

World Data Organization launched in Beijing to advance global data governance

The Innovation Informatics Editorial Team, China*

*Correspondence: informatics@the-innovation.org

Received: April 1, 2026; Accepted: April 14, 2026; Published Online: April 17, 2026; <https://doi.org/10.59717/j.xinn-inform.2026.100042>

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Citation: The Innovation Informatics Editorial Team, China (2026). World Data Organization launched in Beijing to advance global data governance. *The Innovation Informatics* 2:100042.

The World Data Organization (WDO), the first international body dedicated to promoting global data development and governance, was established in Beijing on March 30.

Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang attended the inauguration ceremony, read a congratulatory letter from President Xi Jinping and delivered a keynote speech. Ding described the creation of the WDO as a major step in keeping with the trend of the intelligent era and deepening international cooperation on data, saying that China supports the development of the organization and expects it to play a key role in "bridging the data divide, unlocking data value, and fostering the digital economy", thus contributing to a shared digital future.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said that the WDO is both a natural result of the evolution of global digital civilization and a key step to address governance challenges, marking a shift from fragmented competition to systematic global data governance.

China's digital economy reached 59.2 trillion yuan (\$8.61 trillion) in 2024, accounting for 43.8 percent of its GDP, among which Beijing's digital economy added value exceeded 2.4 trillion yuan in 2025, almost 60 percent higher than that of 2020. That's why Zhu said hosting the WDO headquarters in Beijing reflects international recognition of China's digital strength and governance capacity.

As the world accelerates into a data-driven, intelligent era, data resources



Figure 1. World Data Organization (WDO) launched in Beijing: Membership, country coverage, and industry coverage.

are increasingly developed and utilized, reshaping how economies function, how societies operate, and how governments fuel new momentum for global innovation, economic growth, and social progress. For Hu Jianbo, President of the National Institute for Data Development, that's a key reason why the WDO was founded, namely to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including businesses, research institutions, industry bodies, tech communities, and social organizations, to build a global platform for cooperation on data development and governance.

"Data contains enormous productive potential. China is the first country to recognize data as a factor of production, and the development of the intelligent economy today is a clear reflection of its critical value," said Zhang Xianghong, a member of the National Data Expert Advisory Committee and a professor at Beijing Jiaotong University.

At its founding assembly, the organization elected its first board of directors, supervisors and leadership team, signaling the official start of opera-

tions. Tan Tieniu, the newly elected council chairman of the organization, said that relying solely on trade and investment to stimulate growth has been long yielding diminishing returns.

"In contrast, the digital economy is rising rapidly, particularly with the surge of artificial intelligence," Tan said. "The most important feature of this wave is that it is data-driven."

He emphasized that unlocking the full potential of data to drive faster digital economic growth is a shared challenge for all countries, which in turn requires a globally recognized platform and WDO as a response to that need.

A key mission of the organization will be to address differences in national data policies and regulatory frameworks. By promoting industry consensus, standards recommendations and best practices, the WDO aims to provide references for governments and research institutions, while helping multinational companies reduce compliance costs when operating across borders.

Beyond governance, the WDO also seeks to build a robust ecosystem for

data application. This includes promoting the use of data in practical scenarios such as healthcare, education and energy, accelerating project implementation and industrial innovation. The organization also aims to support developing countries and those in the Global South in enhancing their data capabilities, helping narrow the global data divide.

The WDO has already attracted more than 200 members from over 40 countries, spanning a wide range of sectors. Its membership covers enterprises, universities, think tanks, international organizations and financial institutions, covering 14 industries such as manufacturing, finance, healthcare, public services, e-commerce, logistics, energy, construction, agriculture, education and media (Figure 1). This diverse participation reflects an initial global network characterized by broad representation and cross-sector collaboration.

Jack Perry, chairman of the UK-based 48 Group, a member of the WDO, stressed the importance of cooperation in the digital age. "Data has no borders — it flows in the cloud," he said. "But at the same time, it can also

create divisions. That's why we must work together."

"In the future, as the global demand for data increases, the newly founded World Data Organization will focus on addressing the challenge of divergent data policies across countries, promote the development of industry consensus, standards recommendations," said Tan. He also added that they will provide references for governments and research institutions, and help multinational companies reduce data compliance costs.

The founding of the WDO is also expected to reshape how countries manage and share data. By reducing policy differences, it may lower compliance costs and make cross-border cooperation easier. More importantly, it shows that data is becoming a global resource that needs common rules and proves to the world that mankind can set key standards and influence how the digital economy develops worldwide.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.