



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



Report of the Twelfth Working Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils

Virtual Session May 2020

**REPORT OF THE TWELFTH WORKING SESSION OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL PANEL ON SOILS**

Virtual Session May 2020

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 2020

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1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Ronald Vargas, on behalf of the GSP Secretariat opened the 12th working session of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil (ITPS) and welcomed all ITPS members for their commitment and willingness to participate in a virtual meeting, although for some members the time was not convenient. After introducing the Evaluation of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) conducted by independent consultants, which recommended that the GSP could enhance its position by becoming an FAO Statutory body, Mr. Vargas clarified the pros and cons of these recommendation.

Mr. Vargas clarified the current role of the ITPS, as a scientific advisory body which should not only clear documents prepared by the GSP Secretariat and partners but also take the initiative and lead the preparation of new documents according to current needs and hot topics. In this regard, Mr. Vargas welcomed the initiative taken by the ITPS on writing the position paper on COVID-19.

Dr. Rosa Poch, ITPS Chair, welcomed all ITPS members and recognized the hard work done in the last months to produce several documents to be presented during this session.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and election of a Rapporteur

Dr. Megan Balks volunteered to be the rapporteur for the two-day virtual working session.

3. Work of the soil organic carbon working group

During the preparatory meeting for the 12th ITPS Working Session, the GSP Secretariat and the ITPS working group on soil organic carbon (or SOC-working group), discussed a series of SOC documents generated in order to improve and/or approve them. Dr. Lucía Anjos, newly elected as Chair of the soil organic carbon (SOC) working group, presented the extensive work done by the ITPS, different working groups and the GSP Secretariat. Five main documents were presented and discussed.

- *GSOC-MRV: Protocol for Measurement, Reporting, Verification and Monitoring to Assess Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Emissions in Agricultural Landscapes*

Dr. Lucía Anjos outlined the considerable work done by the working group on the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Protocol and its four sub-protocols, and acknowledged the work done by the ITPS and the GSP Secretariat to review the final draft of the Protocol in early 2020. Dr. Anjos also summarized the main discussions and agreements on the MRV Protocol resulting from the SOC-working group meeting in April 2020, which included clarifications of concepts, the possibility of using remote sensing techniques and the inclusion of sampling equipment.

Dr. Maria Konyushkova asked for clarification on who should endorse the MRV Protocol and what should be the involvement of the ITPS members who are not part of the SOC-Working group. The GSP Secretariat clarified that the approval of the MRV Protocol would not require the endorsement of all ITPS members but only that of the SOC-working group.

- *GSOCmap interpretation document*

Dr. Anjos highlighted the work done by the GSP Secretariat in collaboration with the ITPS to prepare and revise the Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOCmap) interpretation document as a useful tool for decision-makers. Similarly to the MRV Document, Dr. Anjos presented the discussions and agreements on the GSOCmap interpretation document that occurred in the SOC-working group meeting in April 2020. An emphasis was made

on the constant evolution and improvement of the GSOCmap and the updates of the GSOCmap for 2020 were presented.

Dr. Rafla Attia suggested the creation of a soil degradation map to avoid SOC being considered static and to create closer links between SOC and land degradation and sustainable soil management. While Dr. Fernando Garcia Préchac and Dr. Rosa Poch showed interest in the creation of such map, they considered it to be too premature as it will require the combination of different maps currently under creation.

- *Best soil management practices for SOC maintenance and sequestration: A technical manual*

Dr. Anjos presented the main aspects and challenges of the Soil Organic Carbon Technical Manual (SOC Technical Manual) and the ITPS role in the process, stressing the need for all ITPS members, even those not currently involved in the initiative, to take part in the official revision of the manual as from August 2020, specifically for the different case-studies issued by their region.

The ITPS members acknowledged the Secretariat's efforts to identify and respond to the gaps and challenges in the SOC Technical Manual. The ITPS members offered their support for those chapters of the SOC Manual which are currently without practical content. Before circulating the information to find new case studies for the manual, Dr. Ellen Graber asked for clarification on the type of recognition that would be given to new authors and whether their names would be included in the manual.

- *Position paper on SOC sequestration and climate change*

Dr. Lucía Anjos introduced the advances made on the position paper on SOC sequestration and climate change and acknowledged the effort of the GSP Secretariat to prepare the zero draft of the position paper.

Although the GSP Secretariat welcomed the initiative, Mr. Ronald Vargas encouraged the ITPS members to directly prepare a zero draft for future ITPS publications. Mr. Vargas highlighted the success of the ITPS initiative to draft a position paper on COVID19 and soils before seeking the support of the Secretariat, and suggested this should be the way forward.

- *Technical Specifications of Country Guidelines for Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration Potential Map (GSOCseq)*

Finally, Dr. Anjos reported on the development of the Technical Specifications and Country Guidelines for the Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration Potential map (GSOCseq) and the contribution of the ITPS to the initiative. The final draft was reviewed by the ITPS in April 2020 and is expected to be published in June 2020.

4. Table of content of the Global Status of Black Soils Report

Dr. Lucía Anjos, coordinator of the Black Soil working group, presented the achievements of the International Network of Black Soils (INBS), with an emphasis on the adoption of the black soil definition after the 11th working session of the ITPS and the Table of Content of the Global Status of Black Soils Report. She highlighted the importance of black soil protection for the achievement of global food security and mitigating climate change. Until now, 31 countries and one union have officially joined the INBS. The 2019-2020 work plan of the INBS has been endorsed in the second workshop of INBS in Chisinau 2019.

Dr. Anjos encouraged the ITPS members to use their network to support filling gaps already identified for the report. Dr. Anjos also invited ITPS members to support the activities on black soils, such as the Global Black Soil Distribution Map (GBSDmap) and the International Black Soil Monitoring Network.

Dr. Kutaiba M. Hassan acknowledged the necessity for sharing the presentations in the first workshop of INBS. The GSP invited the ITPS members to contribute to the report of black soils by nominating contributors especially from tropical regions, as well as the black soil distribution map.

5. Global Assessment of Soil Pollution (GASP report)

Dr. Ellen Graber, coordinator of the soil pollution working group, presented the status of the GASP report preparation and the methodology used for it. The preparation of the GASP report was initiated at the beginning of 2019 with the formulation of a questionnaire to be sent to countries. This tool included 93 questions, organized in 12 sections aimed at collecting information about inter alia: administrative level of competence for soil pollution issues; reference values for contaminants; major sources of soil pollution and associated contaminants; soil pollution monitoring systems; inventories and data; monitoring of health and environmental risk; socioeconomic cost of soil pollution; management and remediation practices; case studies; major constraints to tackle soil pollution; and future planned actions. 2. The questionnaire was distributed through the GSP focal points and made available to other stakeholders through the GSP website and newsletter in March 2019. 107 responses were received from 77 countries. The majority of respondents were from research institutes or universities (38 responses), followed by representatives of ministries of agriculture (32) and environment (15).

The ITPS members of the Soil pollution working group are part of the Editorial Board and have participated in the peer review process that started in January 2020 with the review of chapter 3 and still continues. The ITPS members of the soil pollution working group were encouraged to take the lead on the final chapter of the report outlining the way forward, the preparation of the executive summary and the extraction of key messages from the report. The GASP report and the summary for policy makers will be formally released at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA5), in February 2021.

Dr. Peter de Ruiter raised a question about the similarities between remediation and management technologies presented in chapter 7, question that was addressed by the GSP Secretariat explaining in which cases remediation or management options would be more convenient to be applied.

Dr. Rafla also expressed her concerns about the remediation technologies and their applicability in different soil types. The GSP Secretariat indicated that the present document aims to show the existing technologies but experts need to do a site-specific assessment to understand the feasibility of each technology in each particular situation.

The ITPS members welcomed and highlighted their interest in the database of good practices in soil pollution management and remediation planned to be launch in February 2021. The ITPS members encouraged the Secretariat to provide more information on the project to disseminate the information with their partners and add new cases studies and new technologies to the database. Both the ITPS members and the GSP Secretariat underlined their willingness to organize a webinar on soil pollution in the coming months.

6. Organization of the Global Symposium on Salt-affected Soils and update on the International Network of Salt-Affected Soils

Dr. Maria Konyushkova, co-coordinator of the soil salinity working group, presented the work done by the GSP Secretariat and the ITPS working group on soil salinity. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on meetings and travel, the salinity working group met using virtual means.

Progress was reported on the preparations for the upcoming Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils (GSSAS21), to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in September 2021. The symposium, which was supposed to take place in October 2020, is postponed given the impacts of the global pandemic. A concept note and key messages on salt-affected soils for all awareness raising activities related to the upcoming symposium were finalized and endorsed by the ITPS salinity working group.

Dr Hassan Kutaiba briefed the ITPS members on the launch of the International Network of Salt-Affected Soils (INSAS), which took place in Dubai, in November 2019, during the first Global Forum on Innovations for Marginal Environments (GFIME), hosted by the International Center on Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA). The first meeting of INSAS was to be held during the above mentioned symposium, but given the current global situation, a work plan and virtual meetings will be considered instead.

The ITPS members welcomed the proposal of Dr. Konyushkova on establishing new criteria for the call for abstracts for the Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils in order to reach out to a different audience outside academia. However, concerns were raised about how these abstracts would then be incorporated into a GSP publication and how to avoid abstracts becoming platforms for commercial purposes. Dr. Konyushkova also called the attention of the ITPS members on the need to invite a woman keynote speaker for the symposium.

Dr. Konyushkova expressed concern on who should be leading the Global Soil Salinity Map (GSSmap). The GSP Secretariat explained that the preparatory work and the development of the national and global maps are coordinated by the Pillar 4 working group and the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII), the ITPS was included in the reviewing process and to provide scientific advice.

Given the postponement of the Symposium, the ITPS members strongly encouraged the Secretariat to organize a webinar on salt-affected soils in the near future to raise awareness on the topic and keep interest up before the Symposium.

7. Global Assessment of Soil Biodiversity

Ms. Monica Kobayashi, on behalf of Dr. Peter de Ruiter, coordinator of the soil biodiversity working group, presented the report State of Knowledge of Soil Biodiversity - Status, challenges and potentialities. Under the leadership of the ITPS, the preparation of the Report started in the beginning of 2019, with the nomination of an Editorial Board which includes ITPS members. The report is a result of the work of 147 scientists and experts on soil biodiversity from all regions of the world and it presents the best available knowledge on soil biota and the ecosystem functions and services provided by them. FAO invited countries to participate in a National Survey on the Status of Soil Biodiversity and fifty-seven countries submitted responses covering all the regions of the world.

The ITPS members of the Soil biodiversity working group have participated in the definition of the table of contents, participation in the report preparation and in the peer review process, as well as in mobilizing countries to submit the survey and support the recommendations for the development of the plan of action.

The next steps include the presentation of the preliminary findings during the 24th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD to be held in Montreal, Canada in August 2020. The main findings of the Report supported the revision of the International Initiative on the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Soil Biodiversity and on the preparation of the updated Plan of Action. The official launch of the report will be held on 5th December 2020 during the World Soil Day celebration and some events are planned to

happen during the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity and the 15th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2021.

Dr. Peter de Ruiter acknowledged the Secretariat's efforts to meet the deadline and deliver the State of Knowledge on Soil Biodiversity – Status, challenges and potentialities report on time.

8. ITPS report to the GSP Plenary Assembly

The Chair of the ITPS, Dr. Rosa Poch, presented the numerous activities and publications in which the ITPS has participated this year and suggested some activities in which the ITPS could support the GSP for the year 2020-2021. These included the preparation of scientific/technical notes on soil fertility, soil pollution and soil biodiversity, support of the two upcoming Symposia on soil biodiversity and salt-affected soils, as well as the review of the Soil Doctor Programme documents and SoilEX. Although not imminent, the 2nd Status of the World's Soil Resources Report 2025 was also mentioned and its preparation should be planned.

Dr. Rosa Poch also stressed the need to strengthen cooperation with its partners, including the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative, IPBES, CBD, UNCCD SPI, 4 per 1000, IPCC and the European Commission.

9. Assessment of the new tools used for communication between GSP Secretariat and ITPS

The ITPS members acknowledged the extensive efforts made by the GSP Secretariat to improve communication between the ITPS and the GSP, using the online platform Trello, despite the many documents currently under progress. Dr. Poch presented the workflow for documents review and encouraged all ITPS members to work directly on the document rather than add comments on emails to prevent reviews to be lost. However, Dr. Maria Konyushkova stressed the need to strengthen communication between the Secretariat and the ITPS members also after the review of the documents to strengthen the monitoring of documents and enhance the transparency of the reviewing process. The reviewed and agreed workflow is presented in Annex III.

To respond to that comment, the GSP Secretariat welcomed the option to upload past versions of documents on Trello to allow the ITPS members to view the changes made within the document. Although the ITPS members understood how the endorsement procedures established earlier this year can improve the transparency of documents approved by the ITPS, they also raised some concerns and interrogations about the extent to which they should or should not accept a document.

10. International Board on Fertilizers Quality Assessment (INFA)

Ms. Lucrezia Caon introduced the International Board on Fertilizers Quality Assessment, to be launched in the coming months. In order to meet the request of some countries and laboratories, participants in the 3rd GLOSOLAN meeting approved the proposal to get the network to work also on the harmonization of methods for the analysis of fertilizers' quality. However, it was pointed out that this topic is strongly linked to individual countries' legislations and is usually dealt by specific laboratories. In this regard, it was proposed to establish an International Network on Fertilizers Quality Assessment (INFA) to work under GLOSOLAN. If this proposal is endorsed by the 8th GSP PA, the launch meeting of INFA can be organized at the end of June 2020.

For the moment, all institutes and organizations working on fertilizers quality assessment were asked to complete an online survey. These information will be used to open the discussion at the launch meeting of INFA and agree on the objectives and main activities of the network as well as on the international partners and networks to involve and cooperate with.

The ITPS members welcomed the development of the initiative but expressed some reservations about the name of the network. Indeed, they considered the word “quality” to be misleading as INFA will not create quality standards for fertilizers but rather harmonize their methods of analysis. The GSP Secretariat took note of this suggestion that will be discussed at the launch meeting of INFA. The ITPS members and the GSP Secretariat agreed that the network should have close links with the implementation of other components of the Fertiliser Code, such as the development of quality standards, fertilizer labels and the review of national legislations, which might be necessary to ensure the implementation of the INFA methods at the country level. The GSP Secretariat encouraged the ITPS members to participate in the launch meeting of INFA, to contribute to the discussion and to follow up on the implementation of the network’s activities.

11. Soil Manual for Rapid Responses to Emergencies

Given the occurrence of natural disasters more and more often, the FAO Emergency Division frequently requests the technical units to provide support for after-disaster development projects. Mr. Vargas called the attention of the ITPS members on this regard and proposed the preparation of a series of guidelines to react after an emergency regarding the restoration and management of soils to reestablish the provision of food and other ecosystem services.

Mr. Vargas also took this opportunity to request the ITPS member to initiate the preparatory work of the Second Edition of the Status of the World’s Soil Resources Report expected in 2025. He encouraged Dr. David Lobb and Dr. Megan Balks to start working on the concept note and methodology and proposed to organize a meeting in which the GSP Secretariat will summarize them on how the previous report was prepared and lessons learned from that exercise.

12. Any other business

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the 12th ITPS working session could not take place as organized initially but was conducted virtually in a two-hour slot over two days. Consequently, many items of the original agenda were not addressed. However a brief description of the progress done so far for each of them is provided below:

a. Global Symposium on Soil Fertility (nutrition-sensitive agriculture)

The Symposium on Soil Fertility will be a science-policy meeting, to be held over a period of three days at FAO Headquarters in Rome, with about 500 participants representing all regions of the world. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the agenda of GSP activities, the date of the symposium has been postponed to the first semester of 2022.

b. Position paper on the Fertilizer Code

The drafting of the position paper on the Fertilizer Code was originally intended to be done by brainstorming during the in-person working session, with a few hours' interval between the ITPS members drafting a table of contents for the position paper on the Fertilizer Code, from which the leader of this working group, Dr. Gary Pierzinsky, would prepare the first draft. Given the health emergency caused by the COVID-19, which forced the cancellation of the in-person session, and the limited time available during the virtual sessions due to time differences, no progress has been made on this activity.

c. Project proposal on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Soils

At present, no project proposal on Small Island Developing States (SIDs) and soils was prepared, as the GSP Secretariat is still looking for a donor interested to financially support such a project. A discussion on the main project objectives and activities had to be initiated at the 12th ITPS meeting. However, the constraints related to the organization of such a meeting online made it impossible to include this item in the revised meeting agenda. The GSP Secretariat will work on initiating the discussion with the ITPS and relevant regional partners by email and through the organization of dedicated online meetings in the second half of the year.

d. Global Soil Erosion Map (GSEmap) concept note, technical specifications and country guidelines

Activities related to the country-driven Global Soil Erosion Map (GSEmap) have been postponed to 2021. A new calendar is under preparation by the Secretariat and will be shared before the end of the year. This postponement has been decided to reduce the workload of countries, who are already participating in the development of the GSOCseq and GSSmap.

13. Closure of the meeting

Dr. Rosa Poch thanked all the participants from the ITPS and the GSP Secretariat who attended the two-day virtual working session despite the time difference and encouraged all members to continue working as to date.

Annex I - List of Participants

ITPS members	Region
Dr Lydia Mumbi Chabala (Zambia)	Africa
Dr Générose Nziguheba (Burundi)	Africa
Dr Rafla Sahli Epse Attia (Tunisia)	Near East and North Africa
Dr Kutaiba M. Hassan (Iraq)	Near East and North Africa
Dr Martha Marina Bolanos Benavides (Colombia)	Latin America and Caribbean
Dr Fernando Garcia Prechac (Uruguay)	Latin America and Caribbean
Dr Adalberto Benavides Mendoza (Mexico)	Latin America and Caribbean
Dr Lucia Anjos (Brazil)	Latin America and Caribbean
Dr Samuel Francke Campana (Chile)	Latin America and Caribbean
Dr David Allen Lobb (Canada)	North America
Dr Gary Pierzynski (USA)	North America
Dr Ashok K. Patra (India)	Asia
Dr Jun Murase (Japan)	Asia
Dr Jin Ke (China)	Asia
Dr Costanza Calzolari (Italy)	Europe
Dr Ellen R. Graber (Israel)	Europe
Dr Peter de Ruiters (The Netherlands)	Europe
Dr Maria Konyushkova (Russia)	Europe
Dr Rosa Poch (Spain)	Europe
Dr Megan Balks (New Zealand)	South West Pacific

Other participants	Affiliation
Mr Ronald Vargas	GSP Secretariat
Ms Lucrezia Caon	GSP Secretariat
Ms Clara Lefevre	GSP Secretariat
Mr Yusuf Yigini	GSP Secretariat
Ms Zineb Bazza	GSP Secretariat
Ms Natalia Rodriguez Eugenio	GSP Secretariat
Mr Yuxin Tong	GSP Secretariat
Mr Kostiantyn Viatkin	GSP Secretariat
Ms Isabelle Verbeke	GSP Secretariat
Ms Giulia Stanco	GSP Secretariat
Mr Christian Omuto	GSP Secretariat
Mr Hugo Bourhis	GSP Secretariat
Ms Helen Dejenie	GSP Secretariat
Mr Filippo Benedetti	GSP Secretariat
Ms Monica Kobayashi	GSP Secretariat
Ms Natalia Rodriguez	GSP Secretariat
Mr Matteo Sala	GSP Secretariat

Annex II – ITPS Activities 2020 - 2021

Topic	Activities	ITPS Members
Soil erosion	GSER Map	David Lobb (Lead erosion group) and Costanza Calzolari (Lead mapping activities)
	Economic Assessment of the costs and benefits of soil erosion and soil erosion control	Not yet started - NA
SOC	Technical Manual on the best management practices for SOC maintenance and sequestration	Rosa Poch and David Lobb as main coordinators in the Scientific board
	Review and endorse of Technical Specifications of the GSOC seq map	SOC Working Group
	Review and endorse of SOC MRV Protocol at farm level	SOC Working Group
	Preparation of the zero draft of the SOC position paper	To be initiated by Lúcia Anjos
Black soils	Global Black Soil Distribution Map (GBSDmap)	Lúcia Anjos and black soil working group
	Global Status of Black Soils report	Lúcia Anjos and black soil working group
Soil pollution	Global Assessment of Soil Pollution report	Soil pollution working group
	Finalization of the Technical Manual on Assessing, Mapping, Monitoring and Reporting on soil pollution	Soil pollution working group
	Database of good techniques to manage and remediate soil pollution	Soil pollution working group
	Scientific/Technical Notes on Soil Pollution	To be initiated by Ellen Graber
Soil fertility	Implementation of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers	Gary Pierzinsky
Soil Biodiversity	Report on the status of knowledge on soil biodiversity	Peter de Ruiter and soil biodiversity working group
	Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity 2021	soil biodiversity working group

Soil salinity	Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils 2021	Soil Salinity working group
	Technical Manual and cookbook for global map on salt-affected soils	Salinity working group led by Maria Konyushkova and Mohammad Jamal Khan
	Global status of salt-affected soils	
	Country guidelines and technical specifications for global map on salt-affected soils	Salinity working group
SSM	Protocol for the Assessment of Sustainable Soil Management	Megan Balks
	Review of the Soil Doctors Programme materials	All ITPS members
Other topics	Preparation of the 2nd Status of the World's Soil Resources Report 2025	Megan Balks and David Lobb
	Review of SoiLEX	All ITPS members
	Report on Gender and Sustainable Soil Management (part of the work plan between ITPS and UNCCD-SPI)	All ITPS members
	Soils and Small Island Developing States project proposals	Megan Balks and Siosuia Halavatauj

Annex III – PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW AND ENDORSEMENT OF MATERIALS BY THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL PANEL ON SOILS (ITPS)

ITPS - 5/6/2020

This procedure has been developed to efficiently review and revise documents, notes, presentations or any item produced by GSP or by the ITPS itself for the provision of expert opinion and endorsement.

1. The initial draft of such materials is sent by the GSP Secretariat to all members of the ITPS or to the ITPS working group (WG) dealing with the subject. A deadline for responses is agreed upon. In responding, comments, observations and proposed changes must refer to the draft under consideration and they should be prepared as an annotated version of the document (e.g., using Track Changes in MSWord). At this point in the review process, the attachment to responses of long documents for integration into the materials should be avoided, since this can represent excessive workload for the GSP Secretariat. As well, when a reviewer is not in agreement with content or wording, they should provide alternative content or wording for consideration.
2. The person responsible at the GSP Secretariat receives the responses, in the manner he/she requested (e.g., one response per person, comments on a previously annotated document, direct edits on MSWord document), and using document titles following a strict format: abbreviated document title, version, distribution date, reviewer initials, and response date (yy-mm-dd). For example:

For the report “Management of soils on Mars for the production of flowers”. Version 2.3. Intergalactic Soil Working Group. Distributed on 2025-01-31

Document title: SoilsOnMars V2.3

David Lobb’s response: SoilsOnMars V2.3 dal 25-05-25

3. The chair of the ITPS working group and the person at the GSP Secretariat work together to compile the responses, review and adopt changes where appropriate, and resolving conflicting responses between reviewers where possible. All requests for changes must be considered and as much as possible dealt with (if they are accepted or not, and, if not, why). It is however left to the discretion of ITPS WG chair/ GSP Secretariat to ultimately ensure the best overall outcome for the document. At this point in the review process, responses from external agencies, invited through agreements with the GSP, will be compiled and integrated.
4. Once the reviewed draft is ready, it is sent for a second round of reviews by the ITPS members or ITPS working group, with a deadline to send final, minor comments. This second round should finish with an internal approval of the final draft by the working group. The final draft should be discussed with the representative of the GSP Secretariat and the working group chair, with or without all the working group members, and agreed upon. This discussion could take place in a face-to-face meeting or as a virtual meeting on line.

- The final draft is endorsed, preferably by consensus during a working session (face-to-face or as a virtual meeting) of the ITPS, or if necessary, employing of an endorsement voting procedure set by GSP.

Note: The final version of the document has to be prepared with enough time to be evaluated by the focal points and representant of the countries, when it requires endorsement during a Plenary Assembly.

