

# Summary Report of the 8th Meeting of the World Data System Scientific Committee

International Council for Science (ICSU) Secretariat, Paris  
17–19 April 2013

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## Goals of the Meeting

The main items for discussion in this meeting were

- (1) Strengthening of links between the ICSU World Data System (ICSU-WDS) and various strategic partners; with the convening of the ICSU-WDS and Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) Executive Committees regarding future co-hosted conferences particularly highlighted.
- (2) Membership issues to be addressed—including targeted recruitment in fields such as the Health Sciences.

## Activities with Partners and Outreach

- Joint WDS/CODATA biennial Conferences will be known as ‘SciDataCon’, the first of which (SciDataCon 2014) will take place around the start of November 2014 in New Delhi, India. The general theme of SciDataCon 2014 will most likely revolve around the ‘Future Earth’ (FE) project, and the FE Scientific Committee will be invited to either nominate a member of the Conference Organizing Committee or to organize a themed session. Practical details of selecting candidate hosts and conference requirements beyond 2014 are still to be determined.
- More expansive interactions are planned with the Research Data Alliance (RDA). Currently, two RDA/WDS Interest Groups (IGs) are in progress: ‘Certification of Data Repositories’ and ‘Publishing Data’. WDS Scientific Committee (WDS-SC) members are to be formally involved within these RDA/WDS IGs, as well as other RDA IGs (such as ‘Contextual Metadata’) and RDA Working Groups (WGs). WDS Members will also be encouraged to have both formal and informal involvement in IGs and WGs.
- Concerning the two WDS-supported projects initiated in South Africa: the World Data Centre for Biodiversity and Human Health is attempting to align with the Biodiversity Observation Network of the Group on Earth Observations, and is seeking external funding. In contrast, all aspects of the Network Data Centre for

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Socio-Economic Data in Africa are now in place and the project is underway. Several interesting questions are yet to be addressed, however.

- The International Polar Data Forum co-hosted by ICSU-WDS will take place on 15–16 October at the National Museum of Nature and Science in Tokyo, Japan. The theme of the Forum will be ‘Polar Data Activities in Global Data Systems’ and its scientific programme has now been finalized. Furthermore, the relevant Organizing Committees have been chosen, and a [website](#) created giving details of the Forum (including abstract submission).

## Engaging WDS Members

- General (anonymized) results of the WDS Members’ survey—which gauged Members’ opinions on the Action Items from the 7th WDS-SC Meeting—will be made available on the WDS website, together with feedback from the WDS-SC. Although WDS Members were mostly very positive and provided many useful suggestions, both constructive comments and valid criticisms will be made visible.
- On the basis of the survey results, WDS Members will be encouraged to host webinars on topics of their choosing in order to find synergies between themselves and the broader community. These webinars will be technically supported by the WDS International Programme Office (WDS-IPO) and will be widely advertised 6–8 weeks in advance.
- ICSU-WDS bylaws are to operate in parallel with the WDS constitution and will cover the daily conduct of ICSU-WDS affairs. A first draft of proposed bylaws will be updated according to the recommendations of the WDS-SC. A final draft is expected to be presented to WDS Members by August 2013 for feedback. A final version incorporating suitable Members’ comments will then be submitted for formal approval at the WDS Members’ Forum planned in November 2014 in New Delhi, immediately prior to SciDataCon 2014.
- Co-chairs of the Data Publication WG will look to members beyond European publishers and possibly look towards International Unions.
- The existing prototype WDS Data Portal/Metadata Catalogue will be expanded by the Knowledge Network and open Metadata Catalogue (KNMC-) WG to encompass all WDS Regular and Network Members. This will require real Member contributions, and WDS Regular and Network Members are to be surveyed to determine basic information and data holdings. Requisite information will be obtained from candidate Member Organizations in the revised WDS application forms (see below), under the guidance of KNMC-WG Co-chairs.

- KNMC-WG Co-chairs will look to involve scientists from the National WDS Initiatives that have been launched in Japan and China.

## WDS Membership and Accreditation

- Membership and Accreditation Subcommittee to formalize the procedures for liaising with Network Members in order to ensure that their constituent components fall under the ICSU-WDS umbrella. At present, two models are envisioned for bringing Network nodes into the World Data System: certification alignment and recruitment policies. In the first model, Network Member nodes are accredited according to a certification procedure aligned with that for WDS Regular membership (e.g., the WDS-aligned Quality Management Framework adopted by International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange to accredit its National Oceanographic Data Centres). When a WDS Network Member does not have such an aligned procedure, it is expected to foster its components to join WDS as Regular Members (e.g., International Virtual Observatory Alliance).
- To expedite the WDS accreditation process, the Membership and Accreditation Subcommittee will work towards streamlining the current WDS Regular and Network Member application forms. In particular,
  - Exact reasoning behind inclusion of all parts of the application will be re-examined.
  - Precise definitions of the functions within WDS will be provided, as well as a preferred ontology of scientific disciplines.
  - Original source material will be revisited to ensure all standard measures are integrated without repetition.
  - Guidelines will be rewritten where necessary such that they match the intended purpose of each criterion.
  - Bureaucratic language within the forms will be toned down to improve readability.
- The cases where a biennial report from WDS Members is necessary will be determined and the format of these reports finalized. Details will be included in the WDS bylaws.
- Claudia Emerson will coordinate activities related to expanding ICSU-WDS into the Health Sciences, since difficulties could be encountered when promoting WDS to this audience. Public health data will be focused on initially by approaching the ICSU-sponsored 'Health and Wellbeing in the Changing Urban Environment' scientific programme. As a first step, the Subcommittee will develop a strategic recruitment plan, as well as drafting a business case explaining how multiple disciplines are unified under ICSU-WDS and FE. A track or session on Health Data will also be organized at SciDataCon 2014.

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- ICSU-WDS will attempt to facilitate the creation of commons for the multitude of Health Science initiatives in order to provide unified approaches that do not presently exist.

## WDS Administrative Matters

- An amended WDS Constitution incorporating an extra article (Article VIII) covering bylaws is to be submitted to the ICSU Executive Board for endorsement by the time of its next meeting.
- Feedback by WDS-SC members on the layout of the new WDS 'business card' website will be taken on-board insofar as possible. Moreover, Ruth Neilan's suggested tagline is to be adopted for the website: *Trusted data services for global science*.
- The WDS-SC unanimously decided that the WDS-IPO establish a General Incorporated Association (GIA) in Japan—subject to ascertaining several details, and the Articles of Incorporation being approved. ICSU have agreed to cover the initial costs of this GIA. Such an organization is required to manage external funds received for specific ICSU-WDS activities. The WDS-IPO Executive Director will be the President of the GIA Board, and the WDS-SC Chair an ex officio Board member. The dealings of the GIA will be made transparent to the WDS-SC through the biannual WDS-IPO Report.
- The 9th WDS-SC Meeting is to take place on 17–18 October 2013. The meeting will be held at the NICT Kōjimachi office in Tokyo, Japan; and all travel and accommodation arrangements will be handled by the WDS-IPO. The meeting is to take place directly after the International Polar Data Forum. WDS-SC Members are strongly encouraged to attend the Forum.