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Report of the

SECOND PLENARY MEETING OF THE EURASIAN SOIL PARTNERSHIP

International Agricultural Research and Training Centre
Izmir, Turkey

15- 18 June 2015

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CACAARI	Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
CACFish	Central Asia and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre
CACILM	Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
COP	Conference of Parties
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ECFS	Eurasian Center for Food Security
EC- IFAS	Executive Committee of International Fund for saving the Aral Sea
EASP	Eurasian Soil Partnership
ELD	Economics of Land Degradation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GLADIS	Global Land Degradation Information System
GM	Global Mechanism
GSP	Global Soil Partnership
IARTC	International Agricultural Research and Training Center
ICAL2	International Conference on Arid Land Studies
ICARDA	International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dryland Areas
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INRM	Integrated Natural Resources Management
ITPS	Inter-governmental Technical Panel on Soils of the GSP
IYS	International Year of Soils
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
LD	Land Degradation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoFAL	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Livestock of Turkey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PoA	Plan of Action
RIP	Regional Implementation Plan of EASP
RWSR	Report on Status of World Soil Resources
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SC	Steering Committee
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SOTER	Global Soil and Terrain Database
SSM	Sustainable Soil Management
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
UZGIP	Design and Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan
WG	Working Group
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies
WSD	World Soil Day (5 December)
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Second Plenary meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) took place in International Agricultural Research and Training Center (IARTC), Izmir on 15-18 June 2015. It was attended by 26 participants: Global Soil Partnership Focal Points from Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine, representatives of GSP secretariat, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey, international organisations ICARDA and CAREC and FAO experts and resource persons. The overall purpose of the meeting was to consolidate the EASP by reactivating the Steering Committee (SC) and further elaborating a five year rolling Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) of EASP – taking into consideration Terms of Reference of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Implementation Plan– and to provide recommendations for the next steps for the RIP implementation.

The workshop was organised around plenary presentations (in particular on the status of GSP and outcomes of the previous EASP meetings held in Samarkand, September 2014 and Antalya, October 2014) and plenary discussions for re-establishment of EASP Steering Committee and development and validation of the RIP. The 6 working groups discussed the proposed RIP components, outputs, activities, indicators, timeline, partners and budget/funding. The topics discussed included:

- Pillar 1 Sustainable soil management, protection and restoration (framework)
- Pillar 2 Investment, technical cooperation, policy, education, awareness and extension in soil
- Pillar 3 Targeted soil research and development
- Pillars 4 and 5 Enhancing soil data and information and harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators
- IYS 2015 in the EASP member countries
- Financing RIP Donor mapping

The workshop was also forward looking and provided recommendations for possible considerations and actions needed to promote and support implementation of the RIP. Furthermore, the workshop offered advice to GSP Focal Points and Secretariat with regard to the road map, next steps in the RIP development process and the additional actions that may be required to ensure that the document can be approved by GSP and successfully implemented. The importance for securing support for the RIP and to collaborate with variety of partners and projects, in particular FAO CACILM-II project for 'Integrated natural resources management for salt affected and drought prone areas in Central Asia and Turkey' was noted.

Under the Chair of Ms Yuriko Shoji, the way forward was agreed for implementation of activities under the EASP and the "Izmir Communiqué" (Annex 1) was adopted highlighting main agreements of the workshop and EASP commitments for promoting wide uptake of sustainable soil management and restoration of degraded soils in the region.

The next steps for the Regional EASP include finalization and approval of the five year rolling RIP, by the EASP SC with support from the GSP Secretariat and working groups of the 5 GSP Pillars of action. It was noted that progress would be presented to the 3rd meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly (Rome 22-24 June 2015) alongside progress in other regions. It was also agreed to present the final document at the next EASP meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, during the International Conference Eurasian Food Security Network (ECFS) and Eurasian Soil Partnership, 19-21 November 2015. A further objective of the EASP is to make the International Year of Soils 2015 and the World Soil Day each year on 5 December 2015, a successful foundation for advocating "healthy soils for healthy life" in the region and especially to continue this momentum beyond 2015.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was jointly prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Eurasian Centre for Food Security (ECFS), serving as the Secretariat of EASP. The report was compiled by Sally Bunning, Ines Beernaerts and Iwona Piechowiak from FAO and Pavel Krasilnikov from ECFS.

Gratefully acknowledged are the financial contributions for the conduct of the workshop by the European Commission and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey, with the logistical support of the International Agricultural Research and Training Center in Menemen-İzmir/Turkey, the FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia and the Global Soil Partnership Secretariat. Special thanks are addressed to Ines Beernaerts, Hakki Erdogan, Kaan Basaran and Ronald Vargas for supporting the organization of this workshop.

INTRODUCTION

The Global Soil Partnership (GSP)¹ is a major international initiative with a vision 'to improve global governance of the limited soil resources of the planet in order to guarantee healthy and productive soils for a food secure world, as well as sustain other essential ecosystem services'. The Regional Soil Partnerships are to assist the GSP to move into concrete field action at regional, national and local levels through 'Implementation Plans'.

Launch of the Eurasia Soil Partnership (November 2014, Moscow). The Eurasian chapter of the Global Soil Partnership was successfully launched on 20th November 2013 in Moscow, Russia with a final 'communiqué' appointing the Eurasian Center for Food Security (ECFS) as the Secretariat. The launch workshop was a first step to support the development of a dynamic community of practice of soil specialists and practitioners and identify key soil issues / research needs in each country.

GSP Plans of Action for Pillars 1, 2, 4 and 5 were endorsed during the second Plenary Assembly Meeting on 24th July 2014 in Rome, Italy. The Plenary urged for the imminent development of Implementation Plans at regional level and further implementation of actions.

First Plenary Meeting and Steering Committee Meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) (Samarkand, September 2014). The first Plenary Meeting and Steering Committee Meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 10th September till 11th September 2014, in the framework of the International Conference on Arid Land Studies (ICAL2) on 'Food Security and Innovations in Arid and Semi-arid Agro-ecosystems'. The meetings had as main objectives to introduce the endorsed Plans of Action for each of the five Pillars of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), agree on the regional priorities, outline the process for finalizing the formulation of the EASP Implementation Plan, formalize the partnership and agree on the expected outputs for each of the five pillars. There were also initial discussion on specific activities such as celebration of World Soil Day (WSD) and the International Year of Soils (IYS) 2015. The report of the meeting is available at FAO Regional Section of the GSP website.

Meeting of Working Group 1 (October 2014, Antalya). During the forthcoming Eurasian Soil Science Federation Conference in Antalya, Turkey, 13-17 October 2014, members of the Working Group 1 proposed a Plan of Action and paved the way towards a draft regional implementation plan for sustainable soil management and restoration to reverse the alarming soil degradation trends (including soil salinization) in Eurasia.

The report summarizes the proceedings of the second Plenary Meeting of the EASP and intends to provide a useful reference document that will feed into the process of finalization and approval of the five year rolling RIP of the EASP. On several topics, the workshop provided alternative proposals and it was stated that it would be task of EASP SC, GSP Secretariat and working groups of the 5 GSP Pillars of action to decide which approach to adopt in finalisation of the RIP.

¹ GSP website www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/en, including mandate and rule of procedures www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/madate-rules-of-procedure/en/ and the five pillars of action www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/the-5-pillars-of-action/en/

WORKSHOP ARRANGEMENTS

Venue and participation

The workshop took place at the International Agricultural Research and Training Center (IARTC), Izmir on 15-18 June 2015. It was attended by 26 participants: Global Soil Partnership Focal Points from Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine, representatives Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey, international organisations ICARDA and CAREC. GSP Secretariat and FAO staff participated both in their technical roles but also as working group facilitators and rapporteurs of the plenary discussions and working groups. The list of participants can be found in Appendix 3.

Workshop objectives

The objectives of the second Plenary Meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) include the following:

- to raise awareness and share information on action taken or planned by member Countries and regional partners in celebrating the International Year of Soil (IYS) 2015;
- to review the priorities in the region for ensuring the sustainable soil management, protection and restoration - by building on experiences and lessons learned and through an active and dynamic network of champions and stakeholders under the umbrella of the EASP;
- to renew the EASP by updating the steering committee members; and
- to review and validate the EASP Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) and discuss and agree on the way forward (next steps).

Workshop methodology and Process

The workshop took place over two working days. The meeting was structured around three main sessions:

- **Session 1** Update on the status of the GSP, the EASP and the IYS 2015.
- **Session 2** Participatory development of the RIP (including prospective programmes and investment to move into action) and establishment of procedures and renewal of the steering committee of the EASP, including members and key partners of the working groups for each pillar.
- **Session 3** Validation of the RIP, way forward and closure.

Presentations in each session were followed by questions and answers, in which participants sought clarification on areas of interest. The key points from presentations and subsequent questions and answers are recorded in the report, with copies of the presentations available at FAO Regional (Europe) Section of the GSP website². A copy of the programme is available in Appendix 2.

On the third day of the workshop, participants took a part in a field trip " Introduction to cultural soil heritage - Ancient City of Ephesus and House of Virgin Mary" organized by the host country.

² FAO GSP website www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/regional-partnerships/europe/en/

Opening Session

Presenter: Ms Dilek Kahraman, Director of International Agricultural Research and Training Center, IARTC (UTAEM)

The presenter introduced IARTC objectives and tasks, which includes (i) preparation, organisation, coordination and implementation of training projects and programmes at international level, including Central Asia (ii) arrangements of training courses, seminars, conferences (ii) improvements of cooperation with the public and private research institutes. The presenter noted that in 2014 the Centre organised a number of courses in the area of soil and water conservation, including (i) determination of soil fertility potential, protection and sustainable use of soils (ii) development of agronomic and agricultural precautions to retain water and soil moisture on-site in arid and semi-arid regions (ii) creation of soil and land information system (iv) conduct of social and economic analysis concerning the improvements of soil and water resources etc. The presenter indicated the very low attendance of Central Asia countries in the agricultural training courses provided freely at IARTC by the Turkish Government and invited participants to share information on the training programme, available at IARTC website³.

Presenter: Mr Bulent Sonmez, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey (MoFAL)

The presenter noted that the Turkish Government will host Twelfth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Ankara, Turkey, from 12 to 23 October 2015 and requested the GSP and EASP to co-organize a side event, with support of Turkey, to promote sustainable soil management in Eurasia.

Presenter: Mr Pavel Krasilnikov, Eurasian Centre for Food Security (ECFS), GSP Secretariat

The presenter noted the relevance and importance of FAO in eradicating hunger and poverty. He stressed that the EASP has been working for 2 years and it is now at a decisive point for the GSP focal points representing their Governments to take decisions to further develop and approve the RIP for a period of 5 years. The workshop aims are to discuss and make decisions on how to implement the plan.

Presenter: Ms Ines Beernaerts, Land and Water Officer, FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, GSP Secretariat

The presenter welcomed participants on behalf of Shoji Yuriko, FAO subregional coordinator for Central Asia and highlighted that "In this region, partners agreed that the main goal for the Eurasian Soil Partnership should be to increase the area of land under sustainable management – in agriculture and forestry – through the adoption of sustainable soil management practices at a wider scale, especially in areas affected by soil salinity." The presenter indicated that FAO regional CACILM-2 project for scaling up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected areas has been technically cleared and endorsed by GEF6 (11 million USD). The presenter also indicated that GSP is supporting a target under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a 30% increase in area under Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) by 2030 and FAO will help support countries in developing and monitoring the indicator. Recognizing that we need healthy soils to achieve food security goals and provide vital ecosystem services, FAO stands ready to serve member countries in efforts to attain that goal (see also appendix 6)

³ IARTC website: <http://arastirma.tarim.gov.tr/izmirutaem/Menu/43/Objectives-And-Tasks>

She then outlined the workshop agenda (see also appendix 2) purpose and expected outputs of the workshop:

- Sub-regional action plan of activities for IYS 2015 (uploaded on the IYS 2015 website)
- Eurasian Soil Partnership Implementation Plan reviewed, further developed, supported by prospective programmes and investment and presented to the 3rd meeting of the GSP Plenary Assembly
- Eurasian Soil Partnership institutional framework renewed and consolidated
- ' Izmir communiqué', workshop proceedings and press release drafted

Ms Beernaerts emphasized the need to consider how to scale up SSM and mobilize investments for action. She proposed the establishment of a statutory body such as a commission on soils within the region for effective delivery of the EASP RIP and to gather buy in / commitment by concerned Member Countries (taking note of the successful experience of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission 'CACFish'⁴).

During the round of self-introduction by all workshop participants, following expectations from the workshop were indicated:

- development of a strong RIP on how to protect and restore soils for our needs, good regional coordination and cooperation
- facilitate development of new technologies and knowledge for improvement of land use
- fight against soil salinity and increase in soil fertility, share experience in tackling soil salinization technologies and scale up practices
- share information on successful activities for enhanced soil quality
- improve knowledge and soil health for combating climate change
- learn how international training centres can more effectively use scientific knowledge related to SSM practice
- buy in and commitment by countries to the RIP, IYS, WSD and continued actions over next 5 years, mobilise various stakeholders to engage in implementation of RIP, IYS, WSD
- support for rational use of soils /lands for agriculture, monitoring of soil fertility in agricultural lands
- support to the proposal on the establishment of a statutory body such as a soil commission within the region
- convince farmers to use proper technologies, more radical measures to protect soils
- exchange experiences among countries on soil productivity, water and soil management as a basis for Food security
- strengthening EASP visibility and translation of communication materials to local languages

⁴ CACFish website: cacaari.org/

PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

Introduction to the Global Soil Partnership and Eurasian Soil Partnership

Presenter: Ms Sally Bunning and Ms Beernaerts, GSP Secretariat

The presenter provided an overview on how soil is formed, soil functions and degradation issues as a basis for her presentation. Soil is where FOOD BEGINS! Directly and indirectly, 95% of our food comes from soils. FAO's mandate is related to food security; therefore soils are a strategic resource for FAO, as it constitutes the foundation for healthy food production. Although soil plays important functions for human well being, still unsustainable practices that take soils as an input-output system are degrading our precious soil resources. Indeed, already quarter of our planet soils are facing degradation problems including soil erosion, soil sealing, soil contamination, salinization and more.

The Global Soil Partnership supports the restoration of degraded soils as a crucial input to the sustainable development agenda. The GSP consist of 450 partners: FAO members and others (institutions, universities, NGOs, etc.). The Second GSP Plenary Assembly endorsed the nomination of focal points by FAO Members (currently 125 countries nominated their focal points). The GSP partners are advised by the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils of the GSP (ITPS), facilitated by the Secretariat and implemented by Regional Soil Partnerships. The GSP is composed of five Pillars of Action, (see also Box 1). The GSP Plenary Assembly is the main yearly meeting of ITPS members, GSP Executive Secretariat, representatives of the different partners and members to FAO. This assembly is in charge of reviewing and prioritizing GSP actions, and facilitating a balanced regional decision-making process. The Third Plenary Assembly of the GSP will take place from 22 to 24 June 2015 at FAO headquarters in Rome.

Box 1: GSP Pillars of Action and their status

PILLAR 1: Promote sustainable management of soil resources and improved global governance for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity

STATUS: Plan of Action (PoA) endorsed and regional implementation plans in development

PILLAR 2: Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education, awareness and extension in soils

STATUS: PoA endorsed and regional implementation plans in development

PILLAR 3: Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps, priorities and synergies among economic/productive, environmental and social dimensions

STATUS: Endorsed by ITPS (April) for Plenary Assembly in June for inclusion in RIPS

PILLAR 4: Enhance the quality and availability of soil data and information: collection, analysis, validation, reporting, monitoring, integration with other disciplines

STATUS: PoA endorsed and Global implementation plan in final stage

PILLAR 5: Harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources

STATUS: PoA endorsed and Global implementation plan in final stage

The main achievements of the GSP are: (i) updated World Soil Charter (just endorsed by 150 FAO Council), definition of SSM, (ii) establishment of Regional Soil Partnerships (all regions), (iii) support to develop capacities on soils in the various regions (iv) establishment of the Healthy Soils Facility, (iv) advocacy for inclusion of soils in the SDG , (v) preparation of the Status of World Soil Resources Report, (vi) important work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, (vii) World Soil Day (WSD) and IYS 2015.

The Sub-regional Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP), launched in 2011, has a fundamental role to play for the implementation of activities via the 'Implementation Plans'. EASP is to assist the GSP to move into concrete field action at regional, national and local levels. Members of EASP are listed in Annex. Working groups.

The second GSP Plenary Assembly endorsed the nomination of Eurasia GSP focal points by FAO Members to enhance communication with the GSP Secretariat. The Eurasia 12 GSP focal points: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine (GSP Focal Points are listed in appendix 3) play key role to (i) ensure and coordinate action with the most appropriate government authorities and/or national institutions as well as any other body dealing with soil matters within your country (ii) support the forthcoming active phase of the implementation of the agreed Plans of Action under the GSP Pillars through the 'Implementation Plan' (iii) support the awareness raising platforms constituted by the WSD and the IYS 2015 (iv) support activities of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, which may require the setting up of working groups to deal with specific issues.

To strengthen multi-country cooperation amongst the various players dealing with soil issues, EASP established multi-stakeholder partnership with inter-governmental institutions, NGOs, member organizations of the CGIAR and initiatives, including EC-IFAS, CAREC, ICARDA, ICBA, Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative. Potential future cooperation with financial institutions is under discussion.

International Year of Soils 2015 Celebrations

Presenter: Ms Elena Sukhacheva, FAO Consultant, Regional IYS Coordinator for Eurasia

The presentation started with a short video on IYS 2015⁵: Next, the presenter gave an overview of activities in each country under the IYS 2015 and countries were urged to take full advantage of the Year for raising awareness and advocacy on the importance of soils for food security and climate resilience and the provisioning of a range of ecosystem services. The range of IYS activities reported by countries, in particular Turkey (see appendix 5), was appreciated. It was suggested that the momentum should go beyond 2015. On the basis of discussion, participants recognized the value of a coordinator for compiling and sharing information on IYS activities but agreed that effective communication channels should be established. Therefore, it was proposed that:

- The coordinator liaise with GSP focal points, in close collaboration with FAO decentralized offices in the region, on a regular basis, to collect and share information about activities under IYS
- Each country select salient information for a short 2 page report on IYS in the region to be included in a GSP main report on IYS (working group: Ms Sukhacheva, Ms Piechowiak, Mr Erdogan)
- Countries will increase exchange of information among partners

Discussion:

CAREC: Experience shows very effective work with students. Active, small grants 200-300 USD can encourage cooperation, competition very important, measurements, improved soil management, use of water resources can be enhanced through soil management

⁵ IYS 2015 video <https://youtu.be/CZNanlXMXk4>

Tajikistan: Recommend to use mass media (TV and radio) for advertising issues on soil. Further step is to give more information to schools to teach and enhance understanding of importance of soil protection

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): Recommend to contact Turkish airlines and other public and private sector entities with visibility and outreach potential to include some publicity on soils for their magazine or other communication media. Also suggested to promote career development on soils- opportunities, to promote school gardens on soil and water management. To involve other sectors e.g. gardeners, architects, water suppliers etc.

Presentation of the ECSFS Publication on Land/Soil Resources and Food Security of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus

Presenter: Mr Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat, ECFS Representative

The presenter gave an overview of "Land and soil resources and food security of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus" (Editors: P. Krasilnikov and M. Konyushkova). The twelve chapters of the book provide authors 'assessment of status, issues and vision on soils and food security in the region:

Chapter 1	Overview of food security issues
Chapter 2	Agriculture economy and policies
Chapter 3	Development of irrigated agriculture and salinity in Central Asia
Chapter 4	Land resources and degradation problems and food security Uzbekistan
Chapter 5	Degradation and erosion in forestlands
Chapter 6	Sustainable land management (Tajikistan)
Chapter 7	Sustainable land management (Armenia)
Chapter 8	Soil fertility in drought conditions and restoration of degraded lands
Chapter 9	Integrated land resources management for soil fertility
Chapter 10	Plant genetic resources and vegetation management
Chapter 11	Research on management of irrigation in saline lands
Chapter 12	Adaptation to salinity, alternative use of alkaline soils

Discussion:

It was agreed by all participants that the executive summary of the ECFS publication, in English and Russian, will be expanded to include information on the EASP. The book could be the first of a series of publications under EASP and considered as a first key output of the EASP IP. However, it requires to be edited and peer reviewed by EASP members before publication. Furthermore, countries were invited to look at gaps and opportunities (geographic or thematic) for a further publication.

The workshop participants agreed on the following actions:

- ✓ to distribute a) pdf version to all members of EASP by August 2015 and b) word version for track mode changes to selected reviewers only (Moldavia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan); Action: GSP Secretariat
- ✓ to identify and/or create a EASP publication series including an eventual editorial board with GSP Focal Points and/or their designated persons in each country, as per the process for 'Status of World Soil resources Report'; Action: GSP Secretariat, with support of FAO Headquarters and Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia

Perspectives for collaboration and investment opportunities

FAO CACILM – II

Presenter: Ms Beernaerts, GSP Secretariat, FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia

The presentation focused on “Integrated Natural resources management in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey” – CACILM2 (5 years, 11 000 000 USD), approved by GEF6 Council in June 2015. The project is addressing key thematic priorities such as drought risk management, salinity control and economics of land degradation. The project outcome is directly related to GSP Pillar 1 ‘Promote SLM’, particularly in salt affected and drought prone landscapes. EASP members agreed to support its implementation with activities to be carried out under the regional implementation plan (IP) with institutions from the 13 Member Countries

ELD Initiative, ICBA and ICARDA

Presenter: Mr Turok, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Area (ICARDA) / Central Asia and the Caucasus Association on Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI)

The presentation focused on potential contributions of the Consortium Group for International Agricultural Research (ICARDA and ICBA) and the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative to combat land degradation in Central Asia. ICARDA led the project on ‘Knowledge management’ as a link between CACILM 1 and 2 and it is eager to collaborate with FAO for the implementation of CACILM2. ICARDA could play a very instrumental role in formulating and implementing activities for Pillar 3 “targeted soil research”. The presenter invited Ms Beernaerts from GSP Secretariat to the Steering Committee meeting of the ‘Knowledge management’ project on June 24 2015, in Istanbul, Turkey.

CAREC

Presenter: Ms Lyudmila Kiktenko, Representative of Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC)

The presenter gave an overview of CAREC programmes focusing on land degradation and SLM in Central Asia and outlined the strategic role it plays to build sub-regional partnership and support policy dialogue on environmental issues with member countries (e.g. The Aral Sea Basin Program-3 (ASBP-3)⁶ of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea).

PLENARY PARTICIPATORY SESSIONS

Reactivating EASP Steering Committee

Chair: Mr Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat

The chair noted that the EASP Steering Committee (SC) was set up during the first Plenary Meeting of the EASP, Samarkand, September 2015 with Chair, Vice-Chair and designated experts from renowned institutions.

⁶ For more information visit: <http://ec-ifas.waterunites-ca.org/about/activities/events/asbp-3-elaboration/35-what-is-asbp-3.html>

Members of the EASP agreed to keep the Steering Committee as it is for the first 2 year term (2014-2016) but suggested to strengthen the existing committee, by including new representative members and organizing annual meetings and, as and when needed, ad hoc virtual consultations. Working Groups have also been established for each GSP pillar (see Annex 4).

The meeting approved Chair, H. Ahmadov, and Vice-Chair, G. Khasankhanova. It was proposed to include in the EASP SC - the Institute of Soil and Agro-chemistry in Kazakhstan (Agbul Karavovic) and a representative institution from the Caucasus. The EASP Secretariat is currently hosted by the Eurasian Center for Food Security (ECFS) in Moscow for 2 years (2014-2016), acting as a liaison between government and scientific structures.

The venue of the next EASP meeting was proposed to be held in Kyrgyzstan, November 2015 and in Astana, Kazakhstan, in the spring/ summer 2016. Between official EASP meetings, it was suggested to organize back-to-back meetings with major soil related events. It was recommended that working groups on the GSP pillars should continue an active consultative process for finalizing the RIP.

Brainstorming on content of the RIP

Facilitators: Ms Bunning and Ms Beernaerts, GSP Secretariat, Rapporteur: Ms Iwona Piechowiak, FAO Tajikistan

The facilitators provided a brief overview of the expected outputs and working arrangements for the plenary participatory exercise. The participants identified five different topics for discussion, which corresponded closely to the different sections of the RIP of the EASP. Outcomes of the group work are summarised below:

Sustainable Soil Management and Governance

- Outcomes of SSM programme: Climate Change (Adaptation and Mitigation) and Food Security and Poverty Reduction
- Crosscutting issues: Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming
- Technical areas of focus to add e.g. salinization (specificities)
- Partnerships (Governments, Civil Society Organisations, Private Sector etc.)
- Communications/ media
- Monitoring and evaluation

Capacity Development for promotion and scaling up of SSM

- Knowledge on SSM in all land use systems/ecosystems and socioeconomic contexts (annual and perennial crops, grazing lands, forests)
- Training research, advisory, extension and education centres
- Capacity needs assessment
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of young experts
- Diagnostic methods and equipment
- Technology transfer (knowledge IPR and costs and benefits)
- Information/knowledge sharing on costs and benefits and impacts of Land Degradation (LD) and SSM/SLM

- Producers organisations, Water Users Associations, cooperatives, youth groups

Targeted Research for addressing soil problems, adaptation and targeted technology transfer to address development constraints

- Knowledge on technologies, innovations and impacts
- Land quality assessment and mapping
- Land productivity
- Integrated land and water resources planning and management
- Applied pedology
- Technology transfer (knowledge, IPR, cost/benefits)
- Field diagnostics methods and equipment
- Soil management/knowledge in forests, rangelands, croplands (all land users)

Mainstreaming of SSM and restoration in policies and legislation and national and regional strategies for food security and climate change and sustainable agriculture (including livestock and forestry)

- Develop strategic investment programme for SSM and restoration aiming at sustained/enhanced land productivity, climate resilience and food security
- Policies and institutions strengthened for SSM and rehabilitation of degraded lands
 - Policy dialogue
 - Integration of SSM across sectoral and national plans (LD, biodiversity, climate change , agriculture, forestry, water)
- Financing mechanisms
- Land use planning methods
- Legislation and regulations
 - Protection of productive lands for agriculture (reduce land take by urban development)
 - Control pollution/contamination
 - Peat/organic soils management
 - Leaching requirement saline lands etc.
- Develop and pilot Incentive mechanisms for SSM and restoration (access to microcredit, small grants, Incentives for Environmental Services etc.)
- Improved land governance, access rights, tenure security, controlled /planned land acquisitions, banking for land consolidation
- Develop reporting Monitoring and Evaluation tools for all levels (local, administrative, national levels) cross-sectoral
- Economics of Land Degradation

Databases and information systems for monitoring and assessment

- Develop and link available databases
- Soil classification
- Standards for specific situations (saline soils, organic soils, steep lands prone to landslides etc.)
- Harmonisation of
 - soil methods
 - soil standards for problem soils e.g. salinity
 - soil indicators (soil quality; health, management)

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

Presentation of the draft Implementation Plan for Eurasia

Facilitator: Mr Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat

The facilitator presented the definition of Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and the challenges of today. *Soil management is sustainable if the supporting, provisioning, regulating, and cultural services provided by soil are maintained or enhanced without significantly impairing the soil functions that enable those services. 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.* In the framework of the SDG post-2015 process the proposed target is 30% increase in area of land in agriculture and forestry under sustainable management by 2030.

Next, the presenter gave an overview of the draft RIP of EASP and invited participants to working group session to identify actions for promoting SSM and restoring degraded soils and a stakeholder analysis was conducted.

Working group arrangements

Facilitator: Mr Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat

The facilitator provided a brief overview of working arrangements for the working group session. Six working groups were set up to review and further develop priority activities and delivery mechanisms of the RIP for a short-term (2015-2016) and medium-term (2017-2020) period:

Working Group No 1

Pillar 1- Sustainable soil management, protection and restoration (framework)

Group members: GSP Focal Point- Tajikistan and EASP Vice-Chair - Uzbekistan

Working Group No 2

Pillar 2- Investment, technical cooperation, policy, education, awareness and extension in soil

Group members: GSP Focal Point - Moldova and EASP Chair - Tajikistan

Working Group No 3

Pillar 3- Targeted soil research and development

Group members: GSP Focal Points - Kazakhstan

Working Group No 4

WG4 - Pillars 4 and 5- Enhancing soil data and information and harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators

Group members: GSP Focal Points - Ukraine and Armenia

Working Group No 5

IYS 2015 – Report on IYS in the EASP member countries

Group members: IYS Regional Coordinator

Working Group No 6

Financing RIP – Donor mapping

Group members: CARITAS, FAO Tajikistan and EASP Chair – Tajikistan

Report back on Pillar 1 Sustainable soil management, protection and restoration (framework)

Rapporteur: Ms Gulchekhra Khasankhanova, EASP Vice-Chair

The rapporteur presented outcomes of the working group no1 (WG1) discussion on Pillar 1 Promotion of sustainable management of soil resources for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity, including following components: (1) Preparation of a report on the barriers preventing SSM application and the recommended SSM practices at regional and national level (2) Best practices upscaled at regional and national level (3) Support of small projects of implementation of SSM practices. She also gave an overview of the potential donors for the implementation of the Pillar 1.

The WG1 discussion gave an important list of recommendations:

- ✓ Development and support of a strong policy for SSM and restoration as part of sustainable development process
- ✓ Mainstream of SSM for food security, ecosystem services and poverty alleviation
- ✓ Targeted research studies
- ✓ Capacity development for scaling up SSM

A selection of the financing mechanisms made include:

Potential Donors:

- ✓ EU, GEF6, SDC, SIDA, UNDP, GIZ, USAID, Aga Khan, South–South Cooperation China, FFID, WFP, IFAD, UNCCD GM, Development Banks
- ✓ Governments - bilateral Germany, Finland, Turkey, Russia, Japan, Korea
- ✓ National partners close contact with Governments; SSM should become priority for INRM (soil, water, biodiversity for sustainable livelihoods and economic and social development)
- ✓ Private sector

Approaches:

- ✓ GSP Focal Points and members of EASP steering committee active and responsible in resource mobilization and diversification of funding
- ✓ Resource mobilization group (RMG) within EASP steering committee to attract internal and external resources (e.g. climate change - adaptation funds, Green Climate Fund, green economy, soil carbon mitigation)
- ✓ National governments and institutional resources (staff, equipment, training centers etc.)
- ✓ GSP to develop capacities and support to the EASP resource mobilisation activities
- ✓ GSP Focal Points and partners with FAO provide support to coordinate development of project proposals using available funding mechanisms

Discussion:

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): suggested to organize a roundtable meeting of donors once RIP is completed and facilitated by FAO SEC. It should reflect a strategic investment framework for SLM /SSM

with a focus on soils and interrelation with water and biodiversity, food security and climate change. GEF has expressed interest in supporting RSPs, recent interest in multifocal projects (LD, Climate change and biodiversity) requests should be initiated by EASP and country driven. GSP Focal Points need to raise awareness of national focal points for the 3 Rio conventions in their countries on relevance of SSM for each convention. She also suggested mainstreaming SSM into national plans and prepare package of proposals for SSM for access to GEF small grants.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Beernaerts): expressed readiness to support resource mobilisation process for implementation of Pillar 1 of the RIP

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): called for stronger support from EASP chair and vice-chair for the implementation of Pillar 1 of the RIP. It was proposed to form Pillar 1 resource mobilisation working group: Chair – Ms Khasankhanova, Ms Kiktenko, Mr Erdogan. The GSP Focal Points shall support the resource mobilisation WG.

Report back on Pillar 2 Investment, technical cooperation, policy, education, awareness and extension in soil

Rapporteur: Mr Iurie Senic, GSP Focal Point, Moldova

The rapporteur presented outcomes of the working group 2 (WG2) discussion on Pillar 2 Encourage Investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils, including following components: (1) Informing politicians, policy advisors, decision makers and associated agencies, through FAO formal channels and GSP partners, to better appreciate the true societal value of soil (2) Knowledge and skills of stakeholders at all levels enhanced (3) Extension services enhanced (4) Legacy and recent research results published. Mr Senic also gave an overview of the potential donors for implementation of Pillar 2.

A selection of proposals made include:

- ✓ Develop legislation for soil/land conservation and sustainable use
- ✓ Research on Conservation and increase of land fertility
- ✓ Protection from erosion as one of the most serious problems
- ✓ Monitoring of the above mentioned points by Governments (national funds)

The WG2 called upon the GSP Focal Points and their Governments to finance implementation of Pillar 2. Soil is a public good and Governments are responsible for supporting land quality.

Discussion:

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): supported financing implementation of Pillar 2 through national funding. He also raised concern on lack of soil protection laws/policies. Activities on raising awareness on importance of soils shall be included in Pillar 2 implementation plan.

Moldova: shared concern on effectiveness of implementation of the soil/land policies. There is a need for effective mechanisms for application of legislation.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): the Pillar 2 should not be too narrow and focused on the soil erosion and fertility only but also on other problems e.g. land tenure. Ms Bunning proposed to link Pillar 2 with the

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT)⁷ and to support to policy dialogue and mechanism to obtain countries support.

Report back on Pillar 3 Targeted soil research and development

Rapporteur: Mr Yerbolat Bazilzhanov, GSP Focal Point, Kazakhstan

The rapporteur presented outcomes of the working group no3 (WG3) discussion on Pillar 3 Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities and synergies with related productive, environmental and social development actions, including following components (1) Best practices mainstreamed into national program, investment frameworks and strategies (mitigation and adaptation), (2) Applied research aimed at the development and implementation of SSM practices encouraged and supported.

The outcomes of the WG3 discussion include:

- ✓ Involve innovative research
- ✓ Involve youth e.g. through universities
- ✓ Technology transfer
- ✓ Include standardization

Discussion:

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): recommended to expand access to information on the new technologies, e.g. by sharing information through a several of portals on new technologies and related projects (beyond EASP). Mr Krasilnikov also suggested including inventory of salinized soils, natural and anthropogenic factors, amelioration of saline lands. Next, he proposed implementation of ELD, sharing results of pilot projects implemented and assessment criteria developed on impacts on soil productivity and number of successful projects and results in upscaling of innovations and new technologies as well as involving various ministries and inform of work of GSP including NGOs. Mr Krasilnikov called to identify /involve existing research centres for implementation of the Pillar 3

Armenia: supported proposal of Mr Krasilnikov to collect experiences of countries in amelioration of salinity. Armenia has conducted research on these issues and expressed interest to share information on related projects /technologies implemented in their country.

Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Armenia: informed about their field demonstration sites and training centres for soil experts

Report back on Pillar 4&5 Enhancing soil data and information and harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators

Rapporteur: Mr Arkady Levin, GSP Focal Point

The rapporteur presented outcomes of the working group no4 (WG4) discussion on Pillar 4 Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information: data collection (generation), analysis, validation, reporting, monitoring and integration with other disciplines, including following components (1) The

⁷ VGGT: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

system for soil monitoring in Eurasia designed and introduced to the partners, (2) Capacity building on soil information management and on Pillar 5 Harmonisation of methods, measurements and indicators for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources, including following component (1) The GSP harmonisation principles introduced to EASP.

The WG4 discussion gave the following of recommendations on Pillar 4:

- ✓ Development of geographical network on alkaline and salinized soils
- ✓ Creation and development of national reference platforms
- ✓ Include reference in all pillars to users of information institutions ministries, agencies, agricultural companies, farmers

Discussion:

Armenia: stressed importance of stationary experiments (salinity, humidity, acidity) monitoring in face of climate change such as resilience to drought, change in humus quality etc. Benchmark sites and field experiments – data collected and analysed

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): supported creation development of national reference platforms. He added that soil data portals have been already created in some countries but need funds and approaches for developing and sharing soils databases. There is a need to build on existing benchmark sites, e.g. ICARDA and ICBA salinity network. Institutions should be responsible for compiling and sharing information. For various users He also informed participants about existing Eurasian portal, which is regularly updated with support of WB and ECFS. Next Mr Krasilnikov highlighted lack of information on effect of unsustainable soil management at farm level. He also stressed importance on expanding focus on dynamics, evolution of land use change (not only morphology) of erosion, salinity, and effects on yield on livelihoods, costs to farmers, etc.

IYS Coordinator: informed participants about monitoring of more than 2000 soil monoliths in Russia collected in soviet period, assessment of changes relating to CC and land uses and radioactive pollution in some provinces (analysis not complete but very interesting information).

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): stressed need to focus on targeted research for development and avoiding development of a huge research programme. She noted that additional efforts is needed to get research knowledge transferred to the field e.g. by complementing work by ICARDA and ICBA in the region.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): concluded that there are no more long-term experiments and we cannot rely only on short-term projects and grants. There is a need for stationary research - long term monitoring requires stable funding under ministries.

The WG4 discussion recommendations on Pillar 5 include:

- ✓ Development of intergovernmental standards for alkaline and saline soils (21 standards already exist)
- ✓ Need for regional work on harmonisation of technologies and techniques and indicators for alkaline and saline soils
- ✓ WG representatives of EASP to jointly review soil terminology, soil classification with support of ECFS and GSP
- ✓ Online conferences and workshop to support/discuss further work

Discussion:

Ukraine: shared information about Ukraine national scientific centre "Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry" and their research/knowledge on soil salinity. The ongoing research on humid soils requires active participation of all partners in addition to the institutes that are already involved.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): stated that all partners should participate in development intergovernmental standards for alkaline and saline soils (2016-2018). There is a need to identify coefficients for recalculations and harmonisation of soil data in Europe with involvement of soil experts with experience in Europe. He also added that donors prefer to support online conference instead of costly face-to face workshops.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): highlighted existing gaps on soil biodiversity and associated soil functions as an important factor for soil management and enhancing productivity. She informed participants about recently set up Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative led by Diana Wall in Colorado State University and the CBD International Initiative on soil biodiversity adopted under the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity , which was supported by FAO for several years (though this area was deprioritised due to funding constraints). She added that it is very important to understand effects of management practices on soil biodiversity and soil biological functions and use of soil biota to enhance soil functions.

Armenia: added that a number of methods have been developed and data collected on soils biological activity, which could be shared and further developed/expanded by EASP and partners. He added that soil biology is a good indicator for land productivity.

Report back on Donor Mapping

Rapporteur: Ms Gulchekhra Khasankhanova, EASP Vice-Chair

The rapporteur presented the first draft of the resource mobilisation framework:

Possible source of funds:

- ✓ Donors/International Agencies
EU, GEF, SDC, SIDA, UNDP, Aga Khan Foundation, South-South Cooperation, China, DFID, WFP, IFAD, GM (land private finance and investment program)
- ✓ Banks
WB, ADB, Islamic Development Bank, Eurasian Development Bank, KfW
- ✓ Governments
Germany, Russia, Korea, Japan
- ✓ National Government partners:
GIZ, USAID, TIKa etc.
- ✓ Private sector

Proposed Approach and Mechanism:

- ✓ GSP Focal Points and members of Steering Committee Must be active and responsible
- ✓ Resource mobilisation and diversification of financial sources
- ✓ To establish a resource mobilisation group within EASP Steering Committee in order to attract (i) internal resources (state budget, public, private) (ii) external resources (international financial

institutions, donors, including STAR, adapt fund, green economy) (iii) innovation resources (funds, national funds)

- ✓ GSP to build capacities and support the resource mobilisation group activities

FINALISATION OF THE EASP RIP AND PREPARATION OF THE “IZMIR COMMUNIQUE”

Facilitator: Mr Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat

The session started with discussion on the EASP RIP, reorganised by the GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov) in line with the WG 1-4 discussions outcomes. Next, a working group was set up to draft Izmir Communiqué: Ms Bunning, Chair and Vice-Chair of EASP and GSP Secretariat representatives and Ms Beernaerts.

Discussion:

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): discussed options for the structure of the RIP to avoid duplication proposed that EASP formulate a RIP short summary and log frame (budget, partners etc) to facilitate communication with partners, including with GSP Plenary Assembly.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): suggested to endorse the draft of the plan as the EASP have been trying for two years to adapt their work plan to the 5 pillars and to provide schema of logical framework results of brainstorming.

ICARDA, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine: supported structure of 5 pillars in the RIP

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): suggested to include indicators reflecting results and impacts (results based monitoring), there is a need to assess impacts of the RIP, e.g. not on how many people trained but how many people have learned and applied knowledge.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): volunteered to provide revised version of the RIP with inputs from WGs in Russian and in English for inputs by GAP Focal Points and finalization with FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia and GSP Secretariat. Final version of the RIP will be shared with all workshop participants and partners.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Beernaerts): recognized the need to specify roles and responsibilities of FAO and EASP Secretariat and country focal points and partner institutions for the implementation of the EASP RIP. She suggested to strengthen synergies with relevant projects aiming at promoting Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) practices in salt-affected and drought-prone agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey(e.g. CACILM2). Such projects could mobilize the wide expertise of the Eurasian Soil Partnership for supporting the implementation of mutually benefitting activities (under specific areas of work) in Central Asia and Turkey.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): suggested to elaborate further on the potential partners to play key roles in EASP RIP activities (partnership analysis)

WAY FORWARD

Validation of the RIP of EASP and Izmir Communiqué

Chair: Ms Yuriko Shoji, FAO Sub Regional Coordinator

During the workshop summing up session, Mr Krasilnikov presented a revised version of the RIP including outcomes of the working groups and plenary discussions that followed them. Next, Ms Bunning presented the revised version of the RIP with inputs from WGs and draft Izmir Communiqué and invited participants to join the final plenary discussion on the presented documents.

Discussion:

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): suggested that the WG should elaborate further on the stakeholders analysis for implementation of the proposed EASP RIP activities and target research. She informed participants on the ongoing FAO/GEF "Decision Support for scaling up SLM" project (including Turkey and Uzbekistan in the region and 13 other countries in other regions) with components on LD assessment and mapping and enhancing decision making processes at landscape and sub-national or national levels and invited participants to share relevant experiences and methods.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov): requested Ms Bunning to support identification of relevant stakeholders once the RIP is finalised. He informed participants that the revised version of the EASP RIP will be shared with participants within 2-3 weeks and invited participants to share additional suggestions with GSP Secretariat via email.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Bunning): noted that Steering Committee roles and responsibilities as well as members need to be redefined to include representatives of both Caucasus and Central Asia countries. She also called to define roles and responsibilities of Chair and Vice-Chair of EASP.

GSP Secretariat (Mr Krasilnikov), Kazakhstan and Tajikistan: responded that Steering Committee was discussed and approved by participants during the day one of the workshop.

GSP Secretariat (Ms Beernaerts): added that the EASP includes new members/countries (GSP Focal Points) that have not been present during previous meetings (EASP meeting in Moscow, Samarkand and Antalya) during which the Steering Committee was formed.

Signing of the Izmir Communiqué

The revised Izmir Communiqué was signed by all participating countries (copy is available on FAO GSP web site: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/GSP/docs/eurasian/Communique_EASP_Izmir__2_.pdf). Salient points of the 'Communiqué' include: i) the agreement for the finalization and approval of the five year rolling Implementation Plan of the Eurasian Soil Partnership; ii) the agreement that the development of this plan will be facilitated by the Steering Committee (SC) with support from the Secretariat and working groups of the 5 GSP Pillars of action; iii) the agreement that the EASP should meet once a year and; iv) the commitment to making the International Year of Soils 2015 and the World Soil Day each year on 5 December 2015, a successful foundation for advocating "healthy soils for healthy life" in the region and especially to continue this momentum beyond 2015.

Next steps for the EASP

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the purpose of the present report is to provide a summary of workshop presentations, discussions, conclusions and recommendations with the intention to provide a consolidated account of inputs to take into consideration for the preparation of the RIP of the EASP. This report of the Workshop on Secondary Plenary Meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership was prepared in English and would be available as soon as possible after the workshop (in hard copy and on FAO GSP website www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/en/).

Base on the report, and thus on the outcomes of the workshop, together with other materials already available (in particular GSP guidelines for formulation of the regional implementation plans and results from consultation of the previous EASP meetings held in Samarkand, September 2014 and Antalya, October 2014), the EASP SC with support from the GSP Secretariat and working groups of the 5 GSP Pillars of action will finalize and approve of the five year rolling RIP.

It was noted that progress would be presented to the 3rd meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly (Rome 22-24 June 2015) alongside progress in other regions. The intention is to present the final document at the next EASP meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, during the International Conference Eurasian Food Security Network and Eurasian Soil Partnership, 19-21 November 2015. The document will be prepared in Russian language and translated to English language posted on FAO GSP website www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/en/. Partners are encouraged to translate the document into the official language of their countries.

Further objective of the EASP is to make the International Year of Soils 2015 and the World Soil Day each year on 5 December 2015, a successful foundation for advocating "healthy soils for healthy life" in the region and especially to continue this momentum beyond 2015.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

Chair: Ms Yuriko Shoji, FAO Sub Regional Coordinator

The workshop brought a wide range of SSM/SLM experts from 9 Central Asia, Turkey and Italy. It provided an excellent opportunity to discuss new ideas and further consider suggestions and national/regional issues brought up by the GSP Focal Points and SSM/SLM other experts. The workshop encouraged continued and strengthened collaboration and partnerships, both with regard to the development of the five year rolling RIP as well as for its implementation.

The importance for securing support for the RIP implementation through collaboration with variety of partners and projects, in particular FAO CACILM-II project for 'Integrated natural resources management for salt affected and drought prone areas in Central Asia and Turkey' was noted.

Relevant international, regional and national events and meetings in the framework of the IYS 2015 should be supported by EASP. The chair reported that, in the framework of the IYS 2015, 'Combating land degradation for food security and provision of soil ecosystem services in Europe and Central Asia' is considered as a key topic for the 38th Session of the European Commission on Agriculture.

In closing remarks, Ms Shoji stated that together, we need to mobilize adequate policy, institutional, technical and financial support for promoting sustainable soil management during the International Year of Soils and beyond. We need healthy soils to achieve food security and nutrition goals, to fight climate change and to provide vital ecosystem services.

Izmir Communiqué, 18 June 2015

We, the Eurasian soil partnership focal points and representatives of 9 countries from Eurasia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russian Federation Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), as well as representatives of ICARDA and CAREC, participated in the Eurasian Soil Partnership Consultation workshop held in Izmir, Turkey on 16-18 June 2015. The meeting was organized and supported by the GSP Secretariat and FAO sub-regional office in Ankara together with the host, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Livestock (MOFAL) of Turkey, and was conducted in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Global Soil Partnership building on the results of previous meetings held in Samarkand (September 2014) and Antalya (October 2014). As representatives of the Eurasian soil partnerships, we have duly developed this communiqué to be shared with stakeholders in our countries and with the representatives of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Turkmenistan who are absent from this current meeting, for their agreement and active contribution to the partnership.

Recognizing the vital importance of sustainable soil management as a basis for sustainable production systems worldwide, for the production of food, fiber, fuel, fodder, timber and energy, and essential for achieving food security and enhancing resilience to climate change.

Aware of the great potential and diversity of soils in the region and the experiences gained over generations in managing the soil resources for a multitude of goods and ecosystem services - provisioning, regulating, socio-cultural and supporting services.

Conscious:

- that soils have been neglected for many years in the development agenda and are being increasingly degraded due to inappropriate land use and management practices and inadequate attention at all levels;
- that soils are under increasing pressure due to population growth, competition over limited resources, unsustainable management practices, urban expansion and impacts of climate change;
- that the area that is reaching the limits of its productive capacity is fast increasing limiting our capacity to meet increasing demands on this precious resource
- that costs of restoring degraded soils are prohibitive compared to the costs of ensuring soil conservation and sustainable use.
- Conscious also of the need for enhanced awareness, education, extension, knowledge and information, as well as policy and institutional support for prioritizing soil protection, sustainable soil management and restoration in the development agenda.

Calling to attention that soil degradation and problem soils are a serious process that is affecting the soils in the region through various processes, in particular, salinization, erosion and landslides, soil organic matter, nutrient and biodiversity depletion, soil acidification, compaction as well as soil sealing through urbanization.

Committed therefore to increasing the area of land in agriculture and forestry under sustainable management" in line with indicator 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Considering that the close cooperation and joint efforts garnered through a sub-regional soil partnership towards promoting sustainable soil management and restoring degraded lands is expected to make a significant contribution to achieving multiple economic, social and environmental benefits at all levels and especially for the direct beneficiaries, the farmers, livestock keepers and other land users.

Also noting the need for integrated natural resources and ecosystems management for the responsible and coordinated management of soil, water, forest and biological resources, and for responsible governance over land resources, as a means to sustain both the productivity of agricultural production landscapes and the flow of ecosystems services.

Appreciating the contribution of governments, academic and research organizations, non- governmental and civil society organizations, donors and regional initiatives in supporting soil protection, management and restoration and calling upon them to join, collaborate in and actively support the Eurasian Soil Partnership towards achieving an effective transformation from unsustainable to sustainable soil management.

We, the participants and representatives of 9 countries from the region participating in the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) consultation workshop (Izmir, June 2015) hereby:

- Acknowledge the important role of the designated focal points of the Eurasian soil partnership for effective communication and cooperation with the EASP and Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Secretariats, with all partners and stakeholders in each country and with other country members of the EASP for effective implementation of the regional plan of action.
- Agree to the finalization and approval of a five year rolling RIP for the Eurasian Soil Partnership as a means for promoting wide uptake of sustainable soil management and restoration of degraded soils in the region and for mobilizing adequate policy, institutional, technical and financial support to that end.
- Further agree to the priorities, activities, responsibilities, timing, proposed budget allocations and expected outcomes, as elaborated in the Eurasian Soil Partnership Implementation Plan for the initial five year period.
- Call to attention that increasing investment in the promotion of sustainable soil management is a pre-condition for achieving sustainable development through regional partners, programmes and financing, such as CACILM-2, but especially through national budget allocations, human resources, knowledge development, technology transfer, databases and equipment to support the execution of actions and priorities identified herewith.
- Acknowledge the need for a participatory, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder process for implementing the RIP at all levels.
- Agree that the development of this plan will be facilitated by the Steering Committee (SC) with support from the Secretariat and working groups of the 5 GSP Pillars of action, ensuring a very inclusive process where all interested parties are invited to register as partners and all partners in the region are encouraged to play an active role.
- Further agree to consolidate the Eurasian Soil Partnership by renewing and revitalizing the Steering Committee (SC), under the overall guidance of the designated GSP Focal Points and supported by FAO through the GSP Secretariat
- Agree that the EASP should meet once a year and should convene virtual electronic consultations, as and when required
- Recognize the need to monitor the progress and impacts through execution of this Eurasian soil implementation plan in terms of achievements including area under sustainable soil management, area of degraded lands restored to productive purposes and their contributions to achieving food and nutritional security, sustaining a range of ecosystem services, enhancing resilience of land users, wider populations and ecosystems, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable economic development.
- Further recognize the need for monitoring and assessment and communication during the implementation and to share results of the plan to guide the execution and regular updating of the plan in accordance with other development efforts and commitments and as part of a longer term development process
- Consider, for the implementation of the EASP Regional implementation plan, the establishment, under Article 14 of the constitution of FAO, of a "Regional Eurasian Soil Commission" and drafting of an agreement outlining its organization, objectives and functions, geographical scope, financial regulations and administration.
- Further consider, in this context, the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) (composed of the members of Working Groups on Pillars), to provide technical and scientific advice to the soil commission and its work supplemented by any other specific working groups.
- Finally, we hereby commit to making the International Year of Soils 2015 and the World Soil Day each year on 5 December 2015, a successful foundation for advocating "healthy soils for healthy life" in the region and especially to continue this momentum beyond 2015.

Workshop Agenda

Day 1: Tuesday 16 June 2015

Session 1: Update on the Global / Eurasia Soil Partnership and International Year on Soils 2015

- Welcome and Opening by FAO and Host country:
Dilek Kahraman, IARTC Director
Ines Beernaerts, Land and Water Officer, FAO, GSP Secretariat
Bulent Sonmez, MoFAL Representative
- Round table introductions & Introduction to the workshop agenda and expected outputs:
Moderator: Ines Beernaerts
- Introduction to the GSP and Eurasian Soil Partnership
Ms Sally Bunning, FAO Global Soil Partnership Secretariat, and Ines Beernaerts
- Celebrating the International Year of Soils 2015 - Report back from countries on activities conducted or planned (as basis for a draft Sub-regional Plan of Activities for the IYS2015)
Ms Elena Sukhacheva, IYS Coordinator for Eurasia and Sally Bunning, IYS 2015 Secretariat

Session 2: Participatory development of the regional implementation plan

- Presentation of the draft Implementation Plan for Eurasia and discussion
Mr Pavel Krasilnikov, GSP Secretariat
- Working group by Pillars to develop the RIP (concrete activities, lead and partner responsibilities, outputs, targets/indicators - short short-term (2015-2016) and medium-term (2017-2020) targets and timeline)
 - WG1: Pillar 1 Sustainable soil management, protection and restoration (framework)
 - WG2: Pillar 2 Investment, technical cooperation, policy, education, awareness and extension in soil
 - WG3: Pillar 3 Targeted soil research and development
 - WG4: Pillars 4&5 Enhancing soil data & information, harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators*Chair: Mr Pavel Krasilnikov, Ms Bunning, Ms Beernaerts; Rapporteur: Ms Iwona Piechowiak, FAO*
- Preparation of report back on progress for next day
Chair: Mr Pavel Krasilnikov

Day 2: Wednesday 17 June 2015

Session 2: Participatory development of the regional implementation plan (cont.)

- ECFS "Land/Soil Resources and Food Security of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus"
Mr Pavel Krasilnikov
- Report back/Presentation and discussion by working group (Pillar 1- 5)
Chair: Mr Pavel Krasilnikov; Rapporteur: Working Groups
- Procedures and renewal of the steering committee of the Eurasia Soil Partnership, including members and key partners of the working groups for each pillar
Moderator Mr Pavel Krasilnikov
- Perspectives for collaboration & investment opportunities: FAO-CACILM-II, ELD Initiative, ICBA, ICARDA and CAREC
Moderator: Ms Ines Beernaerts
- Finalization of the Eurasian soil Partnership implementation plan and preparation of the "Izmir Communiqué"

Day 3: Thursday 18 June 2015

Session 3: Validation of the Implementation Plan

- Validation of the EASP Implementation Plan
Chair: Ms Yuriko Shoji, SRC SEC
- Way forward and closure
Chair: Ms Yuriko Shoji

Session 4: Field trip organized by Host country/partner

- Field trip "Introduction to cultural soil heritage"

List of participant

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I. Beernaerts (FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia, GSP Secretariat)

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A.Charnysh (Belarus)

R. Kuziev (Uzbekistan)

International Year of Soils Celebrations in countries of the Eurasia⁸

1. XVIII Docuchaev's conference for young scientists "Soil degradation and food security of Russia" March 2-5, Russia, Saint-Petersburg
2. Round-table discussion "Topical issues of soil rational use and protection", May 1, Uzbekistan, Tashkent
3. Scientific seminar "Problems of Second Stage of Irrigation Systems Reconstruction in Russia" May, 18-22 Russia, Moscow
4. All Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference "New Solutions Soil Sciences- the Key to Food Security and Sustainable Use", May, 28-29, Ukraine, Kharkov
5. Workshops "Culture of Land-use – the Basis For High Yield", May- June, Tajikistan
6. Competition of pictures «Soil – Artist», May – June, 1, Russia, Barnaul
7. Fashion show "Parade of soils" on "International Children's Day", June, 1, Russia, Barnaul
8. Scientific and practical seminar "Soil is a Base for Planet Life", June, 1-15, Russia, Nizhny Novgorod
9. Exhibition of soils on ecological festival "Ekograd", June, 12, Russia, Voronez region.
10. Round-table discussion of Student Research Union "Yosh tuprokhunos" on "Desertification issues" June, 17, Uzbekistan, Tashkent
11. Travelling seminar "Degradation of Armenian Soils", Armenia, June, Yerevan
12. V Congress of Soil scientists and Agrochemists "Soil Fertility Recovery and Soil Conservation in Conditions of Modern Land-use", June, 22-26, Belorussia, Minsk.
13. "Hands-on assistance for farmers. Sustainable land use and correct fertilizer application" (Gabala, Guba, Barda, Lenkoran, Shamkir districts) Azerbaijan
14. Symposium "Soil Fertility Status of Russian South Regions", Jule, Russia, Stavropol
15. Russian Research International Conference «Soils of cold areas: genesis, geography, ecology», August – September, 31-9, Russia, Ulan-Ude
16. Farmer's Day, September, Uzbekistan, Tashkent
17. International Scientific Conference "Modern state of Soil Science and Agrochemistry, problems and solutions", September, 10-11, Kazakhstan, Almaty
18. International Scientific Conference "Soil diversity: space and time", September, 15-19, Ukraine, Chernovtsy
19. XV International Conference "Forests of Eurasia – Great Altai", September 13-20, Russia, Barnaul
20. International Research Conference "Role of soils in biosphere and human life" October, 5-7, Russia, Moscow
21. Olympiad for schoolchildren "Underground kingdom", October, 10-15, Russia, Barnaul.
22. International Forum AGROPORT-2015 October, 15-17, Ukraine, Kharkiv
23. Scientific and Practical International Conference "Ukrainian soil is the basic of sustainable development", October,16, Ukraine, Kharkiv
24. International Soil Science Congress on "Soil Science in International Year of Soils 2015", October, 19-23 Russia, Sochi
25. Workshop «Introduction of No-till Technology» October, Armenia, Yerevan
26. Public lecture "Global role of soils for food program", October, Tajikistan.
27. Photo competition "Soil and people", October, Russia, Tuva
28. All-Russian Conference "Modern methods of soil and soil cover study" November, 9-11, Moscow
29. Seminar "Status, problems and ways of their solution, perspective of the Caspian lowland agricultural landscape", November, 18, Kazakhstan
30. Scientific session «History of Soil Science Development in Siberia», November, Russia, Novosibirsk
31. Republican Conference "Improvement methods of land reclamation", November, Tajikistan,

⁸ Prepared by Elena Sukhacheva, FAO Consultant

32. Seminars "Degradation of Armenian Mountain Meadow Soil", Armenia. Yerevan
33. Scientific and practical conference "New infrastructures in the Azerbaijan Agricultural Sector: agro parks, organization need" (Gyanja) Azerbaijan
34. Scientific and practical symposium "Actual issues of soil and ecological sciences in the 21st century" Azerbaijan
35. PARAD SOILS in World Soil Day, December, 5 **Russia:** Saint-Petersburg, Barnaul, **Irkutsk**, Ulyanovsk and other
36. Scientific session «History of Soil Science Development in Siberia», November, Russia, Novosibirsk
37. Presentation of books for students: "Uzbekistan soils and their evolution", "Degradation of soils and landscapes" December, 5, Uzbekistan, Tashkent
38. Publication of articles, expositions for libraries and museums, public reports, Scientific and educational lectures, Publication of an scientific and popular article in the newspaper, Exhibition of children's drawings

International Year of Soils Celebrations in Turkey⁹

1. Training Programme, Ageian Forest Foundation, 2015-2016 semester, Izmir
2. "Agac yapraktan gelecege uzanan kopru" yarisma, Ageian Forest Foundation, 13 Feb-27 March, Izmir
3. EOY Turhish Art Music "Toprak" Concert, Ageian Forest Foundation, 22-Mar-15, Izmir
4. Field Trip, Suleymen Demirel Uni. Soil Science Department, May, 2015, Konya
5. International Conference, East Mediterranean Transition Z Agricultural Resource Citation, KAHRMANMARAŞ, 1-4 October 2015, Kahramanmaras
6. Forum on Boron in Crop Production, International Boron Resource Center, 16-Apr-15, KIRKLARELİ
7. National Workshop on Soil fertility and nutrition mapping and database, MoFAL-TAGEM, 28-30 April 2015, ŞANLIURFA
8. Photo Exhibition, TAGEM/Konya Soil, Water and Combat of Desertification Resource Center, Jun-15, Konya
9. Forum on "Soil in Life", TAGEM/Konya Soil, Water and Combat of Desertification Resource Center -KONYA, 21April 2015- 16 June 2015- 16 October, Aksaray- Karaman- Isparta
10. Forum on Conservative soil tillage, TAGEM/Konya Soil, Water and Combat of Desertification Resource Center -KONYA, 14-May-15, Karapınar/KONYA
11. Soil Exhibition (Monolit), TAGEM/Konya Soil, Water and Combat of Desertification Resource Center -KONYA, 16-Jun-15, Konya Alışveriş Merkezleri
12. Workshop on Land Degradation and Soil Erosion, MoFAL-TAGEM, Oct-15, Ankara, Konya
13. National Soil Week, MoFAL-TRGM, 11-15 June 2015
14. Symposium on International Importance of Soil, MoFAL-TRGM, 12-Jun, Ankara
15. Conference on Precision farming techniques for SSM, MoFAL-TAGEM, 31-Mar-15, Izmir/IARTC
16. International training programme on sustainable use of soil and water resources, MoFAL-TAGEM/IARTC, 27 July-07 August 2015, Izmir/IARTC
17. Training on Carbon Sequestration, MoFAL-TAGEM, May-15, Izmir/IARTC

⁹ Prepared by Hakki Emrah Erdogan, GSP Secretariat

**Welcome address by Ines Beernaerts
GSP Secretariat
FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia**

Distinguished representatives of the government and international organizations,

Dear Colleagues, ladies and gentleman,

On behalf of the Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, Mr Vladimir Rahmanin Olegovich and the Sub-Regional Coordinator for Central Asia, Ms Yuriko Shoji, I have the pleasure to welcome you all to the Eurasian Soil Partnership Workshop today. We are coming together to advance sustainable soil management in the region and coordinate our efforts to trigger concrete action and investments at regional, national and local levels.

Soils have been neglected for too many years. To quote the FAO Director General, Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, "Multiple roles of soils often go unnoticed. Soils don't have a voice and few people speak for them. They are our silent ally in food production".

Soils are under increasing pressure due to a number of factors (e.g. demographic growth, urbanization, unsustainable intensive land and water management practices, climate change, etc.) and the area that is reaching the limits of its productive capacity is fast increasing... It is estimated that every year an area about the size of Costa Rica (50,000 sq km) loses its productive capacity. It is a growing threat to food security!

FAO in its continuous efforts to promote the cause of soils and to trigger action worldwide launched the Global Soil Partnership in 2012. In this region, FAO supported the establishment of the Eurasian Soil Partnership in Moscow in November 2013.

The Global Soil Partnership is supporting the process for promoting the wide adoption of sustainable soil management practices, by addressing five pillars of action for which plans of action have been elaborated and adopted by the GSP Plenary Assembly. The GSP is facilitated by the Secretariat based in Rome but the regional soil partnerships have a fundamental role to play for the implementation of activities via the 'Implementation Plan'.

The 2nd Session of the Plenary Assembly of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), held in Rome in July 2014, endorsed the proposal for FAO Members to nominate GSP Focal Points in order to enhance communication with the GSP Secretariat. You have a key role to play to ensure action by all the partners and stakeholders concerned in your country.

As you all know, FAO is a specialized inter-governmental agency of the UN with the mandate to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, with a substantive knowledge base and a multi-disciplinary expertise to work at both technical and policy levels.

In this region, FAO has the Regional office for Europe and Central Asia located in Budapest (GEF Unit) and the Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia located in Ankara (multi-disciplinary team established since 2007). The Organization is strengthening its field presence in the sub-region.

In this region, partners agreed that the main goal for the EASP should be the implementation of sustainable soil management practices at a wider scale, especially in areas affected by soil salinity. Together with national authorities and relevant stakeholders/partners, FAO has already been supporting the development of prospective programmes for achieving this goal. One example is FAO's support for the formulation of a multi-country project

on 'Upscaling Integrated Natural Resources Management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey' (11,000,000 USD, 5 years) under GEF-6.

Today, the Eurasian Soil Partnership Workshop is deemed necessary to review and further develop the Implementation Plan with the participation of all partner countries from East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Based on the results of this workshop, the draft Implementation Plan will be presented as part of the regional report to the 3rd meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly which will take place next week in Rome from 22-24 June . The plan will then be finalized by the steering committee, working group members and all partners in the region.

The Global Soil Partnership has been the platform (supported by the Government of Thailand) to have the celebration of the World Soil Day (5th December 2015) and the International Year of Soils 2015 declared by the UNGA, with the aim to raise awareness on the importance of healthy soils and advocate for sustainable soil management.

2015 was selected because it is a key year to influence the Post 2015 process and the adoption of the "Sustainable Development Goals". Actually, in this framework, FAO is contributing actively to the development of soil related SDGs and our Organization has even proposed a Target: 'By 2030, 30 per cent increase in area of land in agriculture and forestry under sustainable management". To quote the FAO Director General, Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, "The International Year of Soils will help us pave the road towards sustainable development for all and by all". IYS2015 is expected to put soils on the top of the development agenda.

2015 marks also the 70th anniversary of our Organization.

I would like to express our very sincere thanks to the Turkish Government for hosting this event and all its staff for having actively supported the Eurasian Soil Partnership since its establishment.

We invite contributions from all Representatives of Member Countries and development partners (such as CAREC and ICARDA) so that, together, the Implementation Plan effectively addresses priorities and builds upon collective expertise and knowledge .

I invite you all to take an active role in the EASP workshop, and in promoting the Eurasian Soil partnership during the IYS2015 and beyond. We need healthy soils to achieve food security and nutrition goals, to fight climate change and to provide vital ecosystem services.

FAO is determined to renew its commitment to healthy soils in the region and stands ready to serve the member states in their efforts towards that goal.

I wish you all a very successful workshop