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|  | منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة | 联合国 粮食及 农业组织 | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture | Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций | Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura |
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Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

First session

Rome, 11-12 June 2013

Development of a GSP Roadmap

Executive Summary

- 1) GSPPA documents I/2013/3 and I/2013/4 highlight practical actions carried out by the Secretariat in line with GSP aims, especially in the regions as well as a number of priority actions undertaken in some countries. In this initial effort, focus has been placed on reviewing ongoing soil activities and assessing needs and priorities with national soil institutions.
- 2) In addition, an assessment is being made on how the GSP could contribute effectively to relevant regional and international initiatives and agreements with impact on food security and poverty reduction, climate change adaptation, provision of ecosystem services, and overall sustainable development. This document summarizes such links and makes preliminary suggestions on how they can be reinforced through the GSP.
- 3) The document also presents for consideration by Partners vigorous supporting action programmes to all GSP Pillars of action: Soil Information, Global Soil Restoration Programme, Sustainable Soil Management Programme, and a Global Soil Biodiversity Programme. The soil information programme will inform the other three programmes, and the four interlinked programmes should allow for a major reversal of current threats on soil resources.
- 4) The proposals in this document may constitute a preliminary outline “roadmap” of the GSP in the broader development context and is directly related to the GSP Pillars of Action (GSPPA:I/2013/3). It would need to be developed further through active stakeholder, country and partner involvement in regional and global review and priority setting processes.

Suggested action by GSP Plenary Assembly

- The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

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- endorse in principle the general scope and direction of the proposals in this roadmap and request the Secretariat to pursue their further development through a transparent consultative process;
- request the Secretariat and ITPS to work towards a solid and feasible proposal for the due attention to soils issues and attendant solutions and targets into the Sustainable Development Agenda;
- request the Secretariat and ITPS to ensure close links with the Rio Conventions to enable the GSP, with guidance from the ITPS, to provide sound advice on soil resources in relation to further implementation of the strategies and targets of those Conventions;
- support updating of the World Soil Charter and request the Secretariat to take necessary actions to that end;
- support the establishment of a Global Soil Restoration Programme, urging the Secretariat to develop, in consultation with regional soil partnerships and partners, a more elaborate proposal to be submitted to donors for implementation;
- support the establishment of a Sustainable Soil Management Programme, also urging the Secretariat to develop, in consultation with regional soil partnerships and partners, a related proposal to be submitted to donors;
- endorse the development of a new tool covering soils, SoilSTAT, consistent with the major FAOSTAT programme, and request the Secretariat to assist with this;
- support the Global Soil Biodiversity Assessment and request the Secretariat to facilitate its realization in collaboration with the CBD and the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative.

1. As highlighted in GSPPA documents GSPPA: I/2013/3 and 4, the Secretariat has taken action in order to start activities, especially in the regions, in line with GSP's objectives. As also reported, a number of priority actions that required attention by national institutions has been undertaken in the concerned countries.

2. In this initial effort, due focus has been placed in particular on reviewing ongoing soil activities, assessing needs and priorities by national soil institutions, and considering how the GSP could contribute to various global initiatives or international agreements linked to food security and poverty reduction, climate change adaptation, provision of ecosystem services, and overall sustainable development. It is useful that the Plenary Assembly is aware of such links, and how they can be reinforced, as briefly summarized below.

3. This is followed by the presentation for consideration by Partners of focused and vigorous supporting programmes to all GSP Pillars of Action: Global Soil Restoration Programme, Sustainable Soil Management Programme, a major effort on Soil Information and a Global Soil Biodiversity Programme which, taken together, should allow for a major reversal of current threats on soil resources.

4. This document provides Partners with a consistent, yet tentative "roadmap" of the GSP that aims to contribute effectively to the broad sustainable development efforts at all levels. Many of the proposals therein are outlined for initial feedback and, once endorsed, would need to be developed further through the development of Plan of Actions facilitated by the Secretariat.

I. Soils and the Sustainable Development Goals

1. Healthy soils are a prerequisite to sustainable development. One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs).
2. An Open Working Group (OWG) was established by the UN for preparing proposals on the SDGs. Considering the challenges posed by population growth and taking into account the alarming current soil degradation status in many regions, it is imperative to include soils into the ongoing SDGs dialogue.
3. Sound technical advice from the pertinent UN bodies is required by the international community and especially by the above OWG, in order to make the SDGs fully reflective of well identified problems and challenges. The Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) is expected to play an essential role in such provision of scientific guidance to the SDG process and subsequent implementation and impact assessment.

II. Links with the Rio Conventions

1. The GSP's five pillars of action will contribute to FAO Global Plan of Action for Food security, bearing in mind key dimensions of soil fertility and productivity, soil carbon fluxes, soil biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as soil and water conservation.
2. Those pillars will also greatly contribute "to achieving a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development", as agreed by the Rio+20 outcome document as well as the "zero hunger challenge" proposed by the United Nations. Sustainable management of soil resources contributes directly and indirectly to all three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD) and again, active inputs of the GSP to developments related to these international agreements will be required.
3. The Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils should provide technical and scientific guidance in this collaborative process. A clear strategy on how the ITPS will contribute to and interact with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) should be formulated and implemented, so that links are effective and contribute substantively to developing the SDG agenda.

III. The World Soil Charter

1. It is important to recall that the 21st Session of the FAO Conference adopted in November 1981 the [World Soil Charter](#) to respond to the enormous increase during the 1970s in human demands for food production. Soils are the basis for future food security and sustainable livelihoods and the accelerating pressures were highlighted at the time by projections in FAO's forward-looking assessment "Agriculture towards 2000".
2. The World Soil Charter established a set of principles related to optimum use of the world's land resources, improvement of their productivity, and their conservation for future generations. The World Soil Charter called for a commitment of governments, international organizations and land users in general to manage soils and land for long-term advantage rather than for short-term exploitation. Special attention is called for the need of land-use policies to create incentives for people to participate in soil conservation, taking into account both the technical and socio-economic elements of effective land use.
3. FAO estimates - through the global review undertaken under the LADA (Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands) project - that 43% of rangelands and 20% of croplands are degraded worldwide, despite 22 years of existence of the World Soil Charter. Therefore, serious challenges lie ahead to increase food production sustainably, to satisfy accelerating demands

of rural and urban populations, as well as to sustain the provision of a range of ecosystem services in the face of climate change.

4. It is important that the World Soil Charter is reviewed and updated to reflect the current situation, important upcoming issues, and to take into account the successes and failures of past and ongoing efforts towards sustainable soil management. That should include the prevention of degradation and of the loss of productive soils and lands, coupled with the restoration of degraded soils. The GSP activities should assist in updating the World Soil Charter and aligning it with the ongoing SDG process and the broad development agenda, while interlinking environmental, social and economic dimensions.

IV. Global Soil Information

1. Considering the advanced status of activities related to Pillars 4 and 5 of the Global Soil Partnership, as mentioned in document GSPPA: I/2013/3, it is of fundamental importance that updated and reliable global soil information is produced at the earliest possible horizon. Special attention should be given to the development and future implementation of a global soil monitoring framework (SoilSTAT), consistent with the FAOSTAT family (such as the AquaSTAT tool).

V. Global Soil Restoration Programme

1. The FAO-LADA Project defined soil/land degradation as reduction in the capacity of soils and land to provide ecosystem goods and services over a period of time for its beneficiaries.
2. The current status of soil degradation is estimated at 40% of degraded land globally. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), over 1.5 billion people are affected by soil/land degradation, desertification and drought in more than 110 countries, 90% of whom live in low income areas.
3. Due to population growth and ongoing soil degradation, the FAOs SOLAW Report estimates that on average only 0.20 ha of arable and productive land will be available per person in 2020, less than half the amount in 1960 (0.43 ha). By 2050, only 0.10 ha will be available, if soil degradation is not stopped. This has severe implications in regard to sustainable production intensification. The Secretariat organized regional consultations in 2012/13 in which national soil institutions reported that soil degradation is one of the major problems in their efforts to increase food production and to reduce poverty. They called for action to combat soil degradation at field level.
4. Large areas of land are so degraded that they have been taken out of production. A restoration of their soils is necessary in order to rehabilitate the land and to regain these soils for food production and the provision of ecosystem services. This is in line with the outcome document agreed at Rio+20, which recognized the need for urgent action to reverse land degradation and advocated for a land-degradation neutral world.
5. The Secretariat, therefore, considers that the establishment of a Global Soil Restoration Programme is essential in order to respond effectively to ongoing soil degradation trends in different regions of the world. This programme should cover a range of activities to restore degraded soils and use all the accumulated knowledge and experience available in institutions and countries.

VI. Sustainable Soil Management Programme

1. Healthy soils for a food secure world is a motto that the Secretariat has advocated in order to promote the sustainable use of soil resources as a prerequisite to achieve global food security, poverty eradication and sustainable development goals. Special attention should be given to soil fertility, as it constitutes a key soil function.
2. A sustainable soil management programme should allow the Global Soil Partnership to implement concrete and well focused actions towards preventing soil degradation and increasing soils' resilience to climate change and other potentially negative events.

VII. Global Soil Biodiversity Assessment

1. The Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative (GSBI) [proposes](#) a Global Soil Biodiversity Assessment (GSBA) to bring to bear the rapidly developing science of soil biodiversity and ecosystem services on the local, regional and global management of lands in a sustainable manner. It should have the following key features:
 - a) be scientifically credible, independent and peer-reviewed, and serve to identify uncertainties;
 - b) outline the current state of knowledge, and highlight relationships between soil biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services;
 - c) identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers, and serve as an independent scientific resource for policymakers;
 - d) produce maps useful to policymakers and the public, showing potential changes and links to global change drivers;
 - e) involve a network of international scientists (e.g. soil ecologists, taxonomists, soil scientists, biogeochemists, ecosystem scientists, agronomists) and policymakers representing different countries, regions and gender;
 - f) the final product of the GSBA to be available in print and online, including a Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas.
2. It is proposed that this activity be linked to the goals and implementation processes of the GSP in close consultation with the CBD and in line with the global targets and national biodiversity strategies and action plans.