

Minutes of the 16th session of the DDE Executive Committee (EC)

8 December 2025, 1300-1500 hrs CET

Meeting Recording accessible at:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/Y_zZuMCIX0y_5MXzYFsKt9LJQMymdc1vXPNZvjtMU2w1uA8zuX38trBJMT_dkg.uhFrBg74Vnspb3fP

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Meeting participants

DDE Executive Committee (EC)

Qiuming Cheng – EC Chair (Qiuming)

William Cavazza – EC Member (William)

Anna Nguno – EC Member (Anna)

Irasema Alcantara-Ayala – EC Member (Ira)

Natarajan Ishwaran – EC Member (Ish)

DDE Governing Council (GC)

Harvey Thorleifson – GC Chair (Harvey)

DDE Science Committee (SC)

Hans Thybo (Hans)

DDE Secretariat

Mike Stephenson (Mike)

James Ogg (Jim)

Juxin Shen (Chris)

Wangyi, Olivia (Wangyi)

Overview

The first EC meeting (16th session), with 3 new Members and EC Chair assuming their roles in 2025, was a productive one. The Chair of the DDE GC and several Secretariat Members attended the session. The Chair of DDE SC was present for a brief period at the beginning of the meeting. The EC Chair welcomed new members and discussed the agenda. The minutes of the 15th session were noted and future priorities for DDE, including funding for projects and activities for implementing the Strategic Framework of 2025-2028 adopted by the 9th session of the DDE GC, were discussed. The meeting covered DDE's history, recent progress, and strategic framework, while addressing concerns about DDE's relationship with IUGS and the need to establish a clear legal identity for DDE and improve transparency of Governance and financial management. Discussions included operational and financial aspects of DDE, including funding cycles, international outreach programs, and collaboration opportunities with various organizations.

Follow up actions and lead responsibilities:

- Ish/Secretariat: Draft minutes of the 16th session of the EC and submit to EC Members for review and finalize with changes as appropriate and post it on the DDE web.
- Qiuming/Mike: Discuss and decide on practical approach for outreach/communication with Geological Society of London (GSL) to address concerns, including, if desired, an informal meeting before the IUGS EC meeting in Bogota in January 2026.
- Qiuming/Secretariat: Prepare and present a report to the upcoming IUGS EC meeting in Bogota (Colombia, January 22-26) detailing steps taken by DDE to address concerns expressed in the IUGS communique of April 2025.
- Secretariat: Confirm with Ira and William their availability to be part of the DDE Delegation to the 82nd session of the IUGS-EC, during 22-27 January 2025 in Bogota, Colombia.
- Qiuming/Secretariat: Continue the process to legally register DDE as an international organization in China and prepare a proposal for DDE affiliated membership with IUGS.
- Ish/Secretariat: Review and finalize the call for proposals document for the Global Open Science Fund and release it for December/January for receipt of proposals and for finalizing project selection for funding by February/March.

- Ish/Secretariat: Schedule and organize future EC meetings, in particular, in-person meetings, to the extent possible.
- Qiuming/Ish/Secretariat: Discuss and decide on the relationship and potential MOU between DDE and platform/infrastructure developers regarding responsibilities and benefits, especially concerning data, models, and intellectual property.
- Ish/Secretariat: Review and discuss the list of major events for 2026, including international outreach programs, at the upcoming GC meeting, and decide on participation and budgets.
- Ish/Secretariat: Follow up actions to proceed with a UNESCO-MOST MoU for designing and implementing appropriate IGCP/IGGP or related activities as part of DDE contributions to UNESCO-IUGS collaborative initiatives.
- Qiuming to discuss with other EC Members steps for identifying 2 candidates to be included as Councilors in DDE EC.

Meeting Minutes

New EC Team Introduction Meeting

The meeting marked the first EC meeting for 5 members including 3 new members, namely William, Anna and Ira. The EC Chair, Qiuming, elected in April 2025, welcomed them and other meeting attendees, highlighted the importance of collaboration and recognized the contributions of past, existing and new members, including Harvey as GC chair, Hans as SC chair, and others. EC Members and other meeting participants introduced themselves, sharing their expertise and roles in DDE, emphasizing their commitment to advancing the organization's vision and mission.

The agenda of the session was adopted without any changes.

DDE Strategic Planning

The meeting focused on the history and future direction of DDE (Deep-time Digital Earth), a global initiative for solid Earth sciences. Harvey, the GC chair, thanked participants for their contributions and outlined DDE's evolution since its inception in 2019, emphasizing its focus on big data and harmonized data for Earth modeling. He highlighted the need to refresh governance, improve transparency, and clarify risks, as requested by IUGS which suspended its relationship with DDE for a year in April 2025. The group discussed plans for

the second half decade of DDE, where DDE projects and initiatives will be implemented under six scientific programs, namely (i) digital/intelligent technologies, (ii) Earth structure, (iii) Earth plate motion, (iv) Earth timeline and history, (v) Earth modelling, and (vi) sustainable Earth resources, with the first milestone for demonstrating achievements and products and services developed during 2025-2028 to be the 38th International Geological Congress (IGC) in Calgary, Canada in August 2028.

DDE Strategic Framework Progress Update

Qiuming reported on recent progress in DDE's development, including four open planning forums held in May that gathered input from various stakeholders. The GC approved a new strategic framework at its June 26th meeting (9th session of the GC); progress on the implementation of the framework will be presented at upcoming 10th session of the GC meetings on the 9th and 11th of December 2025. William stressed the importance of re-establishing the link between IUGS and DDE, suggesting that DDE should prepare a detailed report for the upcoming IUGS EC meeting in Bogota addressing each of the many concerns raised by IUGS. William also pointed out that IUGS' decision to suspend relations with DDE has created a lot of concern and confusion among geologists and could impact DDE's reputation in the long run. Michael added that the main concern from IUGS, particularly its Members such as the Geological Society of London (GSL), was about DDE's lack of legal identity and transparency in financial management. He suggested that it may be useful to establish direct contact with GSL and have discussions before the Bogota meeting to address those concerns. Ira also stressed the importance of DDE maintaining cordial relationships with organizations like IUGS and others.

DDE EC Structure and Operations

Qiuming as the EC Chair referred to the descriptions of the roles and functions of the EC as defined in the DDE Statutes and informed Members that the EC membership in the past had 6, with a quorum of 5. In the present EC of 5, only Ish was member of the last EC. Qiuming suggested that the EC Members consider potential individuals who may be considered for inclusion as 2 councilors.

The meeting focused on the status and future of DDE as an international organization, with plans to establish it legally soon. The minutes of the last EC meeting held on January 22nd were noted, with the group agreeing to treat them as information for new members rather than for formal approval. The composition and working methods of the DDE EC were discussed, including the requirement for at least three meetings per year, the need for geographical, ethnic, and gender balance among members, and the practice of inviting the GC chair and SC chair to EC meetings. The group also considered and agreed to post EC

meeting minutes on the DDE website to improve transparency in governance as recommended by IUGS.

DDE-IUGS Relationship

The EC discussed the status of DDE's relationship with IUGS, noting that revisions to the statutes have been suspended until January 2026, EC meeting in Bogota due to uncertainty about the IUGS-DDE relationship. William suggested holding in-person EC meetings, which Qiuming agreed was desirable for future discussions despite some logistical challenges. Harvey and others discussed the strategy for restoring DDE's relationship with IUGS, with Harvey proposing to seek affiliate status like CGMW, which Qiuming confirmed was being considered in parallel to efforts to register DDE as a legal entity in China. Jim emphasized the importance of establishing international affiliations to enhance DDE's global reputation.

Strategies for Global Science Engagement

The group discussed strategies for engaging with the GSL and other organizations, emphasizing the importance of face-to-face meetings to demonstrate good faith and address concerns. Michael and others highlighted the need to balance collaboration with maintaining independence, while Ira stressed the importance of being part of the international scientific community through relations with ISC and its Members. Qiuming provided an overview of the upcoming GC session agenda, focusing on DDE operations and the DDE Global Open Science Fund (DDE-GOSF), which has been established with a budget of approximately 14 million USD for 2025 to be distributed across infrastructure development and support (30%), operational activities (20%), and scientific research (50%). The funds for infrastructure support will be managed directly by the Zhejiang Center in Hangzhou while the Suzhou Center in Kunshan City will oversee the use of operational and research funds. Qiuming stressed the need to expedite the proposal and project selection process for this year's funds to avoid delays in budget allocation for future years.

DDE Platform Operations and Funding

The meeting focused on the operational and financial aspects of the DDE platform, including discussions about its integration with the "One Earth" initiative of the Zhejiang Lab. Anna inquired about the funding cycle, which Qiuming explained runs from January to January, with most project funding from sponsors received in the second half of the year. Jim raised questions about international outreach programs for 2026, and Qiuming mentioned that a report with details on major events and budgets would be available soon. Ish clarified that fellowship grants foreseen to be made available from the DDE-GOSF would target individuals rather than organizations. Qiuming mentioned a potential

collaboration with UNESCO to support IGCP and related activities. Anna asked whether a conversation with the GSL as suggested by Mike will be undertaken and Qiuming agreed to discuss the matter with Mike and take necessary follow-up actions.

In addition, Qiuming provided the EC with updates on several other items. These included the status of the Working and Task Group (WTG) and Research Centers of Excellence (RCEs), progress on the DDE Journal and the establishment of an International Society of Deep-time Digital Earth, and plans for a Forum in 2026.

Qiuming closed the meeting after the Members unanimously adopted a motion to post EC meeting minutes on the DDE website after review and approval by all EC Members.