

Seventh Meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

Rome, Italy, 5-7 June 2019



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



**GLOBAL SOIL
PARTNERSHIP**

**REPORT OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
GLOBAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

Rome, 5-7, June 2019

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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Opening of the Session

The seventh meeting of the Plenary Assembly (PA) of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) was held in Rome at FAO headquarters on 5-7 June 2019 (the list of participants is attached in Annex I).

The session was chaired by Mr Mike Grundy (Australia), the vice-chair was Ms Floria Bertsch (Costa Rica) and the Rapporteur was Mr Thanawat Tiensin (Thailand).

Mr Daniel Gustafson, Deputy Director-General Programmes at FAO, welcomed the participants on behalf of the FAO Director-General, Mr Jose Graziano da Silva. Mr Gustafson acknowledged the work done by the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), the GSP and its partners for promoting Sustainable Soil Management at the global level. He underscored the central role of the GSP Plenary Assembly as a decision making body to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to soils. Mr Gustafson highlighted the successful establishment of nine National Soil Partnerships (NSP) and their commitment to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM). Lastly, he invited Plenary members to join the "Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future" campaign for the next World Soil Day.

Mr Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs, Assistant Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand and Chair of the Asian Soil Partnership (ASP), thanked the GSP and member countries for the successful activities to promote sustainable soil management, which in light of the alarming rates of soil degradation are becoming increasingly relevant. Mr Chandarasrivongs highlighted the success of World Soil Day (WSD) celebrations and the establishment of the WSD King Bhumibol Award. The PA members were invited to promote the event within their countries and to come forward with nominations. Mr Chandarasrivongs proceeded by highlighting some key activities of the ASP, including the launch of the Centre of Excellence for Soil Research in Asia (CESRA), and acknowledged the GSP for facilitating the ASP activities. Lastly, Mr Chandarasrivongs highlighted that since 2012 the GSP and its members have made a significant progress to position soils in the global agenda and to advocate for sustainable soil management. Considering all these achievements and taking note on the need to secure the continuity of such process, he has invited the PA members to consider the formalization of the GSP in the FAO structure so to move the GSP from a voluntary partnership to a formal body of FAO. Finally, Mr Chandarasrivongs concluded by reiterating the key message "no soil, no food; no healthy soil, no healthy food".

Ms. Laura Bertha Reyes Sánchez, president-elect of the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS), welcomed the participants of the meeting and provided background information on the IUSS and its mandate. She highlighted the common goals shared with the GSP linked to fighting soil degradation and regarding the promotion of sustainable soil management. She underscored the need to raise awareness among the younger generations as well as reach a broader audience outside the soil science community. Ms. Reyes Sanchez concluded by emphasizing the cooperation between the IUSS and the GSP needed to achieve these common goals.

Mr Eduardo Mansur, Director of the Land and Water Division at FAO, highlighted FAO's continued commitment to the GSP, which over the years has successfully supported the translation of scientific knowledge into policies on soil. Mr Mansur underscored the great outreach of the latest Global Symposium of Soil Erosion (GSER19) and acknowledged the GSP for its successful organization. The PA members were invited to disseminate the outcome document resulting from the Symposium. Mr Mansur proceeded by highlighting some of the main upcoming activities of the GSP, such as the Global Soil Doctors Program and the global assessments on soil pollution and soil biodiversity and stressed their relevance in regards to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, declared by the UN General Assembly in March 2019. Finally, Mr Mansur mentioned that notwithstanding the great achievements of the GSP, the Secretariat still faces several administrative challenges that limit for instance the availability of translation of the plenary documents in all UN languages.

The opening session was concluded with two keynote presentations, given by Mr Suresh Kumar Chaudhari, Assistant Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and Mr Gérard Rass, General Secretary of the Association for Sustainable Agriculture (APAD). Mr Chaudhari reported on the experience of India with the Soil Health Programme, highlighting the major constraints linked with proper soil management in India, where croplands face increasing soil degradation. He presented the government of India's priorities in soil health management, which includes new tools and techniques of soil testing, balanced and integrated nutrient management, and liquid fertilizer use through drip irrigation, use of organic amendments, soil and water conservation and land reclamation, and many more. Mr Gérard Rass, presented several case studies led by APAD, and funded by the European Commission (EC) and supported by the French Ministry of Agriculture, aimed at promoting conservation agriculture with a farmer-to-farmer approach. Mr Rass also mentioned the need for a joint venture between the GSP and the Global Conservation Agriculture Network (GCAN), as well as a few expectations from the GSP and FAO, which include the need for a balanced dialogue with farmers, the need to define decision processes for public policies and the allocation of a budget for farmers' participation.

Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda

The document containing the provisional agenda and timetable was amended as per request of the delegation of Cuba, supported by the European Union, Portugal and Switzerland to include under item 2 a discussion on the proposal to formalize the GSP as a permanent body of FAO and subsequently adopted.

Item 2: Overall performance of the Global Soil Partnership

2.1 Main achievements and challenges 2018-2019

The Assembly welcomed the achievements of the GSP and its ITPS during the reporting period, urging for a more active engagement by countries and partners through focal points and technical staff. The PA invited the Member Countries to support and recognize the role played by experts from their ministries, academia, and research institutions, who freely provide inputs to various working groups under the umbrella of the GSP and the ITPS. The PA recommended that further efforts be made to support the implementation of the VGSSM and invited other member countries to translate them into their local languages as part of their broad dissemination. The need to strengthen the link between the GSP and the

ITPS and to improve the communication with its focal points was further emphasized. Lastly, the PA suggested that after 7 years since its establishment it would be appropriate to conduct an evaluation of the GSP performance including the request of formalization of the GSP. The GSP Secretariat pledged to perform such evaluation provided funds will be provided for such assessment.

Members highlighted the need that the GSP Secretariat should make further efforts to involve countries, partners and experts on the different activities requested by the GSP Plenary Assembly, as otherwise it becomes a workload for the Secretariat only.

2.2 Report on financial status of GSP including the Healthy Soils Facility

The PA took notice of the efforts made to mobilize resources for implementing the activities of the GSP and renewed its call to all partners, and especially those resource partners that did not contribute to date to support the GSP. The PA commended the resource partners who have contributed so far to the Healthy Soils Facility. The issue of translation and interpretation services for the plenary assembly was discussed by the PA and it was agreed that the Secretariat should contact donors to mobilize resources for this service. In case resources are not mobilized and as in exceptional case, the PA agreed that the session could be organized in English only.

2.3 New developments: National Soil Partnerships

The Assembly welcomed the establishment of the National Soil Partnerships in: Nicaragua, Portugal, Slovakia, Italy, Mongolia, Malawi, Thailand, Costa Rica, Philippines, Brazil, Ukraine and Colombia. The Assembly suggested that this should not be a formal body in the current GSP structure but it will only be a country-driven initiative to promote an interinstitutional coordinated response to soils at national level.

The PA acknowledged the important role of National Soil Partnerships (NSPs) for coordinating and creating synergies among different stakeholders within the country. The PA appreciated the proposed guidelines, as a potential baseline for those countries that do wish to establish a NSP aligned with GSP's implementation plan. The PA supported the proposed guidelines for the establishment of NSPs and stressed that the document should not be binding in nature and should be adapted to national requirements.

2.4 Report by countries and partners

The PA appreciated the oral reports made by countries on the main activities and achievements in regards to sustainable soil management, in the following order: Brazil; Cuba; Islamic Republic of Iran; Chile; Turkey and Switzerland. The PA welcomed the extensive work performed and acknowledged the presenting countries for their commitment.

2.5 Status of the GSP within FAO

The PA welcomed the proposal of formalizing the Global Soil Partnership from a voluntary partnership into a formal body in the FAO's structure. During the discussion, it was acknowledged that changing the

status of the GSP to a formal body would guarantee more stability and continuity of the good progress made today. Furthermore, this will ease the administrative issues including the mobilization of financial resources and engagement of FAO regional, sub-regional and national offices. It was concluded that the proposal should be presented to the 27th Committee on Agriculture in 2020 (COAG 27) for its endorsement.

Item 3: Work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel of Soils (ITPS): for information and decision (GSPPA: VII/2019/3)

3.1 Report by the chairperson on main activities and outcomes of the work programme 2018-2019

The PA appreciated the overview contained in the document as well as the oral presentation by the ITPS Chairperson, Ms Rosa Poch, who briefed the PA members about the new composition of the panel and reported on its main achievements and collaboration with other intergovernmental bodies. The PA expressed appreciation for the wide array of relevant activities performed, including the outstanding organization of the Global Symposium of Soil Erosion (GSER19).

3.2 ITPS work programme 2019-2020

The PA endorsed the work plan for 2019-2020 and expressed the need to foster synergies and cooperation between the ITPS and other non-governmental bodies. The Assembly invited donors and partners to support this work by providing financial and in-kind resources. The PA appreciated the extensive progress on the Protocol for Assessing SSM. Nonetheless, it was suggested that the document needs further refinement in regards to the list of indicators considered, especially the one related to soil biodiversity. The PA recommended to take into consideration the effect of agricultural insurance for the Study on the Economic Benefits of SSM. Finally, the PA proposed that the ITPS meeting should be held at least three months prior to the next Plenary to allow the panel to review relevant documents.

3.3 Global symposia and follow up actions

3.3.1 Report on the Global Symposium on Soil Erosion (GSER19)

The PA appreciated the successful organization and positive outcomes of the Global Symposium on Soil Erosion (GSER19). The PA suggested that the Economic Assessment of Soil Erosion may explore the effect of incentives such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). The PA recommended to be more specific when addressing the type of erosion that will be assessed in the upcoming Global Map on Soil Erosion, and welcomed the fact that the map will not only include water erosion, but also wind and tillage erosion.

3.3.2 Progress on the implementation of the outcome document of the Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC17)

The PA noted the extensive work on the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC17) performed by the ITPS and the GSP Secretariat. The PA appreciated the efforts revolving around providing accompanying documents to the Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOCmap) and underlined the need for more information in regards to the uncertainty estimation of the map as well as the potential interpretation of the map. RECSOIL (Recarbonization of global agricultural soils) was also presented as a tool to implement the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture.

3.3.3 Progress on the implementation of the outcome document of the Global Symposium on Soil Pollution (GSOP18) including the assessment of the global status and regional trends of soil pollution

The PA acknowledged the progress on the implementation of the outcome document that resulted from the Global Symposium on Soil Pollution (GSOP18). Regarding the assessment of the global status and regional trends of soil pollution, it was suggested to carefully assess the quality and source of the information available, especially when considering non-governmental or non-official sources.

The need to improve the communication between the national focal points and the GSP Secretariat, to obtain accurate information on soil pollution was also emphasized.

3.3.4 Preparation of the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity (GSOBI20)

The PA appreciated the development on the preparation of the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity and underlined its great relevance for the upcoming 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) or COP-15, in Beijing, October 2020. It was highlighted that this event will play a key role in raising awareness of the importance of soil biodiversity. It was suggested that the selection of biological indicators be relevant for the upcoming Status of Knowledge on Soil Biodiversity Assessment Report, which will be published before the upcoming symposium, GSOBI20.

Item 4: Progress under the GSP Pillars including the development/execution of implementation plans: for information and decision (GSPPA: VII/2019/4)

4.1 Pillar 1: Execution of the Implementation Plan

4.1.1 Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management

The PA appreciated the progress on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM). The PA praised the efforts aimed at translating the document into local languages and encouraged other member countries to do the same. It was suggested that member countries provide the GSP Secretariat with information regarding how the VGSSM are and/or could be implemented at the national level.

4.1.2 Proposed Protocol for the Assessment of Sustainable Soil Management

The PA acknowledged the extensive work of the ITPS and the GSP Secretariat on the Protocol for the Assessment of Sustainable Soil Management. It was highly recommended to increase the cooperation with other institutions working on similar issues, such as the UNCCD and more specifically WOCAT. The PA recommended to open a round of consultation to further refine the proposed indicators of the document. Lastly, it was suggested to either include two specific sections regarding the sustainable

management of forest and urban soils or to explicitly state that the protocol is aimed at the management of agricultural soils.

Regarding the concept note for the study on the Economic Benefits of Sustainable Soil Management, the PA recommended to relate this work to already existing projects, such as the one the Economics of Land Degradation led by the German Development Agency (GIZ). The PA also proposed to investigate the effects of agricultural insurance within this study. Lastly, the Plenary suggested to involve a wider range of experts outside of the ITPS.

4.1.3 Status of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers

The PA welcomed the revised version of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers and appreciated the document as being comprehensive and well balanced. The PA members expressed their willingness to encourage members to support the endorsement of the Fertilizer Code at the upcoming 41st session of the FAO Conference and thereafter support its implementation, both financially and in-kind. The need to encourage farmers to test their soils for nutrients for more precise fertilization practices was emphasized.

4.1.4 International Network of Black Soils

The PA welcomed the work implemented under the International Network of Black Soils and invited members from countries with black soils to join the network and to continue the implementation of its work plan. The need for a clear definition, especially in light of the upcoming mapping exercise of Black Soils, was highlighted. It was recommended that the ITPS perform a final review for having a more scientifically and acceptable sound definition.

4.2 Pillar 2: Execution of the Implementation Plan

4.2.1 Towards the strengthening of soil governance (e.g. SoILEX)

The PA acknowledged the extensive work done in developing SoILEX, a global online database on soil-related legal instruments. The PA endorsed the use of SoILEX as a living tool that will contribute to raising awareness of the importance of legal frameworks for soil protection and conservation and invited members to review the legal frameworks available for each country under SoILEX. The PA recommended that land tenure legislation also be taken into consideration. It was suggested to seek out further cooperation with other non-governmental bodies to avoid the duplication of efforts, especially in regards to Soil Wiki, a similar initiative launched by the EC. The PA invited member countries to review and update their country profile and provide a brief summary, in English, of those legal instruments, which are not in any of the official UN languages. The role of SoILEX as a platform to exchange information on soil legislation among countries with similar cultural backgrounds and environmental issues was appreciated. Precaution was advised regarding the adaptation of new legislation to the socio-economic and institutional particularities of each country.

4.2.2 Report on the implementation of World Soil Day 2018 and its celebration in 2019

The PA took note of the successful World Soil Day (WSD) celebration on 5 December 2018 and the program foreseen for WSD 2019. The PA endorsed the proposed theme for the WSD 2020: "Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity". The PA renewed its call to member countries, other partners and new stakeholders to organize WSD celebrations using the 2019 theme. It also invited resource partners to contribute to the implementation of the sustained communication plan developed by the Secretariat.

4.2.3 Report on the Glinka World Soil Prize

The PA took note of the successful organization of the Glinka World Soil Prize in 2018 and the program foreseen for the 2019 award ceremony. The PA invited partners to disseminate as widely as possible the call for nominations to ensure a more inclusive contest with submissions from the different regions of the world. The PA urged resource partners to financially contribute to the implementation of this valuable initiative beyond 2020, as it is currently sponsored by the Russian Federation for a limited period.

4.2.4 Report on the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award

The PA appreciated the launch of the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award sponsored by the Kingdom of Thailand. The awarding ceremony was held in Bangkok, Thailand and the 1st World Soil Day Award Prize from the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Cooperative of Thailand was granted to Practical Action Bangladesh in the person of Mr Habibur Rahman.

The PA appreciated the delivery of the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award medal to H.E. Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to FAO who expressed its appreciation to the Government of Thailand and the GSP Secretariat for organizing and facilitating the event.

4.2.5 Report on the Global Soil Doctors Programme

The PA appreciated the report on the progress on the implementation of the Global Soil Doctors Programme, which was inspired by a similar successfully established initiative in Thailand. The Kingdom of Thailand expressed their interest in providing technical support to implement the programme at the global level.

4.2.6 Towards "EduSoils"

The PA took note of the activities related to the implementation of the EduSOILS platform and requested the GSP Secretariat to continue coordinating the activities aimed at ensuring its effective promotion and use. The PA invited member countries to support the preparation of the educational material and their translation into local languages. The PA recommended seeking cooperation with those countries that have already implemented a similar program. The fact that the material will be prepared to build capacity at different stakeholder levels was appreciated.

4.3 Pillar 3: Execution of the Implementation Plan

4.3.1 Establishment of a soil research database

The PA invited member countries to contribute to the development and consolidation of the online research and development (R&D) platform, by answering the questionnaire to be prepared by the Pillar 3 working group, providing information on all relevant programmes, projects and courses that will be incorporated into the database and to promote the use of the Soil R&D platform within their networks. The PA members were encouraged to find a suitable name for the platform.

4.3.2 Establishment of the Centre of Excellence on Soil Research in Asia (CESRA)

The PA welcomed the establishment of the Centre of Excellence on Soil Research in Asia (CESRA). CESRA was established in Thailand under the auspices of the Asian Soil Partnership and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand. The PA invited other non-Asian member countries and partners to contribute to the initiative.

4.4 Pillar 4: Execution of the Implementation Plan

4.4.1 Status of the execution of the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan

The PA acknowledged the progress made in the establishment of GloSIS and encouraged member countries and partners to support other countries in the establishment of their Soil Information Systems. The PA appreciated the contribution of the Soil Data Facility for the establishment of GloSIS. It was recommended to maintain cooperation with relevant institutions to create synergies. The PA member countries were invited to appoint a relevant contact person and institution to join the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII).

The Assembly endorsed the proposal to have a representative from the IUSS Global Soil Map Working Group join the Pillar 4 Working Group (P4WG).

Regarding the amendment to the GSP Soil Data Policy (Annex 3, Amendment 2), the PA highlighted the importance of adequately recognizing institutions and individuals who were actively involved in the mapping and recommended exploring all avenues to do so. It was concluded that the final decision be taken during the 5th Working Session of INSII, October, 2019. The difficulties in mobilizing resources for the establishment of GloSIS were underscored. It was highlighted that the launch of new global maps addressing soil threats could be a viable way to incentivize funds and ultimately support the establishment of GloSIS.

4.4.2 International Network of Soil Information institutions (INSII) and appointment of its Chair

Mr Luca Montanarella, European Union and former Chair of the ITPS during the 2015-2017 period, was appointed as Chair of the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII).

4.4.3 Report on the Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOCmap) and follow up

The PA noted the work accomplished since the launch of the Global Soil Organic Carbon map on World Soil Day, 5 December 2017, and welcomed its upcoming update to Version 1.5.0, with 35 improved national soil organic carbon maps. The PA members were invited to further contribute to the GSOCmap, to update and validate their national SOC maps, to share soil data for the global validation exercise and to use the national SOC maps for reporting on the SDG target 15.3.

The PA expressed gratitude for the provided trainings on digital soil mapping and invited the GSP Secretariat and partners to continue the activities related to capacity development. Lastly, the PA recommended sustained efforts aimed at providing information about the uncertainty of the GSOCmap as well as its validation.

4.4.4 Progress in the preparation of the global soil salinity, soil erosion and soil organic carbon sequestration potential maps

The Assembly welcomed the efforts made to date by the ITPS, the GSP Secretariat and relevant members in the preparation of the Global Soil Salinity map (GSSmap), the Global Soil Erosion map (GSEmap) and the Global Soil Organic Carbon sequestration potential map (GSOCseq). The PA invited countries to be actively involved in the preparation of the global maps and recommended increasing cooperation with relevant institutions, such as the International Center on Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA). It was suggested to continue the capacity building efforts to support countries in the launch of their national maps. The need to continue implementing the bottom-up approach was emphasized. During the discussion it was clarified that countries that do not provide national maps on time, will be given the choice to be either left out blank or gap-filled.

4.4.5 Global report on the state of knowledge on soil biodiversity covering current status, challenges and potentials

The PA welcomed the proposal for preparing a report on the state of knowledge on soil biodiversity covering current status, challenges and potentials and to make it available for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD. The relevance of this upcoming report in light of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-15) in Beijing, October, 2020, was highlighted. The contribution of the European Union to the concept note was appreciated.

4.5 Pillar 5: Execution of the Implementation Plan

4.5.1 Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and revision of the GSP Soil Data Policy

Acknowledging the added value of the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and its Regional Soil Laboratory Networks (RESOLANs) in the field of soil analysis and soil data harmonization, the PA invited member countries to motivate national laboratories to join and support the work of the network. The PA recommended GLOSOLAN organize its annual meetings in different countries on rotation as a way to promote regional participations and increase GLOSOLAN's visibility.

The PA endorsed the proposed Amendment to the GSP Soil Data Policy on soil laboratory data (see Annex 3, Amendment 1) provided that point 1.1 on the Anonymity of Soil Laboratories be rephrased to ensure that non-public laboratory codes are developed and maintained by the GSP Secretariat and by other few selected actors involved in GLOSOLAN and proficiency testing activities.

4.5.2 Regional Soil Laboratory Networks (RESOLAN)

The PA welcomed the establishment of the Regional Soil Laboratory Networks (RESOLAN), including the Asian Soil Laboratory Network (SEALNET), the Latin American Network of Soil Laboratories (LATSOLAN), the African Soil Laboratory Network (AFRILAB) and the Pacific Soil Laboratory Network under the

Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council (ASPAC). The PA acknowledged that the Regional Soil Laboratory Networks for the Near East and North Africa, Europe, Eurasia and North America will be established soon.

4.5.3 Report of the execution of proficiency testing (PT)

4.5.3.2 Adoption of the resolution for the international exchange of soil samples for research purposes under GLOSOLAN

The PA acknowledged the importance of proficiency testing (PT) in assessing the performance of soil laboratory and in monitoring GLOSOLAN's progress. However, the PA recognized that international barriers to the exchange of soil samples exist and that these might compromise the efficient execution of PT in GLOSOLAN. In this regard, the PA supported the submission of the "Resolution for the international exchange of soil samples for research purposes under GLOSOLAN" to the 27th Committee on Agriculture in 2020 (COAG 27). The PA requested FAO to help developing a simplified procedure for the exchange of samples at the international level.

Item 5: Report on Regional Soil Partnerships: for information and decision (GSPPA: VII/2019/5)

The PA appreciated the oral reports made by representatives of the Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs) on the current status in their respective geographical areas in the following order: Asia; Africa; Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean; Europe and the associated Eurasian Sub-Regional Soil Partnership; South America; North America; Near East and North Africa; and the Pacific.

The PA members were invited to support the RSPs by mobilizing resources and supporting the regional activities.

The PA noted that there are large differences between regions and countries in terms of current levels of implementation of GSP activities and called for the promotion of increased horizontal collaboration between the different RSPs. It was suggested that a parallel meeting be organized during the PA meetings between the chairs of the regional soil partnerships and the GSP Secretariat.

During the report of Asian Soil Partnership (ASP), Mr Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs (Thailand) acknowledged the important role that the GSP has played in keeping soils on the global agenda in the last 7 years and proposed that a book celebrating the main achievements and milestones of the partnerships be published. The PA welcomed the proposal, deeming it a great opportunity to acknowledge the GSP for its extensive work and as a way to reflect on its progress throughout the last 7 years. The EU further expressed interest to be actively involved in the drafting process of the book.

The Assembly appreciated the ASP for its commitment and for the establishment of the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award and the Centre of Excellence on Soil Research in Asia (CESRA).

The PA congratulated with an award of appreciation, the work and commitment performed by Mr Olegario Muniz (Cuba) Chair of the former Central American Soil Partnership, which will be subsequently merged within the Latin American Soil Partnership.

The PA welcomed and endorsed the proposal by the Near East and North African (NENA) Soil Partnership to establish an International Network on Salt-affected Soils provided that a sound concept note is prepared. The PA deemed the network as a great opportunity to tackle the issues of soil salinization and sodification, and to exchange experiences between countries that have to deal with this soil threat.

Item 6: Soil activities of other initiatives/partners for information and decision (GSPPA: VII/2019/6)

The 4/1000 initiative

The Assembly appreciated the presentation on the activities of the 4pour1000 initiative and welcomed its cooperation with the GSP. The PA reiterated the importance of increasing cooperation between the GSP and relevant partners active on common soil issues.

Item 7: Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, and appointment of the Rapporteur for the next period: for decision

In line with agreed arrangements, Ms Floria Bertsch from the Latin America and the Caribbean region and Mr Thanawat Tiensin from the Asia region were nominated as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson respectively, both to serve from the end of the present meeting until the next session. In addition, Mr Hans Brand from the European region was subsequently nominated to act as Rapporteur for the next session in 2020.

Item 8: Date and venue of the next Plenary session

The PA endorsed the proposed dates of 3-5 June 2020 for the next plenary session, to be held at FAO headquarters in Rome.

Item 9: Any other matters

The PA recommended that the Chairs for Pillars 1, 2 and 3 should be nominated and elected, as the Secretariat has adopted these functions in the absence of chairs. The Secretariat will continue its role of coordinating Pillars and Regions. In order to increase the responsiveness of the Working Groups it was suggested to task the focal point with appointing potential members.

At the request and offer of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the PA endorsed the proposal to organize the Global Symposium on Soil Salinity in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in October 2020.

Finally, the GSP Secretariat was tasked to facilitate the participation of member countries that lack monetary funds to attend the next Plenary Assembly meetings.

ANNEX I - List of Participants**FAO members**

Country	Participants
Argentina	Luis María URRIZA
	Nazareno Cruz MONTANI CAZABAT
	Carla PASCALE MEDINA
	Angela TEVES LIBARONA
Azerbaijan	Firidun TAGHIYEV
Bangladesh	Abdus Sobhan SIKDER
	Manash MITRA
	Rajib TRIPURA
Brazil	Fernando José MARRONI DE ABREU
	Lucianara ANDRADE FONSECA
	Jefé LEÃO RIBEIRO
Bulgaria	Petio PETEV
Burkina Faso	Alice SIDIBE ANAGO
Burundi	Jean Bosco NDINDURUVUGO
Cabo Verde	Elsa SIMÕES
Cameroon	Moungui MEDÍ
	Jacques TURCHE
Canada	Bob TURNOCK
	Jennifer Fellows
Chile	Rodrigo OSORIO
	Tamara VILLANUEVA
	Margarita VIGNEAUX
China	Yang GAO
	Zhangquan CHEN
	Yuguo LIU
Colombia	Mónica FONSECA JARAMILLO
Costa Rica	Amarilli VILLEGAS CORDERO
	Floria BERTSCH HERNANDEZ
	Luis Fernando CECILIANO PIEDRA
	Paula PERAZA AGUILAR
Cuba	Dagoberto RODRÍGUEZ LOZANO
Cyprus	George POULIDES
	Marios GEORGIADIS
Czechia	Radim VACHA
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Song Chol RIM
	Chon Gil KIM

Dominican Republic	Mario ARVELO
	INFANTE QUIÑONES
	Liudmila KUZMICHEVA
	Maria Cristina LAUREANO
	Patricia RODRIGUEZ
	Julia VICIOSO
Eritrea	Asmerom KIDANE
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	Amandine CELIE
	Gemma CORNUAU
	Frédéric LAFFONT
	Isabelle MIALET-SERRA
Germany	Mechthild Caspers
	Ingeborg Maria BAYER
Hungary	Zoltán KÁLMÁN
	Boglárka KARNER
	Evelin LANTOS
India	Suresh CHAUDHARI
IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)	Mohammad Hossein EMADI
	Shahin GHORASHIZADEH
	Jahanbaksh MIRZAVAND
Israel	Eran ETTINGER
Italy	Mirco BARBERO
	Anna BENEDETTI
	Giulio CARDINI
	Petra ENGEL
	Elisabetta LANZELLOTTO
	Silvia NICOLI
Ivory Coast	Seydou CISSÉ
	Gisèle COULIBALY NÉE
	Eloi Victor KAMBOU
	Kouame KANGA
Kiribati	Kabuati NAKABUTA
Mexico	Benito JIMENEZ SAUMA
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