

**GSPPA-II/14/Report**

# **Second Meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly**

**Rome, Italy, 22- 24 July 2014**



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY  
OF THE GLOBAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP**

**Rome, 22 – 24 July 2014**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
Rome, 2014**

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## **OPENING OF THE SESSION**

- The second meeting of the Plenary Assembly (PA) of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) was held in Rome at FAO headquarters on 22-24 July 2014 (the list of participants is attached in Annex 1).
- As Minister Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs from Thailand could not attend the session, the Vice-Chairperson Mr. Pavel Krasilnikov from the Russian Federation presided over the proceedings. Mr. Mahmoud Alferihat from Jordan was appointed as Rapporteur.
- Mrs. Semedo, Deputy Director-General for Natural Resources welcomed the participants on behalf of the FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva.
- The Assembly appreciated the keynote address from Mr. Aroldo Cedraz, Minister of the Federal Court of Accounts of Brazil. Minister Cedraz mentioned in particular the intention of his national authorities to organize a major Conference on soil governance, to be held in Brasilia on 25-27 March 2015, and he described its intended objectives. While conceived as an event of primarily national scope, Minister Cedraz emphasized that the Brazilian government would welcome the involvement of the GSP in its preparations.
- The provisional agenda and timetable were adopted, as presented in document GSPPA:II/2014/1.

### **I. Item 3: Amendment of the Rules of Procedure (document GSPPA:II/2014/3)**

#### **3.1 Replacement of ITPS members due to force majeure**

1. The Assembly was advised that one of the originally appointed members of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) could not attend the first ITPS meeting and participate in further work, due to family-related reasons.
2. The Assembly noted that, while the current Rules of Procedure (RoP) (rule VI) were quite explicit regarding the selection of ITPS members and their appointment by the Plenary Assembly, they did not address the eventuality of members not able to serve as intended. Hence, a possible amendment to the RoP was formulated for consideration by the PA, to be inserted as additional paragraph VI.1) e).
3. During the discussion, several changes were requested to be made, particularly with a view to assigning the prerogative of proposing a substitute participant to the pertinent FAO regional group, and not to the concerned country. Eventually, the Assembly approved a revised formulation of this additional paragraph. The Rules of Procedure, as amended, are reproduced in Annex 2.

### **II. Item 4: Work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel of Soils (ITPS) (document GSPPA: II/2014/4)**

#### **4.1 Main activities and outcomes**

4. The Assembly took note that the ITPS had held two sessions (in July 2013 and April 2014) since it was established by the PA in June 2013. In addition to the synthetic overview contained in the document, it welcomed the oral presentation of achievements provided by Dr. Neil Mackenzie, ITPS member, on behalf of the Chairperson, Dr. Luca Montanarella, who could not attend the present session.

5. The Assembly commended the many valuable activities undertaken under the aegis of the ITPS over nearly one year of operation. It expressed particular appreciation for the initiation of work on a new, seminal report entitled “Status of the World Soils Resources” (SWSR). It noted the intent to issue the first version towards the end of 2015, with the active involvement of a large number of contributors.
6. Due to the tight deadlines, the Assembly realized that this first version would not be as comprehensive as desirable (e.g. in terms of full reflection of national reports) but that it would pave the way for more elaborate, successive versions.
7. The Assembly noted that the ITPS had also sought to engage into cooperative links with other Panels or major international initiatives with interest in soils, as specified in its mandate. It recognized that significant progress in this direction could not materialize overnight, as the Panel needed to gain sufficient visibility through concrete achievements. The Assembly welcomed interventions made by representatives of some of these institutions, in particular the Science Policy Interface (SPI) established by the UNCCD, pointing to their reciprocal desire to cooperate.
8. The Assembly strongly encouraged the Panel to pursue such efforts, with due assistance from the Secretariat, singling out other potential interlocutors such as IPBES and the IPCC. The SWSR for instance offered good opportunities to build synergies with activities of other institutions. The ITPS was also invited to establish firm links with non-UN international institutions such as the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS).

#### **4.2 Replacement of one member from North America**

9. The Assembly confirmed the change of one member from North America, so that he could serve on the Panel for the remainder of the term of the original member.

### **III. Item 5: Nomination of Focal Points for the GSP by FAO Members (document GSPPA: II/2014/5)**

10. The Assembly recalled that the Secretariat used established channels of communication with FAO Members in order to transmit important GSP-related messages or information to Governmental partners, for instance the posting of notices of sessions of the Plenary Assembly on the Permanent Representatives’ website.
11. However, the Assembly was advised that a priority need for a complementary process had been identified, with a view to enhancing dissemination of information and technical exchanges at a more working level. This need could be met by FAO Members designating GSP focal points, as was done in many other substantive areas.
12. The Assembly was reassured that this focal point arrangement was in no way intended to substitute for the established channels of communication with FAO Members, which would continue to be used, and that it would be consistent with the voluntary nature of the GSP.
13. In this light, the Assembly endorsed the proposed procedure and invited all FAO Members to nominate such focal points in order to take full advantage of expected benefits of enhanced communications. It noted that a request to that end would be sent by the Secretariat to Members at the conclusion of the Assembly, providing background information on the requirements for such a function, and giving sufficient time for national authorities to select focal points (and substitutes, if so desired).

### **IV. Item 6: Endorsement of Plans of Action for the GSP Pillars (document GSPPA: II/2014/6)**

- 6.1 Pillar 1: Promote sustainable management of soil resources.**
- 6.2 Pillar 2: Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils.**
- 6.4 Pillar 4: Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information.**
- 6.5 Pillar 5: Support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management, with a national validation that takes into account the differences of production systems and ecosystems.**



## 6.6 Implementation of Plans of Action

14. The Assembly recalled that the GSP Terms of Reference (ToR) contemplated five “Pillars of Action” for the GSP, while Rule VII of its Rules of Procedure (RoP) specified that corresponding Plans of Action (PoAs) should be developed following an inclusive and participatory process, and in accordance with agreed guidelines (Annex 1 of the RoP).

15. Hence, the Assembly considered at its present session draft PoAs for Pillars 1, 2, 4 and 5, as transmitted by the ITPS. It noted that no draft of the requisite quality was available as yet for Pillar 3 (hence item 6.3 was not considered).

16. After a general round of comments, the Assembly discussed the draft PoAs in sequence. At the start of each Pillar discussion, the Assembly benefited from a presentation by the Chairperson of the working group which had prepared the draft PoA.

17. The Assembly stressed the desirability of more succinct formulations of the PoAs, including:

- limiting the number of recommendations to the strict minimum, as they should focus on major policy dimensions, so as to convey a better sense of priorities and therefore facilitate further planning and implementation;
- paying particular attention to the drafting of Executive Summaries or introductory sections;
- seeking improved articulation among the Pillars;
- providing consistent definitions and glossaries and avoiding controversial or ambiguous language or expressions.

18. During the discussion of each PoA, GSP participants suggested possible ways to reach more condensed sets of recommendations and provided a range of other specific comments. Clarifications were also requested on some of the wording used in the draft texts, and on whether the eventually agreed PoAs implied any obligation on the side of partners.

19. In respect of Pillar 4, it was recognized that the draft PoA had been formulated and endorsed by the ITPS a full year ago, i.e. well before the other three PoAs, so that the related drafting effort could not draw on approaches used in concurrent exercises. Moreover, the nature of that Pillar had led to the incorporation of considerations more relevant to a detailed implementation plan.

20. Accordingly, the Chairpersons of the Working Groups were invited to reformulate the PoAs in the light of the comments made by the participants, with advice as appropriate from other members of the working groups, and to resubmit them to the Assembly for consideration. In this revision process, it was possible to reduce the number of recommendations: i.e. for Pillar one, from 11 to 5; for Pillar two, from 17 to 7; for Pillar four, from 23 to 4; for Pillar five, from 13 to 6.

21. The Assembly endorsed the reformulated versions of the four Plans of Action which would henceforth be posted on the GSP website for wide consultation of the agreed texts. It urged that more detailed programming at global and regional level proceed forthwith, based on their scope and contents and further guidance to be provided to the various working groups and RSPs facilitated by the GSP Secretariat.

22. In addressing sub-item 6.6. of the agenda, the Assembly stressed that turning the approved PoAs into fully-fledged implementation plans should be one of the main activities of partners and the Secretariat in the immediate future, in accordance with the GSP Rules of Procedure. It encouraged in particular the Regional Soil Partnerships to formulate implementation plans of regional scope, and the applicable working groups to address needed concrete actions at global level. The Secretariat was invited to facilitate this complex process to the maximum extent possible.

23. Finally, the Assembly emphasized the imperative of pursuing vigorous resource mobilization efforts with potential resource partners (also addressed under the following item 7) in order to support the implementation of these plans of action.

## **V. Item 7. Report on the financial status of the GSP, including establishment of the Healthy Soils Facility (document GSPPA:II/2014/7)**

24. The Assembly recalled that FAO's contribution to the GSP from its Regular Budget was primarily in terms of hosting the GSP Secretariat at its headquarters and providing corresponding provisions for staff and non-staff expenditures. It noted that financial contributions had also been made to some regional activities in the 2012-13 and current 2014-15 biennia..

25. The Assembly emphasized the requirement for substantial additional resources to be provided by partners for the implementation of concrete programmes and projects in support of the PoAs, especially at regional and national levels. It observed in this connection that the regional implementation plans soon to be formulated were likely to lead to a considerable portfolio of field activities. Hence, every effort should be made to mobilize extra-budgetary funds to enhance GSP actions. The Assembly appreciated that the European Commission (EC) had agreed to provide the first significant extra-budgetary contribution to the GSP through a project which is under implementation.

26. The Assembly welcomed the establishment of the Healthy Soils Facility formulated in response to a specific request made at its first session. It appreciated the clarifications provided on the *modus operandi* of this Facility, including the tentative overall resource estimate included at this early stage. The Assembly noted that the Facility was intended to be a flexible tool at the service of partners. The corresponding programme document was not cast in stone and would be revised according to developments, especially in the various regions.

27. The Assembly stressed that in-kind contributions were already playing a very useful role in GSP work (for instance in the context of many ITPS activities) and would need to be further solicited in the future. It was suggested that discussion of the overall resource picture at future Assembly sessions would benefit from more articulate progress reports, showing the evolution of various components.

28. In conclusion, the Assembly urged potential resource partners to make full use of the Healthy Soil Facility.

## **VI. Item 8. Updated World Soil Charter (document GSPPA:II/2014/8)**

29. The Assembly recognized that the ITPS had carried out an important activity at its two scheduled meetings, also involving extensive consultations between meetings, in updating of the World Soil Charter, originally endorsed by the FAO Conference in 1981. It noted that a working group appointed by the ITPS was primarily responsible for developing successive drafts of the revised Charter.

30. A brief presentation introducing the updated World Soil Charter was provided by Prof. Dan Pennock (the ITPS member primarily responsible for drafting the revised Charter). The Assembly further recognized that, after consideration by the GSP Plenary Assembly, the process of endorsement of the updated Charter would involve the 24th session of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) (29 September to 3 October 2014), the 150th session of FAO Council (1-5 December), and ultimately the 39th session of the FAO Conference (6-13 June 2015).

31. Participants suggested a number of specific changes to the text proposed by the ITPS. They also requested that better reflection be made of important issues, so as to reinforce the messages and recommendations conveyed by the Charter. At the same time, it was considered pertinent to incorporate some already internationally agreed language, for example, as used in post-UNCED fora or in the Committee for World Security. In several instances, it was also necessary to avoid a too prescriptive tone.

32. Professor Pennock was invited to prepare a new version based on the comments received. Further suggestions were made by participants to improve this new version. Eventually, the Assembly agreed on the text which is reproduced in Annex 3, and commended it to the attention of COAG, prior to transmittal to the FAO Council and Conference.

33. The Assembly felt that the ITPS had very well encapsulated the rationale for the revision process through the following words, which were worth including in its own report:

34. *“There is an urgent need to update the vision and guiding principles as spelled out some 30 years ago by FAO Member Countries in the World Soil Charter (FAO, 1981). The 13 principles listed in the charter are still valid, but need to be updated and revised in light of new scientific knowledge gained over the past 30 years, especially with respect to new issues that emerged or were exacerbated during the last decades, like soil pollution and its consequences for the environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation and urban sprawl*

*impacts on soil availability and functions. New priorities for action as well as follow-up activities should be identified, taking stock of past experiences and learning from the failures and mistakes that have resulted in a still persistent global problem of soil degradation and unsustainable use of available soil resources.”*

### **VII. Item 9. Report on Regional Soil Partnerships (document GSPPA:II/2014/9)**

35. The Assembly stressed the importance of active Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs) in the implementation of the GSP mandate. It appreciated the oral reports made by representatives of several of these RSPs on the current status in respective geographical areas, i.e. the Near East and North Africa; Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean; Africa; Europe (including the associated Eurasian Sub-regional Soil Partnership); South America; and Asia.

36. In observing the difference in stages among these initiatives, the Assembly stressed that further active dialogue among, and firm commitment from the concerned partners was required in order to establish a comprehensive and effective network of RSPs in all regions.

37. The Assembly noted that, in order to assist in this demanding process and in response to requests by many partners, guidelines for the establishment of RSPs have been prepared by the Secretariat. Subject to a few corrections, it endorsed these guidelines and encouraged their wide dissemination, while stressing that they should not be interpreted as a mandatory blueprint and that they could be adjusted to match locally-specific circumstances.

### **VIII. Item 10. Implementation of the International Year of Soils (document GSPPA:II/2014/10)**

38. In view of the GSP's own role in promoting these events, the Plenary Assembly was particularly appreciative of the endorsement by the General Assembly of the United Nations (in December 2013) of the declaration of 2015 as the International Year of Soils (IYS) as well as the observance of World Soil Day (WSD) on every 5th December. It also recalled with deep gratitude the pioneering contributions from the Thai authorities towards the establishment of both WSD and the IYS.

39. The Assembly recognized that FAO was expected to play a key role in “facilitating the implementation of the IYS” in the framework of the GSP. The implementation of the IYS was also expected to rely on extra-budgetary contributions.

40. In this light, the Assembly welcomed the tentative plan of action aiming at successful implementation of the IYS in all regions and countries, as provided in Annex 2 of the document under consideration. It stressed the indicative character of this plan at this stage, as it will need to be progressively enriched and updated in the light of future available information. A recommendation was made to categorize planned activities so as to facilitate understanding by readers.

41. The Assembly approved the logo and communication strategy to be used in connection with the IYS. It endorsed the establishment of a Steering Committee for the IYS as proposed, with a number of changes, such as the participation of one member and his/her alternate from each FAO regional group and the inclusion of representatives from the UN Rome-based Agencies and the Latin American Soil Science Society. In general terms, the Assembly stressed the desirability of finding a good compromise between maximum inclusiveness and manageability in the composition of the Steering Committee.

42. The Assembly received clarifications on some of the other measures to enhance IYS visibility and impact, including the selection of Ambassadors, the instauration of a World Soil Prize, and use of the major opportunity to showcase the importance of soils provided by Expo Milano 2015. It was also important to ensure coherent approaches to the maximum extent possible among the many Internet websites planned to be dedicated to IYS celebrations.

43. The Assembly urged all potential donors to respond to the mobilization efforts of the Secretariat for mustering sufficient extra-budgetary resources for the IYS, and encouraged the countries themselves to secure adequate funding from domestic sources. In this connection, the intent by the Thai authorities to provide financial support, delayed due to current circumstances in the country, was duly noted and welcomed. The Healthy Soils Facility is available to support the IYS resource mobilization process.

### **IX. Item 11: Implementation of the World Soil Day and its celebration in 2014 and 2015 (document GSPPA:II/2014/11)**

44. In reviewing the plans being made in relation to implementation of World Soil Day, the Assembly agreed to be the venue for the selection of themes of successive WSD celebrations, and more generally for keeping abreast of WSD-related developments. The desirability of close coordination with the International Union of Soil Science (IUSS) was underlined in this regard.
45. Accordingly, the Assembly endorsed the proposed WSD themes for 2014 and 2015: i.e. respectively “*Soils, a foundation for family farming*”, and “*Soils, a solid ground for life*”. It also agreed on the logo for WSD.
46. The Assembly strongly encouraged partners to plan for, and support concrete WSD activities at both national and regional levels.

### **X. Item 12: Advocacy for inclusion of Soils into the SDG process (document GSPPA:II/2014/12)**

47. The Assembly noted with appreciation the efforts made so far by the ITPS and the GSP Secretariat – within the confines of respective mandates – to contribute to the maximum extent possible to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulation process, so that due recognition is given to the importance of healthy soils, including in terms of pertinent targets and indicators. However, the Assembly recognized that ultimately, it was the prerogative of Member Nations to decide on the final shape and contents of the SDGs.
48. The Assembly was advised of developments in the competent fora of the United Nations, including most recent agreement on a number of draft SDGs and associated targets and indicators. References to soils were already duly included in these draft SDGs and indicators and targets. However, the formulation process was expected to continue towards refinement and streamlining. In fact, the Assembly was also advised about further planned discussions which would culminate in the approval of the SDGs and other key documents at a global Summit in September 2015.
49. In this light, the Assembly called on all GSP partners to pursue advocacy on behalf of soils in all the national instances where inputs to the SDG formulation process are to be debated and prepared, up to the final stages of negotiations.

### **XI. Item 13: Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur for the next session**

50. In line with agreed arrangements, the Assembly elected Dr. Pavel Krasilnikov from the Russian Federation as Chairperson and ..... from .... was subsequently nominated as Vice-Chairperson, both to serve from the end of the present meeting until the next session. In addition, ..... from .... was subsequently nominated to act as Rapporteur for the next session in 2015.

[Names and countries to be inserted]

### **XII. Item 14: Date and venue of the next Plenary Assembly**

51. The Assembly took note that the next session would be held in Rome at FAO headquarters on 22-24 June 2015.

### **XIII. Item 15: Any other matters**

52. A statement was made by the Russian Federation, highlighting the intention to propose to the international soil community a new framework initiative with the title of “Healthy soils for future generations”. This initiative could include the formulation of voluntary guidelines for sustainable management of soil resources, the identification and dissemination of best practices, the facilitation of scientific exchanges and awareness raising. The Russian authorities planned to provide catalytic resources for its implementation and to communicate more precise information during the 24<sup>th</sup> session of COAG, when the latter would consider the report of the GSP Plenary Assembly under item 11 of the provisional agenda.

## List of Participants

### FAO Members

Country	Participants
Argentina	Infante Gustavo
	González Buttera Matias
	Pascale Medina Carla
Australia	Worrell Matthew
Austria	Feistritz Natalie
Azerbaijan	Akparov Zeynal
Belgium	Mertens de Wilmars Vincent
	Meirman Marc
Brazil	Cedraz de Oliveira Aroldo
	Olyntho Vieira
	Lopes Torres Rafael
	Pio Correa Luiz Maria
	Maria de Lourdes Mendonca Santos Brefin
	Paulo Manoel Protasio
Burundi	Ndinduruvugo Jean-Bosco
Cameroon	Foungui Médi
China	Guo Handi
	Kim Chol Min
	Kim Chun Guk
	Kim Jong Hyok
	Nie Chuang
	Pang Kwang Hyok
	Shen Liping
	Xia Jinguyan
	Zong Huilai
Costa Rica	Blanco Estela
	Pizarro Alfredo
	Sonnino Sharon

Cuba	Muniz Ugarte Olegario
Cyprus	Ellinas Spyridon
	Poulides George F
	Spyridon Ellinas
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Kim C. M. Chol Min
	Kim Chun Guk
	Pang Kwang Hyok
Dominican Republic	Arbaje Rawell
	Laureano Maria
Ecuador	Carranza José Antonio
Ethiopia	Haile Tarekegn Tseqie
	Tsyre Tanelasn
European Union	Bucella Pia
	Marmo Luca
France	Darmaun Maryline
	Sapi Janskas Jurgis
	Soubelet Hélène
	Halley Des Fontaines Segolene
Germany	Baritz Rainer
	Bussian Bernd
	Cramer Friedel George
	Cromm Matthias
	Glante Frank
Greece	Koutrakou Nike Ekaterini
Guatemala	Hochstetter Skinner Klée Stephanie
	Olivero Garcia Nelson Rafael
	Wohlers de Meie Sylvia M.L.
Honduras	Reina Mayra
Hungary	Bereiuyi-Üveges Judit
Iceland	Bragason Gudni
	Peturdsottir Thorunn
Iran	Mashta Ala
Iraq	Taghavi Motlagh Seyed Aminollah
Italy	Bonati Guido

Japan	Aihara Fyminori
	Yagi Kazuyuki
Jordan	Alargan Fiesal R.S.
	Alfraihat Mahmoud
Kenya	Gaita Josephine Wangari
	Muya Fabian Sumba
Kuwait	Albazzaz Salah
Liberia	Sheriff Mohammed S
Lithuania	Tarnauskas Kestutis
Malaysia	Bin Abd Wahab Dzulkifli
	Harun Amir Hamzah
Mexico	Rodrigues Sifuentes Emma Maria Jose
	Romero Zavala Alan
Nigeria	Olaniran Yaya Adisa Olaitan
Oman	Mahmoud R.
Panama	De Castro Maria Giuia
	Quinones Margarita
Paraguay	Soto Sapriza Mirko
Peru	Chirinos Llerena Carla Stella
Philippines	Lazaro Lupino
Republic of Korea	Kim Kyungsook
	Yang Jae
Russia	Konstantinopolskiy Ivan
Rwanda	Rualigirwa Emmanuel
Senegal	Niang Mohamed Bussirou
Slovakia	Okenkova Marieta
	Sobočka Jaroslava
South Africa	Rampedi Moshibudi Priscilla
Sri Lanka	Weerasinghe Priyantha
Switzerland	Havlicek Elena
	Blank Christina
Tanzania	Mundeme A.
Thailand	Wiangwang Narumon
The Netherlands	de Ruiter Peter



	Verburg Gerda
Turkey	Erdogen Hakki Emrah
	Dedeoglu Hilmi E.
United States of America	Schweitzer Meins Laura
Venezuela	Alvarez Fermin Luis Alberto
	Silva Claudia Valeria
	Urbaneja Duran Gladys Francisca
Vietnam	Nguyen Hoang Long
	Quynh Nguyen
Yemen	Al-Akwa Khalid A.
	Al-Ashwal Mahmoud M
	Al-Na-ami Abdullah N.
	Shojaáadin Haytham A

#### Other Partners

Name	Organization	Country
Wiese Liesl	ARC-Institute for Soil, Climate, and Water	South Africa
Pennock Daniel	Canadian Society of Soil Sciences	Canada
Zalidis George	Community Business and the Environment Centre	New Zealand
Castro Aracely	International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)	Colombia
Grundy Mike	<i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)</i>	Australia
Mckenzie Neil	<i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)</i>	Australia
Krasilnikov Pavel	Eurasian Center for Food Security	Russia
Gardi Ciro	Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative	Italy
Weigelt Jes	<i>Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies</i>	Germany
Jeroen Huising	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture	Nigeria
Smreczak Bozena	Institute of Soil Science America	United States of America
Salidis George	Interbalkan Environment Centre	Greece
Kang Seok-Ju	International Co-operative Alliance	Switzerland

Antip Maria	International Fertilizer Industry Association	France
Munafò Michele	ISPRA - Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale	Italy
Van Den Bosch Hendrick	World Soil Information (ISRIC)	The Netherlands
Camargo Flavio	Brazilian Soil Science Society	Brazil
Horn Rainer	International Union of Soil Sciences	Germany
Crawford John	PSM - Rothamsted Research	United Kingdom
Conteh Florence	Rhodes University	South Africa
Petursdottir Thorunn	Soil Conservation Service	Iceland
Rice Charles	Soil Society of America	United States of America
Black Helaina	The James Hutton Institute	United Kingdom
Busch M.	Thunen Institute	Germany
Kozak Josef	Czech University of Life Sciences	Czech Republic
Jones Arwyn	Joint Research Center-European Commission	Italy

### International Organizations

Name	Organization	Country
Awere-Gyekye Kwame	UNCCD	Switzerland
Seyni Fatouma	FAO RAF	Ghana
Yuji Niino	FAO RAP	Thailand
Dale Daniel	FAO RNE	Egypt
Ewald Rametsteiner	FAO	Italy

## **Rules of Procedure of the Global Soil Partnership**

The Plenary Assembly of the Global Soil Partnership adopted Rules of Procedure for the GSP, at its first session of June 2013. The addition of paragraph VI 1) e) was approved at its second session of July 2014.

### **Rule I – Scope**

1) These Rules of Procedure shall apply to all activities related to the implementation of the Global Soil Partnership.

### **Rule II - Partners**

1) The Global Soil Partnership (GSP) is a voluntary partnership, open to governments, international and regional organizations, institutions, and other stakeholders.

2) All Partners, except FAO Members, will be reviewed and approved by the Secretariat following FAO procedures.

### **Rule III – Plenary Assembly**

1) The Plenary Assembly shall hold one regular session every year. It may also decide to convene extraordinary sessions, subject to the approval of Partners. Regular sessions shall not exceed three days and shall be preceded by regional consultations (based, to the extent possible, on electronic communications methods such as teleconferences). The sessions of the Plenary Assembly shall be held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome unless otherwise decided by the Plenary Assembly.

2) The notice for a regular session of the Plenary Assembly shall be communicated to Partners not less than 90 days before the opening day, while notices for extraordinary sessions shall be sent not less than 45 days in advance.

3) All sessions of the Plenary Assembly shall be convened by the GSP Secretariat (hereafter referred to as Secretariat) in consultation with Chairperson and the Secretary of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG).

4) Each Partner shall be registered to attend Plenary sessions by communicating to the Secretariat the name of its representative (s), before the opening day of each session of the Plenary Assembly.

5) Partners should, as far as possible, be represented by highly qualified senior officers so as to contribute actively to multidisciplinary discussions of the subjects on the agenda of the Plenary Assembly.

6) At the end of each session, the Plenary Assembly shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur. The Chairperson, or in his absence the Vice-Chairperson, shall preside at the subsequent sessions of the Plenary Assembly.

7) The Plenary Assembly will keep under continuous review, prioritise and discuss progress on GSP activities through Plans of Action related to each of the GSP pillars. Partners may implement the decisions taken by the Plenary Assembly with the support of the Secretariat as required.

8) Expenses of Partners to attend the sessions of the Plenary Assembly shall be borne by them.

9) Languages of the GSP will be FAO languages. FAO Members may decide to hold specific meetings or carry out specific activities in a selected number of agreed languages on an ad hoc basis.

#### **Rule IV - Agenda and documents**

1) The Secretariat, in consultation with all Partners and, if needed, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, shall prepare a provisional agenda for the Plenary Assembly which shall be communicated with due notice, in accordance with Rule III.2.

2) Any Partner may request the Secretariat, not less than 30 days before the date fixed for the opening day of the Plenary Assembly, to add an item to the provisional agenda. The Secretariat shall thereupon advise all Partners about the proposed item, together with any necessary documents.

3) The Assembly may, by consensus, amend the agenda through the deletion, addition or modification of any item.

4) Documents to be submitted to any session of the Plenary Assembly shall be posted on the GSP website at the time the agenda is published, or as soon as possible thereafter, but at least 30 days prior to the opening day. Upon request by Partners, the documents may be provided in hard copy.

5) Documents exceeding 5000 words shall include an executive summary.

#### **Rule V - Decision-making**

1) All GSP decisions shall be taken by consensus during the Plenary Assembly. Decisions that may require follow up by national Governments will be solely decided upon by GSP partners which are FAO members.

#### **Rule VI - Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)**

1) Procedure for establishing the ITPS:

The ITPS shall be established as follows:

a) The Secretariat will request Partners to propose, within a specific deadline, names of experts from their respective regions, who shall have:

- a recognized academic profile (postgraduate level);
- demonstrated experience at international level in different soil-related activities, ranging from research to development;
- a record of sound publications subjected to peer reviews;
- a position that would not preclude the provision of advice independently from their employment status and nationality.

The ITPS experts should act in their personal capacity and provide the best possible scientific knowledge available.

b) Members of the ITPS shall be experts appointed by the GSP Plenary Assembly for a term of 2 years renewable for one additional term (with agreement of the Plenary Assembly).

Every 2 years the call for experts shall be re-conducted; the Secretariat will consolidate the new list of experts on the basis of the above criteria.

c) This list of experts will be submitted to FAO Members requesting their endorsement, while respecting the criteria mentioned in section 5.2 of the Terms of Reference of the GSP, and taking into account the diverse fields of soil science, a balanced participation within regions, and an equitable rotation.

d) Members of the ITPS will not hold any employment contract with FAO. The Secretariat will meet the costs related to travel and daily subsistence allowance in order to facilitate the participation of the members of the ITPS during its annual working session.

e) If, due to unexpected reasons, an ITPS member is unable to fulfil his/her responsibilities for the full term, the concerned FAO regional group may communicate to the Secretariat the name and qualifications of a substitute expert. This substitute expert can join the ITPS, subject to positive common assessment by the ITPS Chairperson and the Secretariat. Confirmation of the substitute expert to serve during the remainder of the term of the original member is to be requested from the following session of the Plenary Assembly.

## 2) Duties of members of ITPS

The members of the ITPS shall:

- a) provide scientific and technical advice on global soil issues to the GSP;
- b) sign a “non-conflict of interest” declaration;
- c) participate at the Plenary Assembly, as provided for in the TOR of the GSP;
- d) appoint a Chairperson by consensus whose tasks will be:

- i) to coordinate activities with panel members;
- ii) to act as communication channel with the Secretariat;
- iii) to report to the Plenary Assembly and to other events, if so requested by the Plenary Assembly or the Secretariat.

## 3) Functions of ITPS

The ITPS will have the following functions:

- a) provide scientific and technical advice on global soil issues primarily to the GSP and in relation to specific requests submitted by global or regional institutions.
- b) advocate for the inclusion of sustainable soil management into different development agendas.
- c) review and follow up on the situation and issues related to soils in the contexts of food security, use and management of natural resources, ecosystem services provision, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and other relevant areas.
- d) review and endorse from a technical viewpoint the GSP Plans of Action.
- e) follow up on the implementation of these Plans of Action with due attention to their impact and contributions to different global policies and initiatives related to sustainable development, MDGs, food security, climate change adaptation and other subject matters.
- f) in exceptional cases, when complex technical matters arise, request the Plenary Assembly and the Secretariat to form technical committees aiming to gather specific advice.

### **Rule VII - Plans of action**

1) Plans of Action for GSP Pillars will be developed following an inclusive and participatory process according to the guidelines set out in Annex 1 of these Rules of procedure. The Plans of Action shall be approved by the Plenary Assembly.

### **Rule VIII – Regional Soil Partnerships**

1) Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs) may be established in each of the following geographical areas:

- Africa
- Asia

- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Near East
- North America
- Southwest Pacific

2) Partners may decide to establish soil partnerships of regional nature not coinciding with those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, based on common language, culture, physical location or other considerations.

3) Members of the RSPs shall be members of the GSP willing to promote the World Soil Charter principles in their respective region.

4) The RSP Partners will identify the priorities for their region and present them at the Plenary Assembly. The ITPS will provide guidance on these priorities and facilitate their implementation through the concerned Plans of Action.

5) Each RSP shall liaise with the Secretariat for coordinating the implementation of activities in their region.

6) The Secretariat will facilitate the functioning of the RSPs, particularly through promoting implementation at regional level of global actions. The RSPs will seek to catalyze in a proactive manner the necessary financial support at regional level for implementing their activities.

#### **Rule IX - Reporting**

1) The Plenary Assembly shall report, through the Secretariat, to the FAO's Committee on Agriculture which may bring to the attention of the FAO Council any recommendation adopted by the GSP that may have policy implications, or could affect strategic programmes of FAO. As soon as the report of the Plenary Assembly becomes available, it will be circulated to all Partners and will also be sent for information to international organizations concerned with soil resources.

#### **Rule X - Secretariat and expenses**

1) The Secretariat shall be composed by FAO technical and administrative staff. It should facilitate and coordinate implementation of GSP activities at all levels in close interaction with the Plenary Assembly, the ITPS and the RSPs.

2) The Secretariat will organize meetings related to the implementation of GSP activities and provide the necessary administrative and technical support.

3) The Secretariat will facilitate the work of the ITPS, including interaction between the ITPS and the Plenary Assembly.

4) The Secretariat will also facilitate the work of the RSPs in implementing the Plans of Action at regional level.

5) The Secretariat will be responsible for promoting, organizing and facilitating activities related to the celebration of the World Soil Day, and other awareness raising events such as the International Year of Soils.

#### **Rule XI - Amendments to the Rules of Procedure**

- 1) The Plenary Assembly may amend the Rules of Procedure, provided that such amendments are consistent with the Terms of Reference of the GSP.
- 2) No proposal for the amendment of these Rules of Procedure shall be included in the agenda of any session of the Plenary Assembly unless notice thereof has been given to Partners by the Secretariat at least 30 days before the opening of the session.

## **Annex 1 to the Rules of Procedure**

### **Guidelines for the development of Plans of Action of the GSP Pillars**

- a) An international technical workshop will be organised by the Secretariat for the development of each Plan of Action with representatives from each Region to discuss and outline the scope and content of the concerned Plan of Action provide scientific and technical advice on global soil issues to the GSP;
- b) The workshop will nominate a working group, consisting of competent experts from active institutions and considering equitable representation, to further develop the draft Plan of Action through a transparent and open process in close consultation with the Secretariat.
- c) The draft Plan of Action should be circulated for feedback from GSP partners to the Secretariat. The working groups will incorporate inputs in a revised draft Plan of Action with the support of the Secretariat.
- d) Plans of Action shall be submitted to the ITPS for consideration, finalisation and endorsement.
- e) The endorsed Plan of Action will be submitted to the Plenary Assembly for approval.
- f) The Secretariat will invite Partners to suggest how they could contribute to implementation of the approved Plan of Action and will develop an implementation plan together with the working group.
- g) Implementation will be coordinated and facilitated by the Secretariat in close consultation with the interested Partners.

## World Soil Charter

### I. Preamble

1. Soils are fundamental to life on Earth but human pressures on soil resources are reaching critical limits. Careful soil management is one essential element of sustainable agriculture and also provides a valuable lever for climate regulation and a pathway for safeguarding ecosystem services and biodiversity.
2. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 2012, “The Future We Want”, recognizes the economic and social significance of good land management, including soil, particularly its contribution to economic growth, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and food security, eradicating poverty, the empowerment of women, addressing climate change and improving water availability.

### II. Principles

3. Soils are a key enabling resource, central to the creation of a host of goods and services integral to ecosystems and human well-being. The maintenance or enhancement of global soil resources is essential if humanity’s overarching need for food, water, and energy security is to be met in accordance with the sovereign rights of each state over their natural resources. In particular, the projected increases in food, fibre, and fuel production required to achieve food and energy security will place increased pressure on the soil.
4. Soils result from complex actions and interactions of processes in time and space and hence are themselves diverse in form and properties and the level of ecosystem services they provide. Good soil governance requires that these differing soil capabilities be understood and that land use that respects the range of capabilities be encouraged with a view to eradicating poverty and achieving food security.
5. Soil management is sustainable if the supporting, provisioning, regulating, and cultural services provided by soil are maintained or enhanced without significantly impairing either the soil functions that enable those services or biodiversity. The balance between the supporting and provisioning services for plant production and the regulating services the soil provides for water quality and availability and for atmospheric greenhouse gas composition is a particular concern.
6. The implementation of soil management decisions is typically made locally and occurs within widely differing socio-economic contexts. The development of specific measures appropriate for adoption by local decision-makers often requires multi-level, interdisciplinary initiatives by many stakeholders. A strong commitment to including local and indigenous knowledge is critical.
7. The specific functions provided by a soil are governed, in large part, by the suite of chemical, biological, and physical properties present in that soil. Knowledge of the actual state of those properties, their role in soil functions, and the effect of change – both natural and human-induced—on them is essential to achieve sustainability.
8. Soils are a key reservoir of global biodiversity, which ranges from micro-organisms to flora and fauna. This biodiversity has a fundamental role in supporting soil functions and therefore ecosystem goods and services associated with soils. Therefore it is necessary to maintain soil biodiversity to safeguard these functions.
9. All soils – whether actively managed or not- provide ecosystem services relevant to global climate regulation and multi-scale water regulation. Land use conversion can reduce these global, common-good services provided by soils. The impact of local or regional land-use conversions can be reliably evaluated only in the context of global evaluations of the contribution of soils to essential ecosystem services.
10. Soil degradation inherently reduces or eliminates soil functions and their ability to support ecosystem services essential for human well-being. Minimizing or eliminating significant soil degradation is



essential to maintain the services provided by all soils and is substantially more cost-effective than rehabilitating soils after degradation has occurred.

11. Soils that have experienced degradation can, in some cases, have their core functions and their contributions to ecosystem services restored through the application of appropriate rehabilitation techniques. This increases the area available for the provision of services without necessitating land use conversion.

### **III. Guidelines for Action**

12. The overarching goal for all parties is to ensure that soils are managed sustainably and that degraded soils are rehabilitated or restored.
13. Good soil governance requires that actions at all levels – from States, and, to the extent that they are able, other public authorities, international organizations, individuals, groups, and corporations – be informed by the principles of sustainable soil management and contribute to the achievement of a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development.
14. All actors and specifically, each of the following stakeholder groups are encouraged to consider the following actions:

#### **A. Actions by Individuals and the Private Sector**

- I. All individuals using or managing soil must act as stewards of the soil to ensure that this essential natural resource is managed sustainably to safeguard it for future generations.
- II. Undertake sustainable soil management in the production of goods and services.

#### **B. Actions by Groups and the Science Community**

- I. Disseminate information and knowledge on soils.
- II. Emphasise the importance of sustainable soil management to avoid impairing key soil functions.

#### **C. Actions by Governments**

- I. Promote sustainable soil management that is relevant to the range of soils present and the needs of the country.
- II. Strive to create socio-economic and institutional conditions favourable to sustainable soil management by removal of obstacles. Ways and means should be pursued to overcome obstacles to the adoption of sustainable soil management associated with land tenure, the rights of users, access to financial services and educational programmes. Reference is made to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries in the Context of National Food Security adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in May 2012.
- III. Participate in the development of multi-level, interdisciplinary educational and capacity-building initiatives that promote the adoption of sustainable soil management by land users.
- IV. Support research programs that will provide sound scientific backing for development and implementation of sustainable soil management relevant to end users.

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- V. Incorporate the principles and practices of sustainable soil management into policy guidance and legislation at all levels of government, ideally leading to the development of a national soil policy.
  - VI. Explicitly consider the role of soil management practices in planning for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and maintaining biodiversity.
  - VII. Establish and implement regulations to limit the accumulation of contaminants beyond established levels to safeguard human health and wellbeing and facilitate remediation of contaminated soils that exceed these levels where they pose a threat to humans, plants, and animals.
  - VIII. Develop and maintain a national soil information system and contribute to the development of a global soil information system.
  - IX. Develop a national institutional framework for monitoring implementation of sustainable soil management and overall state of soil resources.

#### **D. Actions by International Organizations**

- I. Facilitate the compilation and dissemination of authoritative reports on the state of the global soil resources and sustainable soil management protocols.
- II. Coordinate efforts to develop an accurate, high-resolution global soil information system and ensure its integration with other global earth observing systems.
- III. Assist governments, on request, to establish appropriate legislation, institutions, and processes to enable them to mount, implement, and monitor appropriate sustainable soil management practices.