



International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), Initiative on Forensic Geology (IFG)

Monthly Update and Information for IUGS E-Bulletin, January 2026

Dame Lorna Dawson

IUGS-IFG is proud to report that Lorna Dawson, was named in the January 2026 honours list, and provided the following statement, *"I am humbled, and also deeply honoured to have been appointed as Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in the King's New Year's Honours. It is a privilege to be awarded this for services to Innovations in Soil and Forensic Science in the UK and globally. I realise that it's now nearly 25 years that I have been working in this area. It's been an absolute privilege and a pleasure to continue working with such wonderful people such as in the IUGS IFG, where we are going from strength to strength to deliver sound geoscience with real life impact. Long may we all continue to help to deliver good science with peace, fairness, and justice in a troubled world"*.

82nd Executive Committee Meeting, Bogota, Colombia

On 24-25 January 2026, Laurance Donnelly, attended the 82nd IUGS EC meeting in Bogota and provided a summary of the main achievements of IUGS-IFG in 2025, including a financial summary of the accounts and a work plan and budgetary request for 2026. A full list of the planned events and activities for 2026 can be found in the IUGS-IFG 205 Annual Report. An update was also provided on the completion of Phase I of the IUGS-IFG 'Special Project' on mining crime and the illicit trading of minerals, and the publication of the results in a themed issue of *'Episodes'*. The IUGS Executive has encouraged all affiliated groups to increase membership to ensure gender balance, the next generation of geologists and developing countries.

Sands of Change, London

The illegal extraction of sand is rapidly growing around the world, with an estimated value to US\$ 350 billion. An in-person and virtual one day International Conference will be held at The Geological Society of London on 18 March 2026, in association with the Geological Society of London Forensic Geoscience Group, International Union of Geological Sciences Initiative on Forensic Geology and the British Geological Survey. This event is of interest to academics, practitioners, and those interested in the governance and mitigation of risks associated with illegal sand mining.

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To register: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sands-of-change-the-global-challenge-of-sand-mining-tickets-1409896601689?aff=oddtcreator>

Precious Metals Reaches All Time High and Fraud

In January 2026, gold exceeded US\$ 5,000/oz, silver overtook US\$ 1000/oz and platinum US\$ 3,000/oz. This surge is driven by several factors including market volatility, central bank purchasing and a safe investment haven amongst geopolitical uncertainty. This corresponds to a reported increase in gold fraud. In January 2026, Laurance Donnelly spent over two weeks in Colombia, which included the investigation and mitigation of gold theft, adulteration and substitution from operations, and the provision of advice and guidance on managing and mitigating the associated risks.

<https://investingnews.com/gold-all-time-high/>

[https://www.cnbc.com/2025/10/07/gold-4000-](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/10/07/gold-4000-record.html#:~:text=Gold%20price%20reaches%20$4%2C000%20an%20ounce%20for%20the%20first%20time%20ever)

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Gold Traceability, Switzerland

There is now available a number of methods for the analyses of gold to determine its geographical and geological provinces, and for purposes of traceability. However, these are all at different stages of research and development and commercial availability. IUGS-IFG is planning a conference to be held in Switzerland at a date to be determined in 2026. If you are interested to attend and give a presentation, please contact Laurance Donnelly or Fabio Salvador.

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