

May 2016

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## Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



<b>Fourth session</b>
<b>Rome, 23-25 May 2016</b>
<b>Implementation process under the GSP Pillars</b>

### Executive Summary

- The Terms of Reference (ToRs) contemplate that GSP work should revolve around five “Pillars of Action”. The Rules of Procedure (RoP) specify that corresponding Plans of Action (PoAs) and more specific Implementation Plans shall be developed following an inclusive and participatory process and in accordance with agreed guidelines (cf. Annex 1 of the RoP). The Secretariat ensured that a very inclusive process was used in developing the five PoAs that were endorsed by the GSP Plenary Assembly at its sessions of 2014 and 2015. Since then, as also specified in the RoP, the Secretariat gave utmost attention to facilitating the development of global and regional implementation plans – best recognized by the acronyms GIPs and RIPs (see figure 1 below to understand the overall architecture of PoAs implementation).
- In terms of modalities, it may be useful to recall that Annex to the agreed RoP intimates that: f) the Secretariat will invite Partners to suggest how they could contribute to implementation of the approved PoA and will develop an implementation plan together with the working group, and g) Implementation will be coordinated and facilitated by the Secretariat in close consultation with the interested Partners.
- Accordingly, the Secretariat sought to mobilize efforts of all concerned partners for the development of both RIPs (cf. also Item 5 of the agenda) and GIPs for the five GSP Pillars. Due to its importance and development stage, the GIP for Pillar 4 is addressed in more detail under section 4.2 below. GIPs for Pillars 2 and 5 are in a very advanced mode of formulation, while the process for Pillars 1 and 3 is still at a more initial stage.
- A major priority for both partners, especially *via* the Regional Soil Partnerships, and the Secretariat is to conclude the formulation effort at global and regional levels and to address as urgently as possible the execution of concrete activities. A crucial issue remains the availability of sufficient financial (and in-kind) resources of both domestic and external nature in order to meet the expectations embodied by these plans.

### Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

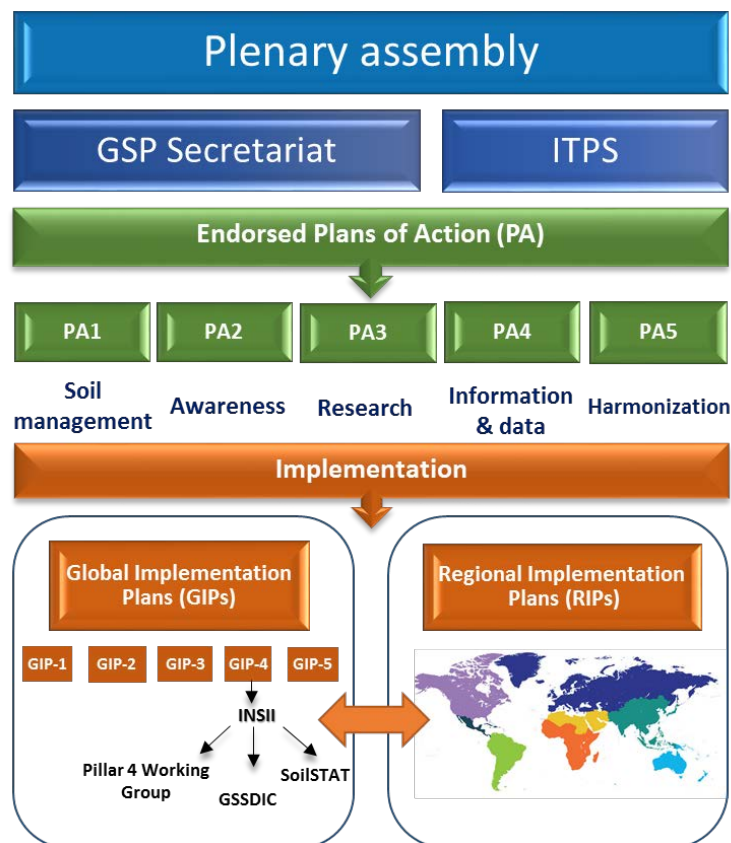
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- acknowledge the extensive work done so far in developing implementation plans and calling on all partners to join forces in the execution of these plans, including those partners prepared to invest in this process.
- note with appreciation the development of the Pillar 4 GIP and request the Secretariat to move into the execution phase together with all interested partners.
- invite partners to join the process of establishing the Global Soil Information System and become active members of the INSII by sharing expertise, data, information and other inputs.
- invite resource partners to contribute financially, as well as by seconding experts to the Secretariat for the execution of the GIP under Pillar 4, especially in view of the need to ensure key outputs by 2017.
- consider the opportunity to join the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) as a vehicle to execute activities under the GIP for Pillar 5 and to develop synergies for harmonization of soil data, indicators and measurements as part of a global framework.

## 4.1 Progress in the implementation of endorsed Plans of Action

### I. Background

1. Work under the five GSP Pillars is to be orchestrated by both Global and Regional Implementation Plans (GIPs and RIPs) which are complementary. Every Regional Soil Partnership has developed or is developing its RIP (cf. document under Item 5). The RIPs normally address activities of relevance to the five GSP pillars in an integrated manner. The following figure summarizes the overall Implementation process:



## II. Summary of progress under the Pillars<sup>1</sup>

### Pillars 1 and 3

2. The Secretariat just launched (April 2016) the process for developing the respective GIPs. Due to the closely associated characteristics of, and objectives sought under both pillars, attention is paid to ensuring full complementarity between the two GIPs. In essence, the GIP for Pillar 1 will focus on global activities of pertinence to the revised World Soil Charter and the subsequent Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (when adopted). This approach will of course take account of its eventual “trickling down” to the various RIPs, as both the principles in the Charter and the VGSSM clearly need to be applied in specific regional contexts. The GIP for Pillar 3 is expected to focus primarily on developing a mechanism for boosting targeted soil research to support the realization of the other GIP, thus combining their impact in promoting sustainable soil management.

### Pillar 2

3. The Secretariat initiated the GIP formulation process in February 2016 and the established working group has made substantial progress so far, as a first draft is currently under review among the members of this working group. The final version is expected to be available by June 2016.

### Pillar 5

4. The Secretariat initiated the development of the global-level implementation plan in January 2016. Due to the strong connection with Pillar 4, various preparatory activities took place after the meeting of the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII) held on 8-10 Dec 2015 (c.f. the following section 4.2.), while the corresponding report may be consulted at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bl103e.pdf> ). Worthy of note are the following requirements and activities which are currently being considered or pursued:

- Full complementarity with the Pillar 4 GIP: the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII) will be a key player (at global as well as at regional level) in achieving the following key areas for harmonization: soil mapping, soil classification, soil description, interpretation and evaluation. Guidance for some of these areas will involve recommendations provided by various working groups and initiatives operating outside the ambit of the GSP. The Pillar 5 GIP Chairperson is also a member of the GIP Pillar 4 Working Group in order to guarantee full complementarity between the two GIPs.
- For harmonization in the area of: “Soil sampling and laboratory analysis”, a voluntary network of reference laboratories will be established - under the umbrella of INSII and will closely liaise with the International Standardization Organisation (ISO). As mentioned under item 5, within the Asian Regional Partnership and in cooperation with the South-East Asia Laboratory Network (SEALNET), a training course on laboratory analysis quality was conducted in 2015, so that a network of laboratories sharing the same procedures and having similar quality control policies could be in place in the region. This will be followed up by three more training events in 2016.
- For harmonization in the area of: “Interoperability – Exchange of digital soil information”, work towards a global soil information model (SoilML) is currently under way through

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The GSP Pillars are recalled as follows:

<sup>1</sup> 1- Promote sustainable management of soil resources for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity.

2- Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soil.

3- Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities and synergies with related productive, environmental and social development actions.

4- Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information: data collection (generation), analysis, validation, reporting, monitoring and integration with other disciplines.

5- Harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources.

activities of ISO TC 190 (Soil Quality) and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC). These activities are fully conform with the Pillar 5 GIP but funding is needed in order to complete this work, and to allow for broad testing and applications. For that, the GSP secretariat proposes to establish close cooperation with the Interest Group on Agricultural Data (IGAD) of the Research Data Alliance (RDA), and the network on Global Open Data in Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN).

- FAO staff and members of the Asian Soil Partnership met at a meeting of IGAD and GODAN (Tokyo, 28-29 February 2016). During this occasion, it was agreed to inform all GSP partners about this opportunity and to enlist their support in the development of a soil information model through testing the current version of SoilML on a voluntary basis. This model is the basis for data exchange through web services, as the guiding principle for data exchange under Pillar 4 (“distributed system”). At a technical level, experts connected with Pillar 5 GIP are participating in a new GODAN working group with the aim to promote the interoperability of soil data.

## 4.2 Pillar 4 GIP

5. Given the importance of, and challenges related to the availability of soil data and information at all levels, Pillar 4 has seen most progress among all the Pillars in terms of formulating a cogent and feasible GIP.

6. In effect, a process for developing this GIP has been in place since December 2014. During the third session of the GSP Plenary Assembly in 2015, the draft available at that time was considered and suggestions were provided to address the final stages of development of this plan, including a very participatory, inclusive and dynamic process. A milestone was the organization by the Secretariat of the International Network of Soil Institutions workshop that was held on 8-10 December at FAO HQ in Rome (report available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-b1103e.pdf> ). During this workshop, the draft GIP was reviewed and agreement was reached on the main components. After the workshop, two further iterations were carried out and, the GIP was finalized in February 2016 (Text available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-b1102e.pdf> ).

7. The GIP describes the necessary steps for establishing the Global Soil Information System including SoilSTAT as its monitoring tool and provider of the necessary information to prepare regular updates of the Status of the World’s Soil Resources report. The key elements in terms of governance and system components are:

- The INSII network, consisting of soil information institutions ideally nominated by governments and other GSP partner institutions that have the willingness to contribute to the GIP implementation. It is also the decision making body. The INSII network will elect a chairperson for guiding the process.
- The Pillar 4 Working Group (P4WG), which carries out the decisions of the INSII, reviews progress and provides necessary guidance to the execution of the plan. The P4WG will be chaired by the INSII chairperson.
- The Global Soil Spatial Data Infrastructure Centre (GSSDIC) which provides the technical backbone of the spatial data infrastructure; it will be selected by the P4WG upon an open call launched by the GSP secretariat.
- SoilSTAT which is a system for monitoring, forecasting and reporting periodically on the status of the global soil resources. Since it forms part of the “FAOStats family”, developed closely with national institutions, FAO will lead its establishment.

8. The execution of the Pillar 4 GIP is of paramount importance, especially at a time when the Sustainable Development Goals agenda is in full swing. It is important to note that, in connection with the SDG indicator 15.3 (cf. Item 2) the UNCCD has suggested the GSP/ITPS to lead work on the sub-indicator on soil organic carbon and, after the agreement reached during the joint session between

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ITPS and SPI-UNCCD, it was agreed to produce a new soil organic carbon map by 2017 as a clear mark of support to the SDG implementation.