiting the well-being and flourishing of humans as well as alleviating pain, suffering and early, unexpected deaths.

Robust data systems underpin science's ability to understand hazards and risks before they turn into a disaster, preventing altogether or significantly reducing human suffering. And, when we cannot mitigate disaster, when science cannot sufficiently foresee it or ward it off, then we need the immediacy of a robust scientific response built on reliable data for the scientist, but also for the rescue worker, for the decision-makers, and – of no less importance – for society at large and those in need of help.

Confronted with the terrible disaster of these earthquakes, as members of the scientific community, we are ever more committed to making data science serve for humanity as we witness the enormous strength and courage of the Turkish and Syrian communities in their brave response to tragedy.