

Minutes of the 10th session of the DDE Governing Council (GC)

9 and 11 December 2025, 1300-1600 hrs CET

Meeting Recordings accessible at:

9 December 2025:

Duration: 02:56:48

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11 December 2025:

Duration: 02:49:17

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Meeting Chair:

Harvey Thorleifson, President, DDE GC

DDE GC Members represented at the 10th session of the GC on 9 and/or 11 December 2025 (All Members were not present throughout the sessions on 9 and 11 December 2025)

CGS/CAGS – China Geological Survey (Jinpeng Zhang)

CGI – Commission on Geoscience Information (Zhang Minghua)

CGMW – Commission on Geological Mapping of the World (Manuel Pubellier)

GSAf – Geological Society of Africa (Gbenga Okunlola)

IGEO – International Geosciences Educational Organization (Nir Orion)

IAGOD – International Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits (Reimar Seltman)

CCOP – Coordinating Committee for Geosciences in East and Southeast Asia (Ma Yongzheng)

IAG – International Association of Geomorphology (Mihai Micu)

GSI – Geological Survey of Iran (Hanieh Bakshaei)

SEGEMAR – Servicio Geológico Minero Argentina (Pablo Johanis)

ILP – International Lithosphere Program (Hans Thybo; he is also the Chair of the DDE SC)

DDE Executive Committee

Qiuming Cheng (EC Chair)

William Cavazza (EC Member; he is also a DDE SC Member)

Anna Nguno (EC Member)

Irasema Alacantara-Ayala (EC Member)

Natarajan Ishwaran (Ish) (EC Member & Head, DDE Secretariat)

DDE Science Committee

Harsh Gupta

DDE Secretariat

Mike Stephenson

James Ogg

Li Chao

Juxin (Chris) Shen

Other observers

Jinpeng Zhang, Marginal Seas Group

Cueimei Zhang – RCE, University of Strasbourg

Overview

The meeting covered DDE's progress since the 9th session of the GC convened on 26 June and plans, including funding arrangements, timelines for calls for project proposals and completion of procedures for initiating implementation of newly approved projects under the 2025 budget, governance structures and the organization's relationship with partners and institutions. Updates were provided on Research Centers of Excellence (RCEs), Working and Task Groups (WTGs), and upcoming events for 2026, with provisional budget estimates for supporting DDE representatives and invited participants at those events. The GC also addressed communication strategies, educational initiatives, and governance improvements, emphasizing the need for increased global participation and improved data standards.

Follow up actions and responsibilities

- [Secretariat: expedite finalization of Central Asia Task Group contracts and funding transfer to China University of Geological Sciences as requested by the Team Leader, Reimar Seltman.](#)
- [Reimar Seltman \(IAGOD\) to resend invitation to DDE to participate in the IAGOD Quadrennial Symposium in Portugal in August 2026 to Harvey, Qiuming and the Secretariat for it to be included in the plan of events for DDE support in 2026](#)
- [Secretariat: Initiate detail planning for events to be supported by DDE in 2026 prioritizing events from January to April 2026, and ensuring timely conclusion of necessary communication and administrative arrangements.](#)
- [Secretariat: post recordings and materials from GC meetings on 9 and 11 December 2025 and circulate them to all GC members](#)
- [Secretariat: schedule the next GC meeting for March or April 2026](#)
- [Qiuming and Harvey: prepare and submit, with support from the Secretariat, DDE affiliate status application to IUGS Executive Committee \(IUGS-EC\) for the EC to consider that proposal at its meeting in Bogota, Columbia, from 22-24 January 2026](#)
- [Qiuming and the Secretariat: complete DDE international legal registration under Chinese laws before next GC session in March/April 2026.](#)
- [Qiuming: Lead the planning and organization of the DDE forum before end of June 2026 and issue the first circular of the Forum before 31 January 2026.](#)
- [Secretariat: establish WeChat official account for Chinese social media presence](#)

- [Secretariat in collaboration with relevant GC Members and partners to explore potential of the DDE platform's use in current and future geoscience research and education and advice Qiuming and the Secretariat on optimal partnership arrangement between DDE and Zhejiang University](#)
- [Nir \(IGEO\): re-initiate conversations with the DDE Secretariat to organize the workshop in China during the first half of 2026 and for exploring the use of DDE Platform as a pedagogic tool for pre-university and university level geoscience education and to explore other future DDE contributions to geoscience education.](#)
- [Qiuming: Convene the 17th session of the Executive Committee to further consider implementation of DDE GC suggestions and recommendations from its 10th session and for examining new proposals from the DDE community, such as the proposal to establish a DDE RCE in the Frontier Science Center, CUGB, China and prepare recommendations for GC decisions at its next session in March/April 2026.](#)
- [Qiuming to consult with EC Members to identify and include for two counselors in the EC and expand EC members from 5 to 7](#)
- [Qiuming to discuss with the EC Members roles, membership and responsibilities of a Finance Committee and make recommendations to the GC for decision-making at its next session in March-April 2026.](#)

Meeting Minutes

Funding for the Implementation of the DDE Strategic Framework, 2025-2028

After Harvey recalled important elements of DDE's past and its evolution into the Strategic Framework adopted by the GC at its 9th session on 26 June 2025, Qiuming provided an overview of activities implemented since the last session of the GC convened on 26 June 2025. Qiuming then described the distribution of the DDE 2025 budget of approximately \$ 14 million for implementation by the Zhejiang Center (30% for digital infrastructure management, operations and support to DDE science), DDE scientific research projects (50% to be managed by the Suzhou Center) and for educational, communication and outreach and governance, Secretariat support and other management and administrative requirements (20% to the Suzhou Center which hosts the DDE Secretariat). Qiuming outlined plans for implementation of major, key, regular and fellowship projects using the 2025 funds and the Secretariat's intention to finalize all procedures for initiating implementation of new projects funded under the DDE 2025 budget allocation by 31 March 2026.

GC members welcomed the information on substantial increase in funding being made available by MOST (Ministry of Science and Technology), China to DDE for initiating the implementation of a new series of projects and initiatives under the 6 scientific programs described in the DDE Strategic Framework for 2025-2028. The need to strengthen the understanding of DDE as an international program open to broader funding, from sources in UK, Europe and other advanced economies, was emphasized. All projects to be supported by the DDE 2025 funding round would have to raise counterpart/matching funding – in cash, or in kind, i.e., expert services, data, technological support, digital infrastructure development etc. GC members were encouraged to engage with their respective government funding bodies or international foundations and similar organizations to explore such counterpart funding for project proposals either they or others associated with them may wish to submit for funding under the DDE 2025 budget.

The Council was informed of the improvements foreseen in governance structures and relationship with IUGS, including proposing that DDE become an IUGS Affiliate organization to be followed by revision of the DDE Statutes to meet such a new status in comparison to what DDE was, during 2019-2024. Reimar (IAGOD) stressed, as he had done so several times in the past, the importance of timely completion of contractual arrangements with his and other WTGs so that they can carry out their annual activities in an effective manner.

Collaboration and Legal Arrangements

The meeting discussed the relationship between DDE Secretariat and the Suzhou Center and the Zhejiang Lab, respectively. The Zhejiang Lab owns and operates GeoGPT. Zhejiang University manages the DDE Platform and relationship between DDE, and the ownership of the DDE Platform needs further clarification. Given that 30% of DDE funding will flow directly to the Zhejiang Center, clear definition of working relationships between DDE and Zhejiang based entities is needed. The GC also discussed the benefits of DDE's affiliation with IUGS, emphasizing the reputational value rather than the modest funding that IUGS provided to DDE until 2024. Qiuming clarified the distinction between Zhejiang Lab and Zhejiang University's roles in managing DDE funds and agreed that possibilities for greater integration of planning for their respective products and services would be desirable; he informed GC Members his intention to discuss the matter with the two institutions soon.

IUGS DDE Affiliate Status Discussion

The Secretariat presented DDE actions taken to address the various concerns that IUGS had raised about DDE in its communique of April 2025, including “fears” of some IUGS Members regarding legal liability that IUGS may incur in respect to some of DDE’s activities

linked to data driven research and development. The Secretariat pointed out that DDE and GeoGPT relationship have now been clearly defined under an MoU. DDE will seek affiliate status with IUGS to minimize legal and other risks to IUGS members. Qiuming provided details about IUGS membership types, explaining that an IUGS Affiliate organizations like DDE would have a relationship with IUGS without voting rights but could receive financial support, if needed. Harvey emphasized the organization's commitment to addressing IUGS concerns and respecting IUGS leadership. He noted that the issues were partially stimulated by one person. Some institutions, such as the Geological Society of London are concerned about the lack of a clear legal identity for DDE. Overall Harvey felt that the result for DDE and its efforts to take necessary steps to address IUGS concerns will be beneficial to the future of DDE.

RCEs and WTGs Progress Review

The meeting covered updates on Research Centers of Excellence (RCEs) and Working Task Groups (WTGs). The Secretariat provided a detailed overview of the five RCEs, highlighting their progress, funding, and collaboration opportunities. The discussion emphasized the need for more exchanges and networking between RCEs and the establishment of new centers in the future. The proposal to establish a new RCE at the Frontier Science Research Center in CUGB, China, had been received by the Secretariat just before the GC session. Regarding WTGs, the assessment of 21 groups carried out in 2024 by the DDE SC, with three scoring high, 12 medium, and six low ranks was highlighted. The high- and medium-performing groups will receive funding for 2024-2025 and for 2026; conversations with low-performing ones are expected to find ways to reorient or improve their performance before any further funding commitments are made. The conversation ended with a discussion on the need for coordination of WTGs activities beginning from 2026 with the directions of the six major scientific programs to be supported under the DDE Strategic Framework for 2025-2028; more frequent online meetings with WTGs to discuss planning and coordination issues were encouraged.

DDE 2026 International Event Planning

The meeting discussed upcoming events for DDE in 2026, including the IUGS-EC Executive Committee meeting in Colombia, the Indaba Cape Town meeting in South Africa, a mining conference in Canada, an NMGS session in Nigeria, a CCOP Steering Committee meeting in Brunei, EGU in Vienna during the first half of 2026, and others, such as GSA in Colorado, CCOP Annual Meeting in Japan, and potential participation in AGU in San Francisco during the latter half of 2026. Reimar encouraged DDE involvement in the IAGOD Quadrennial Symposium in Portugal including a suggestion for DDE to host a booth at the event. He mentioned that he will be present at the mining event in Canada where DDE is expected to

be represented by DDE GC President. DDE GC/EC leaders and Members and Secretariat staff were identified to lead or participate in these events, with budgets for individual events ranging from \$30,000 to \$200,000.

The organization of a DDE Forum, like the last one organized in UNESCO in November 2022, was discussed. The Forum will be convened in China, and the venue, dates and other details of the Forum will be made available to the Members before end of January 2026. Qiuming shall discuss the organization of the Forum and related matters with the DDE EC and other Chinese and international organizations as appropriate.

Education, Communication and Outreach

The Secretariat introduced plans for strengthening education and awareness efforts, highlighting the DDE website, blogs, and newsletters as key communication tools. The intellectual content on the website needs further reflection and improvement and the authorship of blogs could be diversified. DDE-related scientific papers could be listed on the web to demonstrate DDE's scientific impact. LinkedIn is the international platform for professional communication where DDE has about 1,300 followers, with strong engagement from American and African audiences and some representation from oil and gas industries. Expanding to other international social media/communication channels is worthy of exploration. Opening a China-based WeChat platform was encouraged.

Leveraging 3D outcrop models, which received considerable attention and interest when they were included in the DDE Platform beginning 2022, for educational purposes needs to be revived. Funding for 3D outcrop project in China appears to have ended. One of the projects approved by the DDE EC in 2024, implemented by AGI-US and the Asia Pacific University of Malaysia aimed at integrating digital outcrop models into pre-college education. The importance of organizing a workshop with educators, in collaboration with IGEO, which had proposed such a workshop in 2024/2025 in late 2024, to better utilize the platform for high school students and teachers, and further explore DDE actions to promote education, communication and outreach initiatives was stressed.

Nir Orion (IGEO) and Manuel Pabelier (CGMW) provided brief updates on their respective organizations' DDE related initiatives, including CGMW highlighting its new project for a digital geological map of the world at scale 1:1 million.

DDE Governance and Legal Registration

The meeting focused on DDE governance and legal registration. Qiuming presented updates on the governance structure, including a proposal to increase the Executive Committee from 5 to 7 members, and discussed the process of registering DDE as an international legal entity in China. The group agreed to hold the next GC meeting in March

or April 2024, and suggested DDE EC meet as soon as possible to consider implementation of follow-actions arising from this meeting. Harvey emphasized the importance of transparency and governance to attract non-Chinese actors and funding. The conversation ended with Qiuming highlighting progress on institutional development and scientific innovation linked to DDE in China-based institutions and organizations, while also emphasizing the need for increased global participation and improved data standards.

Closing of the Session and Remarks from GC Members

Harvey invited any remarks that GC Members may have before he closes the session. Hanieh Bakshaei of GSIran welcomed the DDE efforts to build international cooperation and asked the Secretariat to find ways to help countries like Iran to improve their geoscience research and development. Pablo Jonis from SEGEMAR Argentina also expressed his satisfaction in the way the meeting was conducted and the interesting opportunities for international collaboration that has become available through increased DDE funding. Harvey thanked all GC Members attending for their active participation and contributions; he informed Members that recordings of both 9 and 11 December 2025 meetings will be available for the benefit of those who could not attend them. After expressing his hope that DDE will move forward positively and constructively in supporting the world geoscience community in 2026 and beyond he declared the 10th session of the GC closed.