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Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



Third session

Rome, 22-24 June 2015

Report by the chairperson on main activities and outcomes

Executive Summary

- This document complements the progress report submitted to the previous session of the Plenary Assembly (GSPPA: II/2014/4) by providing an overview of the main activities carried out, and the conclusions reached by the ITPS since then. The ITPS held only one working session in that period (the third one, 13 - 17 April 2015 in Potsdam, Germany) while being of course quite active via continuous exchanges among members and the convening of smaller groups as appropriate to deal with specific assignments.
- In order to facilitate consideration, this further progress report eschews procedural details to the extent possible. More information on key facets of the work of the Panel, e.g. regarding its interface with other pertinent bodies and initiatives, or its central role in the preparation of the Status of the World's Soil Resources report are provided in other documents, e.g. for sub-items 2.2 and 2.3. The ITPS Chair is also due to make a presentation.
- The full report of the third meeting of the ITPS can be consulted at:
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/GSP/docs/ITPS/ITPS_III_final_report.pdf

Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

- The Plenary Assembly may wish to review and comment as appropriate on the range of activities undertaken by the ITPS in its second year of operation.

1. While only one formal working session of the full ITPS took place in the intervening period since the last PA (held on 13 - 17 April 2015 in Potsdam, Germany) many ITPS members were actively involved in small groups (e.g. editorial board of the SWSR, working group in charge of developing the draft Plan of Action for Pillar 3, etc...). In addition, a range of consultations on various matters of interest was carried out through electronic means.

2. This document complements the progress report submitted to the previous session of the Plenary Assembly (GSPPA: II/2014/4) by providing an overview of the main activities carried out, and the conclusions reached by the ITPS in its second year of operation. The ITPS Chair is also due to make a presentation reporting on main activities and achievements, as well as challenges for the Panel.

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I. Plan of Action for Pillar 3

3. It is recalled that the ITPS was able to endorse draft Plans of Action (PoAs) concerning Pillar 1, 2, 4 and 5 at the two working meetings held in its first year of activity. However, it was not possible for it to consider a draft PoA for Pillar 3 of the requisite quality at that time. Hence, such review and endorsement were scheduled to take place at the above-mentioned third meeting of April 2015 (cf. document 3 covering the preparation process for this draft PoA).

4. Extensive discussion of the draft occurred, allowing for the reactions of ITPS members to the text and proposed amendments to be reflected in a revised draft which was endorsed by the ITPS for consideration by the PA.

II. Status of the World's Soil Resources Report (SWSR)

5. As the originator – at its first meeting – of the concept of periodic issuance of a global assessment report covering such an essential natural resource as soil – hence correcting an important gap – the Panel was in the driving seat for the preparation of the first version. Several members were even more intensively involved by keeping under constant review progress in content development, editorial quality and production schedules, via a specially appointed SWSR Editorial Board.

6. The development of the SWSR was a very inclusive process, as around 200 top scientists from all regions of the world have contributed to its preparation. It consists of two parts: a *Summary for Policy Makers*, and the full report of primarily scientific content (over 600 pages). During the third working session of the ITPS, the SWSR (both the summary and full report) were reviewed, amended and endorsed in order to facilitate consideration by the Plenary Assembly. It is important to note that the PA is expected to focus mainly on the *Summary for Policy Makers* while the full report will be available as a supporting document.

7. The ITPS also agreed about the strong desirability of preparing a summary of the Report to be published in such high profile journals such as *Science* or *Nature*, while seeking synchronized issuance around World Soil Day. A small team was nominated for such a purpose, while the ITPS Chairperson would negotiate with the journals.

III. Interface with other bodies

8. The major highlight was the first ever joint meeting between the ITPS and the Science Policy Interface of the UNCCD which was held during the third Global Soil Week on the 20th of April, 2015 (cf. document 2. Add.2).

IV. Other substantive matters

9. The ITPS also:

- i. reviewed progress so far and plans regarding the implementation of the agreed Plans of Action for Pillars 1, 2, 4 and 5 (cf. document 3),
- ii. finalized a concept note on the sustainable management of soil resources, based on a draft prepared by the Secretariat (cf. document 4),
- iii. took note of the references to soils in the Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets and indicators, soon to be approved by the United Nations General Assembly.

V. Institutional matters

10. The ITPS also discussed the need for ensuring reasonable continuity in the membership of the Panel, by limiting excessive turnover between successive terms of office.