

Meeting summary for 9th DDE GC Meeting (2025/06/26)

Quick recap

The meeting focused on reviewing DDE's strategic framework and governance structure, with discussions including formalization of the organization's legal status and improving transparency in financial, governance and administrative matters. 10 GC Members attended the meeting satisfying the quorum needed (9 of 27) and shared their views of DDE's development so far and thoughts on moving forward. The GC Chair emphasized the important role DDE will play in promoting international collaboration in addressing global geological challenges. The meeting reviewed and adopted the minutes of the 8th session of the DDE GC convened on 5 December 2024, the DDE Strategic Framework, 2025-2028, and the budget for 2025 and indicative budgetary framework for 2026-2028. The GC Chair committed to providing the opportunity to Members who could not attend the session to provide comments on the implementation of DDE Strategic Framework, 2025-2028.

The GC Members who attended the 9th session of the GC, convened online on 26 June 2025, from 1100 to 1430 hrs.,CET were:

1. IAGOD (Reimar Seltman)
2. China GS (Yan Guangsheng)
3. GS of Iran (Hanieh Bakshaei)
4. CGI/IUGS (Zhang Minghua)
5. CCOP (Ma Yongzheng)
6. GSAF (Gbenga Okunlola)
7. CGMW (Manuel Pubellier)
8. IMA (Hans Peter Schertl)
9. Columbian GS (Gloria Prieto Tincon)
10. IAG (Mauro Soldati)

Debahuti Mukherjee from GS India joined the meeting at the beginning but could not continue due to technical/connection problems.

Actions to be implemented following decisions of the 9th session of GC

- **Inform all GC Members of the link to access the recording of the 9th session of the GC**
- **Prepare minutes of the 9th session of the GC and share it with all attending GC Members.**

- **Provide opportunity to GC Members who could not attend the 9th session to comment on the implementation of the DDE Strategic Framework, 2025-2028.**
- **Prepare the 2026 budget, and indicative budget plan for 2027 and 2028 for approval by GC at its next (10th) GC session to be scheduled for the last quarter of 2025.**
- **The secretariat and others responsible initiate implementation of DDE Strategic Framework for 2025-2028 assigning priority to deliverables that are due within the first year, i.e., June 2025-2026, in particular the following:**
 - Secretariat to clear all outstanding payments and contracts from 2024 and earlier by July 31, 2025
 - Secretariat to establish an indicative schedule/calendar of meetings for DDE governance and supportive organs by 31 October 2025.
 - EC Chair in collaboration with others as appropriate define project categories, thematic priorities, funding envelopes, and evaluation criteria for receiving new proposals by October 2025
 - Secretariat to prepare a report on project calls, proposals, and implementation arrangements from 2021-2024 by December 2025
 - EC Chair in collaboration with others as needed to establish rules for sharing and integrating data into the DDE platform and improving compliance with open science commitments and FAIR guidelines by December 2025
 - EC Chair, in collaboration with others as appropriate to develop Secretariat development plan to address staffing needs by December 31, 2025
 - Secretariat to create a monitoring system for DDE web usage and platform performance by December 2025
 - Secretariat to ensure new project proposals for evaluation and approval and completion of arrangements for implementation by January 1, 2026
 - Secretariat to finalize the legal status of DDE as an international entity by January 31, 2026
 - Zhejiang Lab to provide progress report and deliverables plan for IGC 38 in Calgary by March 31, 2026

- DDE Standards Group, CGI, and CODATA implementing the 3-year project on DDE Platform database compliance with FAIR guidelines to provide deliverables plan for IGC 38 by March 31, 2026.
- DDE Secretariat in collaboration with others as needed to update IP policy and associated documents by March 31, 2026
- The Secretariat to create administrative, financial and procedural guidelines for funding management by 31 March 2026

In addition

- **Secretariat to establish one-on-one communication with working groups/task groups that did not submit reports or meet expectations of the assessment carried out by EC in 2024.**
- **EC Chair to review proposals for new WTGs and, in consultation with SC and others as appropriate, explore ways to facilitate their work.**

Summary

DDE Governing Council Governance Meeting

The GC Chair welcomed all participants and emphasized the importance of geoscience and the need for formalizing DDE governance and increasing transparency, including as a response to some of the IUGS directives. Representatives of IAGOD and IAG, commented on some of the recent problems they faced due to some groups using the IUGS Communique to challenge DDE decisions and progress and the discussions and communications that they had generated; but both of them, and others, reasserted their commitment of DDE's future, while insisting that DDE abide strictly by its statutes. The GC Chair welcomed those comments and suggestions and confirmed that the current version of the statutes is adhered to; the statutes would however, must be amended to address some of the concerns expressed by IUGS in its Review Report of DDE.

Geological Collaboration for Global Challenges

The representative of the Geological Society of Africa expressed support for DDE's initiatives and confirmed Africa's readiness for participation in upcoming events. The representative of the Geological Survey of Iran highlighted the impact of recent regional conflicts in her country on scientific activities and requested special attention to countries facing crisis situations in the implementation of future DDE activities. Other Members, including some of the Observers attending emphasized the importance of

international collaboration and science-driven efforts to address global challenges, while commending the progress of DDE since its inception and urging continued international cooperation despite tensions and unrest in different regions of the world.

The agenda of the 9th session, and the minutes of the 8th session of the GC held on 5 December 2024 were adopted without any changes.

EC Chair

The Chair of the GC informed Members of the process followed in electing the new Chair of the EC, Prof. Qiuming Cheng. The EC Chair, in his brief address, thanked Members for electing him unanimously and informed them of some of his ideas and thoughts to ensure efficient functioning of EC and the oversight of Secretariat performance during his tenure over the next 4 years. He emphasized the need to clarify the program's international legal status, establish modern governance structures, and improve global participation, particularly among young people and female scientists. The EC Chair highlighted four priority initiatives: enhancing institutional development, establishing unified data standards, securing diverse funding sources, and improving management transparency.

Implementation of activities since the 8th session of the GC on 5 December 2024.

The EC Chair provided a comprehensive report on the implementation of action items from the last GC meeting; the 15th session of the EC meeting convened on 22 January 2025 and other activities. Key points included progress on funding issues, increased budget for DDE activities at CAG 30 in September 2025 in Kenya, resolution of platform access issues, and efforts to improve collaboration with CCOP, a GC Member representing 16 SE and East Asian countries. The EC Chair highlighted the recent event convened by MOST, China, in Chengdu, where MOST officially recognized DDE as an international big science program which it will fully support. The report highlighted successful events such as the UNESCO endorsement of DDE as an initiative under the framework of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development, opening of GeoGPT to the global Earth science community and the public at EGU 2025, and the 4 Open Forum discussions in May 2025 to facilitate the drafting of the DDE Strategic Framework 2025-2028. The EC Chair emphasized the need for increased efforts to mobilize financial support from diverse sources from outside of China and improvements in communication. The Strategic Framework document was introduced as a roadmap for future activities up to 2028, when IGC 38 will be convened in Calgary, Canada.

DDE Strategic Framework 2028

The GC Chair introduced the DDE Strategic Framework document for 2025-2028, highlighting its focus on big data, machine learning, and AI for geoscience research aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals. He noted significant progress in cyber infrastructure, research centers of excellence, and funded projects, while acknowledging areas for improvement in governance and transparency. The document emphasized updated priorities in high-precision geological timelines, stratigraphy, earth system modeling, and contributions to UNESCO's IDSSD, with a continuing focus on Africa and the global South.

DDE Secretariat then presented an outline of the deliverables and timelines under Governance, Science, Digital Products and Services, Education, Communication and Outreach and Administration and Management. The 2028 endpoint for the Strategic Framework is intended to maximize deliverables that could be shown at IGC 38. Many of the deliverables of the Strategic Framework required completion during year 1, from June 2025 to June 2026; the Framework allowed deliverables and timelines to be adapted to changing contexts between now and 2028.

The EC Chair then made a few comments regarding the importance of DDE being committed to a “data driven research paradigm” which, with the aid of technology takes geosciences research and development to a new era of international cooperation. He emphasized the need to quickly define DDE's legal identity, updating research themes and priorities, clarifying funding mechanisms and project categories and increasing users of the DDE Platform and GeoGPT, particularly in Africa and small island development states(SIDS). Improving administrative and management arrangements were also addressed, including the need for additional Secretariat staff and an updated intellectual property policy.

One of the observers highlighted GeoGpt's success in gaining UN recognition as a globally significant AI initiative. A Member of the DDE SC attending raised concerns about the lack of a comprehensive list of approved projects and their outcomes from the 1st 5 years of DDE; the EC Chair responded that this information has been included in the DDE website under “Science” followed by “Funded” and “Approved” projects. The EC Chair also highlighted the intention to improve the scientific themes and priorities for projects that seek DDE funding during 2025-2028, focusing on DDE's mission to harmonize global Earth evolution data, foster knowledge sharing, and develop public, open access digital infrastructures. Creating a digital earth “twin” with high-resolution temporal and spatial frameworks, integrating multi-sphere knowledge systems, and developing AI-driven

predictive models for critical earth resources, in particular minerals and energy, also need to be assigned high priority.

WTGs and RCEs

The meeting focused on reviewing the progress and plans of various working and task groups (WTGs) and research centers of excellence (RCEs). Findings of the assessment of WTGs in 2024 were highlighted, emphasizing the need for improving communications with underperforming groups and explore some of the new proposals, for example on Geological Hydrogen, that have been received. Information on the status of 4 RCEs, in Suzhou, China, Carnegie, US, University of Strasbourg, France, and the University of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo was provided; under the Strategic Framework, creation of at least two new RCEs by 2028 is foreseen.

Budget Planning

The EC Chair presented an update on the 2025 budget which is now foreseen to be nearly 80 million RMB (equivalent to 11.1 million USD) for research, operational expenses, and infrastructure development. Research and other project activities will include efforts to launch high-impact initiatives and could extend to the years 2026-2028. He indicated that he and the GC Chair, together with Members of the GEG established by MOST, are working hard to ensure similar, or, if possible, higher levels of funding for the period up to 2028 and beyond for the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The budget for 2026 will be prepared and submitted for approval by the GC at its 10th meeting scheduled for the last quarter of 2025.

Strategic Framework and Future Steps

The GC Chair proposed a motion calling for the adoption of the Strategic Framework while allowing time and opportunity for those members who were unable to attend the meeting to share their views on the implementation of the Strategic Framework with the Secretariat. The motion was adopted unanimously by the 10 GC Members attending. It was decided that at the 10th session of the GC to be convened later this year, progress in the implementation of the Strategic Framework and other related matters be reported. In addition, reports and other requirements for DDE participation in the IUGS EC meeting in late January 2026 must also be submitted for review and adoption by the GC at its 10th session. The GC Chair emphasized the importance of efficient and focused meetings for moving forward, while maintaining openness and adherence to statutes.

The GC Chair informed the GC Members the honor conferred upon Prof. Robert Hazen, a Member of the DDE SC who was attending the GC session as an observer, as a

“legendary geoscientist” by the American Geosciences Institute (AGI). The GC Chair and several attending Members and observers congratulated Prof. Hazen who expressed his appreciation to the GC Chair for sharing this information with Members and observers. Prof. Hazen, leads the work of the DDE RCE at the Carnegie Science Institute in Washington, D.C., USA. He welcomed the activities foreseen for 2026-2028 and committed to extending his support for DDE to emerge as the most significant international big science program in geosciences.

The GC Chair, after expressing his appreciation to all for a productive meeting declared the 9th session of the GC closed.

The recording of the 9th session of the GC could be accessed at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/ADW7CXKx-KmUafPv8avyM90mMMjfHjcmrkvfptg0sTVpq8S636M6rpU6Nwc6Tw4i.GTQImrJiwkXHI4eL>

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