

ISC GeoUnions Steering Committee meeting

Online

25th March 2026

Present:

Giuliano Manara (GM) (Chair): URSI
Michael Meadows (MM): IGU
Hassina Mouri (HM): IUGS
David Cohen (DC): IUGS
Edoardo Costantini (EC): IUSS
Thijs van Kolfcholten (TvK): INQUA
Alex Rudloff: (AR) IUGG
Johannes Mattes (JM): UIS
Lena Halounova (LH): (ISPRS)
Georg Gartner (GG): (ICA)
Orhan Altan (OA): (ISPRS)
Bruce Lascelles (IUSS)

Guests:

Alik Ismail-Zadeh (AIZ)
Maria Paradiso (MP): IGU/ISC Governing Board
Yukio Himiyama (YH): IGU/ISC RFP-AP

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Welcome and introduction

The chair opened the online meeting at 10am UTC, welcomed all to the meeting and noted that all but one of the GeoUnions members was represented online.

2. Approval of the agenda

The agenda, previously circulated, was adopted as follows:

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. GeoUnions Matrix table update
4. News from the Unions
5. "GeoUnions: from the past to the future" (presentation by AIZ)
6. ISC – GeoUnions DRR report
7. IDSSD ISC – GeoUnions Distinguished Lecture Series

8. Call for nominations for the ISC Governing Board
9. Any other business

3. GeoUnions matrix table

The matrix table was presented and colleagues were encouraged to note any further updated contact details and inform GM and MM. The updated table is attached as Appendix I.

4. News from the Unions

IAU: The International Astronomical Union continues its activities through its offices dedicated to astronomy for development, outreach, and education. A key initiative is the Centre for the Protection of the Dark and Quiet Sky (CPS), which addresses increasing threats from satellite constellations and space-based infrastructure. The CPS coordinates mitigation efforts across scientific, policy, and industry communities, with the recent inclusion of the European Southern Observatory (ESO) strengthening the partnership. Several major meetings are forthcoming. APRIM 2026 will be held in Hong Kong (4–8 May), followed by the IAU–Kavli workshop on time-domain and multi-messenger astronomy in Görlitz, Germany (22–26 June), focusing on coordination of transient observations. IAU Symposium 409 on astronomy communication will take place in Tokyo (2–6 November 2026). The next IAU General Assembly is scheduled for Rome, Italy, from 10–19 August 2027.

ICA: Recent and upcoming activities highlight a strong commitment to sustainability, outreach, and advancing the role of cartography in society. The ICA Workshop on Sustainability held in Oranjestad in January 2026 focused particularly on the challenges faced by small island states, while the recently released *Atlas of Sustainability* provides a freely accessible demonstration of actionable cartography in addressing global environmental and development issues. Complementing this, the ICA Fact Sheet on choosing appropriate world map projections offers timely guidance for improving communication and reducing misunderstanding in both media and public discourse. Looking ahead, the European cartographic community will convene at EuroCarto 2026 in Brno, Czechia (<https://eurocarto2026.org/>), followed by the International Cartographic Conference 2027 in Warsaw, Poland (<https://icc2027.org/>), which will also host the ICA General Assembly, continuing to strengthen international collaboration and innovation in the field.

IGU: The IGU Regional Conference is scheduled for Istanbul from 17th to 21st August 2026 (<https://www.irc2026.org/en/>).

INQUA: INQUA, together with the International Union for Biological Sciences (IUBS) and the International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS) will jointly host a five-day workshop from 4th to 8th June at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India. The 2027 INQUA Congress will be held in Lucknow, India from January 27th to February 3rd 2027 (<https://www.inquaindia2027.in/>).

ISPRS: XXV ISPRS Congress is scheduled for Toronto, Canada from 4th to 11th July 2026 (<https://www.isprs2026toronto.com/>). There will be election of new Council and Technical Commission Presidents for the 2026-2030 term. Geospatial Week 2027 will be held in Warsaw, Poland from 19th to 24th September 2027,

IUGG: The IUGG General Assembly 2027 will be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 16th to 22nd July 2027 (<https://iugg2027korea.org/>). AR also highlighted the draft statement to be issued on 22nd April 2026 in celebration of Earth Day developed by the Public Engagement and Outreach Task Team of the Global Geoscience Societies. Other Unions are invited to express their support and have their logo included in the publicity.

IUGS: The 82nd Executive Committee (EC) meeting was held in January 2026 in Bogotá, Colombia, for the first time in the union's history. The meeting reviewed the activities of IUGS commissions and affiliated organisations and discussed strategic priorities for global geoscience. The EC meeting was combined with a Latin America and Caribbean Geoscience Workshop that addressed key themes, including international collaboration, natural hazards, water resources, critical minerals, and the energy transition. The discussions reinforced the role of IUGS in promoting global geoscience cooperation and supporting research addressing major societal challenges. One outcome of the workshop was the development of a planned International Geoscience Program project to support geoscience initiatives in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. Efforts were also made to strengthen IUGS membership by attracting five new countries, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tunisia, South Sudan, which will join in 2026. Future activities include the organization of summer schools across the five regions of Africa, beginning with East Africa at the end of 2026.

IUSS: The 23rd World Congress of Soil Science is scheduled for Nanjing, China (<https://www.23wcsc.org.cn/>) from 7th to 12th June 2026. The Congress will serve as a focal point for a wide range of International IUSS activities, including the ongoing Research Forum and initiatives aligned with the Decade of Soil Science for Sustainable Development (DSSSD). Among these is a new scholarship programme supporting evidence collection on the contribution of soil science to the SDGs, alongside continued engagement of IUSS Divisions, Commissions and Working Groups in shaping congress sessions and advancing DSSSD priorities. The Congress will also host the announcement of the 2026 World Soil of the Year and contribute to broader outreach efforts through collaborations with organizations such as the FAO and the EU, particularly in relation to World Soil Day initiatives. Complementing these activities are several key publications scheduled for release this year, including the interdisciplinary volume *The Language of Soil* led by Commission 4.5 (History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Soil Science) and the IUSS Centennial Congress Book of Extended Abstracts, reflecting both the intellectual breadth and strategic direction of the soil science community.

URSI: The XXXVIth General Assembly and Scientific Symposium will be held in Kraków, Poland, 15th to 22nd August 2026. The next flagship meeting of URSI will be the Atlantic Radio Science Conference (AT-RASC 2027), 23rd to 28th May 2027, in Gran Canaria, Spain.

UIS: The UIS is pleased to report that UNESCO proclaimed 13th September as the International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK) in November 2025, following a UIS-led initiative advanced by Slovenia. The first official celebration will take place in Postojna, Slovenia, 10th to 13th September 2026, including an international conference and outreach activities. This recognition underscores the global importance of caves and karst for water resources, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. The UIS warmly thanks the GeoUnions for their valuable letters of support in advancing this initiative.

5. “GeoUnions: from the past to the future” (presentation by AIZ)

Following a suggestion made at the previous meeting, AIZ delivered a Powerpoint presentation

(https://icsu-geounions.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/history-GeoUnions_25March2026a.pdf)

that outlined the evolution, role, and future challenges of GeoUnions as a collaborative network of international scientific unions within the International Science Council. Established in 2004, the GeoUnions have played a significant role in promoting Earth and space sciences through coordinated research, global outreach programmes, and partnerships with organizations such as UNESCO and the United Nations. Key contributions include advancing scientific understanding of major societal issues such as climate change, natural hazards, and resource sustainability, while also supporting capacity building, education, and data infrastructures. The presentation also highlighted successful interdisciplinary initiatives and the importance of engaging with developing regions. Looking forward, he emphasized the need to strengthen fundamental science, enhance interdisciplinary integration, and improve collaboration across scientific unions, professional societies, and policy bodies. Addressing emerging challenges, including the integration of digital and AI-driven science, is seen as essential to ensuring that geoscientific knowledge continues to benefit society.

6. ISC-GU SC DRR report

OA reported that Professor Irasema Alcantara-Ayala has agreed to take over as chair of this group and that she should be invited as guest to future GeoUnions meetings. This was agreed. Recent international activities highlight the growing role of geospatial science in addressing societal challenges. The Geoinformation 2025 conference in Mérida in November focused on the application of geospatial technologies to disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, and decision-making aligned with global frameworks such as Sendai and the SDGs. In parallel, a recent ISPRS sub-commission meeting in Belém, Brazil included a dedicated session on disaster risk science, underscoring advances in Earth observation and spatial data for hazard monitoring, environmental change, and resilience, particularly in the Amazon region.

7. IDSSD-ISC-GU Distinguished Lecture Series

GM reported that the ISC has broadcast the call for nominations of lecturers and members of the selection committee for the series. Several nominations have already been received. However, given the tight timeline, it was agreed to request ISC to extend the closing date for nominations to 30th April 2026. AIZ noted that this is now the ISC Distinguished Lecture series with the aim of enlarging the range of disciplinary contributions and that, given the lead role played by the GeoUnions in this initiative, it is important that we remain active participants.

8. Nominations for ISC Governing Board 2026-28

GM noted the deadline for nominations is 31st March 2026 and outlined the process. There may be an opportunity for GeoUnions to caucus with respect to supporting particular candidates once the

final candidate list is announced by the ISC Elections Committee and a meeting may be called at that point.

9. Any other business

HM inquired whether mechanisms exist for GeoUnions to obtain legal advice, for example, matters related to the statutes and bylaws of the individual Unions. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that the International Science Council can be approached for guidance in this regard. It was also emphasised that the legal frameworks of the countries in which the respective Unions are registered take precedence, and that it would be neither practical nor cost-effective to appoint a single, central legal advisor for all Unions.

10. Next meeting

There will be an opportunity for in-person GeoUnions meeting in association with the ISC mid-term meeting in Beijing in October 2026. However, it was proposed to have another on-line GeoUnions meeting before next summer, with also the aim to organize the activities of GeoUnions at the ISC mid-term meeting in Beijing.

11. Closure

There being no further business, the chair closed the meeting at 12h05 UTC.