



Mid-year letter from the president of IUGS

I was elected at the end of November 2020 and now we are in May 2021 – what has happened in that period?

First of all the new executive (<https://www.iugs.org/executive>) had to get to know each other and discover what we can do for the IUGS, and more importantly what we think IUGS

members expect from us. Of the ten-member team, five members are new and two more executive members who were chosen in 2020, will join in 2022, when two members from the previous executive will rotate off. Thus we have a good mixture of experienced and new members, although most executive members have been involved with the IUGS in various ways in the past.

We are of course restricted to holding meetings electronically and we held our main 2021 executive meeting this winter which was split over four 2-3 hour sessions, which spanned the time zones from California to Japan and the republic of Korea and latitudes from Northern Europe to South Africa. There is no doubt that the reach in holding meetings electronically is good as no-one is obliged to travel. As we know this has the advantage of being effective in getting things done, but tends to result in poor interpersonal communication, which is often where the best ideas germinate.

Funding: The requests from the IUGS activities for 2021 have been reviewed and approved with minor modifications, mainly due to funds not spent in 2020 and being carried forward. I note new subdivisions in the stratigraphic column, new tools in forensics science and an increased focus on geoheritage and geoparks with our UNESCO partner in the IGCP. The EC meeting outputs can be found at <https://www.iugs.org/ecmeetings>.

Funding was provided to the Deep Digital Earth Project <https://www.iugs.org/dde> and we have been advising on the appropriate governance structure for DDE that allows the programme to be flexible and reactive, while not losing its links to IUGS.

Some funding was redirected in activities that involve gender issues. This is because IUGS is developing a stronger more centralised programme in gender issues in science. IUGS has joined the International Science Council (ISC) Standing Committee on this important issue.

Thus, operationally IUGS has managed to put the funding in place for its activities in 2021-2022. We do realise that this year will again be limited by COVID restrictions and travel and fieldwork will again be curtailed.

IGC Meetings: With the Local Organising Committee (LOC) we have cancelled the 36th IGC meeting that was planned for Delhi in August 2021. We are now helping the LOC in reimbursing all of the congress registration fees, field-trip registration and exhibition registration and you will be, or have been, contacted to provide information to the LOC for the refund. Although this level of operational involvement is not the role of the President of the IUGS, I have personally taken on the leadership with Dr Ranjit Rath of the LOC, the aim being, as far as is possible, to restore confidence in the IUGS and the IGC. I note that the Indian LOC will organise a COVID

rescheduled virtual 36th IGC meeting in March 2022, which will include discussions on geoscience and society at the political level in the country, to be followed by a two-day high-level virtual webinar on the major themes of IUGS science.

The 37th IUGS in Busan, Republic of Korea is the focus for the next IGC assembly, and we have already agreed that the 38th IGC will take place in St Petersburg, Russia in 2028.

Anniversaries and outreach: IUGS is 60 years old in 2021 and the UNESCO IGCP will have been running for 50 years in 2022. We thus plan a series of outreach events from autumn 2021 through to May/June 2022 to celebrate these anniversaries with IUGS members, UNESCO and other ISC partners.

Although the IUGS programmes and commissions are themselves active in outreach and communication and IUGS itself has its own outreach and publication activities, I feel that IUGS needs more visibility in public and government engagement. This can come through enhancing our existing channels, but in a more reactive and fluid way – one activity that the executive is looking at is enhancing the IUGS image overall and for this, we will need to invest in an active engagement programme, such as one that might utilise our upcoming anniversaries.

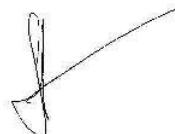
Strategy and Statutes: We will be increasing our interaction with other ISC Unions. I have met with the ISC Geo-Unions and we have joined the ISC standing committee on disaster risk reduction (ISC SC-DRR). We have nominated people for ISC board roles who we can work with in increasing the reach of IUGS.

Geoscience is at a point in which the discipline is going through the biggest changes for decades as we enter the energy transition towards zero-carbon, and there is an ongoing perception that geology is mainly about extracting resources. We need to emphasise the role of geology in underpinning sustainable development, and I believe IUGS needs a strong series of activities that show how geology can underpin the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, I am pleased that many of our activities do work towards the SDG and also that our partnership with UNESCO underpins this.

To underline the role of the IUGS in delivering the UN SDG, we will rewrite the IUGS strategy (while not reinventing the wheel) and we will present this alongside a revised set of statutes at the IUGS 60th anniversary in 2022.

I sincerely hope we can meet each other face to face more as we move into the second half of 2021, but also that we remember and retain the positive aspects of the way we have been working in lockdown over the past 18 months. The idea of hybrid (virtual and in-person) activities including virtual field and lab activities is something to retain as part of the IUGS platform of activities.

I note that the IUGS has renewed an eight-year contract with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to maintain the secretariat and I thank them and all our committee members and activity leads for their support of IUGS.



John Ludden, IUGS President