

May 2015

E



# Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



## Third session

Rome, 22-24 June 2015

### Interface of ITPS with other bodies and initiatives

#### Executive Summary

- At its last session, the Plenary Assembly strongly encouraged the Panel to pursue cooperative efforts with other bodies and initiatives with interest in soils. Three such important entities are: the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Science Policy Interface (SPI) established by the UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification).
- The present document reports on the status of contacts with these bodies, with due emphasis on the most salient developments, i.e.:
  - the first ever joint meeting between members of the ITPS and the SPI which took place on 20th April 2015 in Berlin during the third Global Soil Week; and
  - the appointment of the current ITPS Chairperson as Co-chair of the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration being undertaken by IPBES.
- The former recent development raises the issue of desirable continuity in ITPS membership, as similar appointments outside the ambit of the Panel and with long-term implications could occur in the future.

#### Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

- The Plenary Assembly may wish to note the range of contacts established so far with key bodies, and in particular the positive outcome of the joint ITPS/SPI meeting.

1. At its last session, the Plenary Assembly strongly encouraged the Panel to pursue cooperative efforts with other bodies and initiatives with interest in soils, with due assistance from the Secretariat.
2. Three such important entities are: the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Science Policy Interface (SPI) established by the UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification).
3. Information is provided below on the contacts established so far and the most salient developments in establishing effective cooperation arrangements.

*This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

### **Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)**

4. Following exchanges of letters between the GSP Secretariat and IPBES secretariat, the Multidisciplinary Expert Group (MEP) of IPBES has decided to appoint the current ITPS chairperson, Luca Montanarella, as Co-Chair for the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration being undertaken by this body. This assessment of land degradation and restoration was approved by the 3rd Plenary of IPBES in January 2015.

5. The associated duties include a key role in overseeing the preparation of the assessment report and summary for policy makers, as well as in ensuring that the report is completed to the highest scientific standard. The Co-chair(s), the MEP and the IPBES Bureau members are to finalise the selection of coordinating lead authors (CLAs) and lead authors (LAs) for the various chapters of the assessment. The first author meeting is scheduled to take place from 6 to 10 July 2015.

6. As the result of this decision, the ITPS would have a direct entry point into the preparation of an important global assessment with direct relevance to soils, allowing also to take account of the Status of World's Soil Resources report prepared under the aegis of the GSP.

### **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**

7. There is strong interest on the role of soils within climate change in preparation of the next COP (Conference of the Parties) of UNFCCC to be held in Paris in December 2015. However, no formal contact has materialized as yet with this body.

### **Science Policy Interface (SPI) established by the UNCCD**

8. The first joint ITPS-SPI meeting was organized on the occasion of the 3rd Global Soil Week held in Berlin (20-24 April 2015), with the support of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS). This joint session addressed the theme of "land degradation neutrality and its contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation".

9. The programme of this joint meeting was developed through close advance exchanges, involving on the ITPS side the Chairperson Mr Luca Montanarella, and from the side of the UNCCD: Ms Mariam Akhtar-Schuster and Mr Uriel Safriel, co-chairs of the Science Policy Interface, and Mr Martial Bernoux, leader of the SPI team in charge of objective 4 of the SPI working programme 2014-2015.

10. About 50 representatives attended the meeting, including about half of current SPI members and two-third of current members of the ITPS. Members of the UNCCD and GSP secretariats also participated. About twenty other participants from different stakeholder communities were also present at this open session (opened by the UNCCD and GSP Secretariats).

11. During the discussion, SPI and ITPS members exchanged views regarding the structure, mandates and work programmes of their respective bodies in order to identify potential items for a collaboration mechanism, tasked to avoid duplication of effort and maximize synergies.

12. The session identified three major topics/entry-points as a basis for effective communication and collaboration between the SPI and the ITPS:

- i. the Sustainable Development Goals proposed for adoption next September by the UN General Assembly, and in particular SDG 15.3 related to land degradation: "By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world". Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) can in fact be achieved through sustainable land-based practices that avoid degrading land use and restore the productivity of degraded lands.
- ii. the need for indicators addressing soil and land issues in the context of the implementation of the three "Rio conventions" (namely UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC – and the Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD); this also applied to the SDGs as their realization will require substantiation in terms of indicators related to land and soils.

- 
- iii. soil organic carbon, which is relevant both at global and local scales, and underpins various ecosystem services (global climate regulation, but also biological productivity and other local ecosystem services). More importantly, it provides a basis for interacting with the large and diverse land users and decision-making communities.