What is IUGS?

The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) is one of the largest and most active non-governmental scientific organizations in the world. Founded in 1961, IUGS is a member of the International Council for Science (ICSU). IUGS promotes and encourages the study of geological problems, especially those of world-wide significance, and supports and facilitates international and interdisciplinary cooperation in the earth sciences.

At present IUGS gives special consideration to:

- Initiatives related to the identification and assessment of energy and mineral resources;
- Global change;
- Geologic hazards;
- Environmental geology;
- Geological education and capacity building, and
- Geoinformation.

IUGS Commissions, Committees, Task Groups and Boards are concerned with a wide range of geologic research of direct interest to governments, industry, and academic groups within the earth sciences. IUGS believes that it is of mutual benefit to establish close links with other organizations engaged in geoscience activities, and especially those organizations whose work relates to some of the major activities of IUGS.

How did IUGS originate?

The Union was founded in March of 1961 in response to a need to coordinate geoscientific international research programs on a continuing basis. Geoscientists felt that a mechanism was required to take action on global geological problems between the International Geological Congresses, traditionally held every four years.

IUGS was also to serve as a vital link in solving problems requiring interdisciplinary input from other international scientific unions operating under the aegis of the International Council of Scientific Unions. Compared to these, IUGS was a 'latecomer,' although some of its responsibilities had been carried out by the International Geological Congress—a venerable institution over a century old.

Since 1961, IUGS has experienced rapid growth in membership, scientific scope and expertise, as well as international prestige.

IUGS beyond 1961-2012

IUGS has been actively developing new goals and directions for the next 50 years under its evolving strategic plan. The Union continues to work in a collaborative fashion with other Earth science unions and our partner organizations worldwide to achieve a balanced program. Additional high priorities are in the areas of Earth science education and technology transfer between the developed and developing countries.

What does IUGS do?

IUGS fosters dialogue and communication among the various specialists in Earth sciences

around the world. It achieves this by organizing international projects and meetings, sponsoring symposia and scientific field trips, and producing publications.

Topics addressed span the gamut from fundamental research to its economic and industrial applications, from scientific, environmental and social issues to educational and developmental problems. For example, IUGS is currently involved in:

- identifying and defining the problems critical to an improved understanding of terrestrial and planetary geological processes;
- encouraging formulation and testing of new geological concepts, models, and methodologies;
- focusing effort internationally on the study of critical economic or environmental problems whose resolution may depend on an understanding of geology;
- fostering international agreement on nomenclature and classification in several geoscientific disciplines such as stratigraphy, petrology and tectonics;
- strengthening mechanisms for facilitating international cooperation in geological research and exchange;
- improving publication, dissemination, and use of geological information internationally;
- encouraging new relationships between and among disciplines of science that relate to geology worldwide;
- attracting competent students and research workers who will devote their attention to geology, and to stimulate excellent education for students interested in geology;
- fostering an increased awareness among individual scientists worldwide of what programs are being carried out in geology in each country;
- promoting public understanding and appreciation of the planet Earth, its environment in space, and their study; and
- furthering the public welfare by assuring that geology makes appropriate contribution to public policy decisions of an international nature.

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