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	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

First session

Rome, 11-12 June 2013

Development of Plans of Actions for the GSP Pillars

Executive Summary

- The approved Terms of Reference of the GSP (CL 145/REP/F1) specify that it should be organized around five Pillars. Plans of Action under these pillars are expected to guide future work and need to be formulated. The pillars are as follows:
 - Promote sustainable management of soil resources.
 - Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils.
 - Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities.
 - Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information.
 - Support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management, with a national validation that takes into account the differences of production systems and ecosystems.
- The development of fully-fledged Plans of Action under each pillar is a medium to long-term effort, as they necessarily require a wide range of inputs from, and discussion among all partners, including advice from the ITPS. Pending this collective effort, together with various partners, the Secretariat has carried out a number of activities which should pave the way for formulating more substantial Plans of Action. This document provides short summaries of this preliminary work under the pillars.

Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

1. The Plenary Assembly may wish to:
 - request the Secretariat to continue to carry out supportive activities under the different pillars, laying the foundation for fully-fledged Plans of Action.

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- request the ITPS to guide and support, from the technical point of view, the formulation of these Plans of Action.
- invite partners to support in all appropriate ways the formulation and implementation of the Plans of Action.
- urge the Secretariat to seek swift implementation of activities for all GSP Pillars.
- note the advanced development of the Plan of Action for Pillar 4, request the Secretariat to implement it accordingly and contribute to improved global soil information.

1. The approved Terms of Reference of the GSP (CL 145/REP/F1) envisaged that actions within the GSP should be organized around the following five pillars:
 - Promote sustainable management of soil resources.
 - Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils.
 - Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities.
 - Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information.
 - Support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management, with a national validation that takes into account the differences of production systems and ecosystems.

2. The development of well articulated Plans of Action under each pillar is a long-term effort requiring considerable inputs from, and discussion among all partners, as well as substantive advice from the soon to be established ITPS. In the meantime, building on contributions from different partners, the Secretariat has carried out a number of activities which should assist in formulating these Plans of Action. A short summary of this preliminary work is presented below for each pillar.

Pillar 1: Promote sustainable management of soil resources

- 1) As part of the regional workshops for establishing the partnerships, the Secretariat has taken stock of needs and priorities at national and regional level for promoting sustainable soil management. It has also organized a technical workshop on: “Managing Living Soils” held in December 2012, where important elements for elaborating Plans of Action were collected. A report has been produced and will constitute a solid basis for preparing the pertinent Plans of Action, jointly with all Partners.
- 2) It has been requested to be pay special attention to Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America to enhance soil health for supporting sustainable increases of food production. Accordingly, the Secretariat is preparing for Sub-Saharan Africa, in collaboration with the African Union and relevant partner organizations, an assessment of existing gaps in the implementation of the Abuja Declaration and different Soil Health Programmes. The Secretariat is also working with partner organizations towards the establishment of an African Ministerial Conference on integrated soil fertility management.
- 3) A regional consultation is planned for Central America to establish relevant partnerships and to develop a sustainable soil management program for supporting small farmers.

Pillar 2: Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils

- 1) Awareness raising was one of the main activities in the Secretariat seeking broad endorsement of events such as the World Soil Day to be held on 5 December and the celebration of the International Year of Soils in the year 2015. These constitute essential platforms for ensuring due awareness among policy-makers and stakeholders about the importance of soils at all levels.
- 2) In addition, the Secretariat has developed video materials that are distributed and used in schools and universities around the world in order to share with children and youth the importance of soils in many key contexts, and for sustaining life in general.
- 3) Technical advice was provided to a number of specific requests from national institutions interested in formulating soil policies and developing soil-related actions towards conservation and sustainable management of this crucial resource.
- 4) The Secretariat also advocated and sought support for increased investment in various soil activities which would contribute to broader food security and rural development objectives. A more robust plan of action should build on these initial promotional activities.

Pillar 3: Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities

- 1) Soil research activities are undertaken by a wide range of research institutions and universities, and are very fragmented at a global scale. In effect, there is still a substantial gap in interactions between researchers and rural development actors; in this regard, the Secretariat should help members and partners to identify points of convergence to match effective needs in the field with appropriate targeted research and technological responses.
- 2) In order to capture ongoing activities and develop a proper Plan of Action, the Secretariat proposes to undertake a web-based consultation with national agricultural research organizations, universities and the CGIAR system.

Pillars 4 and 5: Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information and support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management

- 1) The Secretariat organized a technical workshop with partner institutions on “*global soil information*” in March 2012. Participants from various regions were able to present the current availability of global and regional soil information and related capacities. New tools and methods that can aid the demanding process of generating adequate soil information were also discussed. A key outcome of this workshop was the establishment of a working group, with representatives from all regions. Its task was to prepare a discussion paper that will be the prime basis for developing Plans of Action under these pillars. The draft discussion paper was shared with the global community. Comments were provided on the draft and a final version was produced which can be consulted on the [GSP website](#).
- 2) During the discussion of the proposed World Soil Day at the FAO Council in 2012, the Secretariat organized a side event, at which a state of the art report was presented on “*Global and regional soil information: Where are we? Where to go?*”. The report concludes that currently the only global soil information available is the FAO-UNESCO soil map and report produced in 1979. In light of increasing data needs for assessing the implications of climate change and making agricultural production forecasts, the soil science community is regrettably not in a position to offer an accurate assessment of current soil resources at global level. That

needs to be changed by fostering cooperation and efforts towards establishing a soil health monitoring framework.

- 3) It is also clear that harmonization is a key dimension in producing soil information. Therefore, it was found logical to consider Pillars 4 and 5 together, as they are fully interrelated.
- 4) The Secretariat has supported soil information projects in Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, and the Near East to strengthen regional soil information systems, using state of the art technology. This is a medium to long-term effort but first steps of recovering and storing soil legacy data available at national level have to date been met. Capacity development of national institutions was given due attention but more resources are needed in this area, to meet strong demands.