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Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



Eighth session
Virtual, 3-5 June 2020
Work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) (GSPPA:VIII/2020/4)

Executive Summary

- This document contains the annual progress report of the ITPS, complementing those submitted to previous sessions of the Plenary Assembly (PA). Given the present context of virtual session, it is necessarily in telegraphic form, listing the main activities carried out by the Panel and the conclusions reached. It is recalled that the current members were appointed by the PA at its 6th session in June 2018 for a three-year term. The ITPS Chair is also due to make an oral presentation. This document also provides the revised ITPS work programme for 2020-21 for the information and endorsement of the PA. In both past and planned work, due attention is paid to highlight important instances of cooperation with other pertinent bodies and initiatives which remains a major priority for the Panel.
- It may be noted that the twelfth meeting of the ITPS (scheduled for March 2020) could not take place due to the Covid19 pandemics, while the Panel has continued to operate through virtual channels. A virtual 12th working session will take place on 26-27 May 2020
- The panel has prepared a position paper on **Soils and Covid19** that was submitted to Science. This paper provide significant guidance on the role of soils during and especially after the COVID19 pandemic.

Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

- Review and comment, as relevant, on the range of activities undertaken by the ITPS in the last twelve month period.
- Endorse the ITPS work plan 2020-2021.
- Urge countries and partners to encourage their national experts to participate in the different activities lead by the ITPS.

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

1. Joint work with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative (GSBI), and the European Commission (EC) towards finalising the Report on the Status of Knowledge on Soil Biodiversity and its Summary for Policy Makers to be presented to the 15th CBD Conference of the Parties (COP).
2. Organisation of the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity (postponed to 2-4 February 2021).
3. Organisation of the Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils (postponed to 13-16 September 2021).
4. Formulation of a joint workplan with the Science Policy interface of the United Nations to Combat Desertification covering: a review of all the work related to Soil Organic Carbon in the context of the GSOC17 Outcome Document “Unlocking the potential of soil organic carbon”, including the MRV, the SOC sequestration potential and the Manual of Good Practices;
 - as contribution to the Decision 16/COP14 of the UNCCD, the development and implementation of RECSOIL which is fully consistent with this decision.
 - co-organization of the Global Symposia on Soil Biodiversity and Soil Salinity.
 - preparation of a report on “Gender and Sustainable Soil Management” using the successful e-consultation organized by the GSP.
5. Cooperation with the Scientific and Technical Committee of the 4/1000 initiative regarding work related to soil organic carbon under the GSOC17 outcome document.
6. Follow-up actions to the Global Symposium on Soil Erosion (GSER19):
 - concept note of the Global Soil Erosion Map following a multi-level, bottom-up approach.
 - publication (ongoing) of selected contributions to the Symposium in two indexed journals.
7. Relating to the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture: RECSOIL, a facility to move the SOC agenda into concrete implementation; a document regarding the Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) potential for offsetting CO₂ emissions was produced.
8. Updating of the Global Soil Organic Carbon Map coupled with a document on the Interpretation of the GSOC Map, as requested by member countries.
9. Elaboration and reformulation of the Technical Manual for Soil Organic Carbon Management (ongoing).
10. Reformulation and endorsement of the Protocol for the Assessment of Sustainable Soil Management (SSM).
11. Preparation of the Concept Note of the Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration Potential Map and of the GSOCseq Technical Specifications and Country Guidelines.
12. Endorsement of the feasible and regionally contextualized guidelines for monitoring, reporting and verification of SOC stocks and SOC changes (SOC-MRV).
13. Endorsement of the Table of Content of the Global Status of Black Soils Report.
14. Preparation of a position paper on SOC and Climate Change.
15. Global Symposium on Salt Affected Soils: preparation of the concept note.
16. Global Soil Salinity Map: endorsement of the manual and cookbook for mapping salt-affected soils.
17. Preparation of the Technical Guidelines for Assessing, Mapping, Monitoring and Reporting on Soil Pollution.
18. Guidance on the preparation of the global assessment of soil pollution report.
19. Preparation of a document on Soils and Covid19, to be published in 2020.

4.2 Work programme for 2020-2021

20. Follow-up actions to the Global Symposium on Soil Erosion (GSER19):
 - Concept note for country guidelines and technical specifications for GSERmap;
 - Elaboration of the Global Soil Erosion Map;
 - Methodology to evaluate the costs of erosion and benefits of erosion prevention, remediation and mitigation practices, following a tiered approach, as part of the broader scope of evaluation of sustainable soil management practices;
 - Study on how society could compensate farmers for public benefits (ecosystem services) stemming from the implementation of soil erosion control practices;
 - Publication of selected papers in Land Development and Degradation and International Soil and Water Conservation Research.
21. Support activities in follow up of past Symposia.
22. Organization of the Global Symposia on Soil Biodiversity and Salt Affected Soils (GSOBI20 and GSASS20).
23. Finalisation and endorsement of the Technical Manual for Soil Organic Carbon Management.
24. Preparation of the concept note for the Global Black Soil Distribution Map (GBSDmap).
25. Follow up activities related to RECSOIL.Database on the best techniques to manage and remediate polluted soils.
26. Finalisation of the Technical Manual on assessing, mapping, monitoring and reporting on Soil Pollution.
27. Preparation and publication of scientific/technical notes on Soil Fertility, Soil Pollution, Soil Biodiversity.
28. Preparation of the 2nd version of the World Soil Resources Report (to be issued in 2025).
29. Participation to the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity 2020 (postponed to 2021).
30. Continued collaboration with international organizations and panels:
 - Science-Policy Interface of the UNCCD: Review of the MRV SOC at farm level; Review of the Technical Specifications for the preparation of the GSOCseq map;
 - Review of the Manual of Good SOC Practices; GSER map; GSOBI2020 and GSS2020 symposia;
 - Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative: Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity (2021), Report of the Status of Knowledge on Soil Biodiversity;
 - 4/1000 and CIRCASA initiatives: cooperation in relations to soil organic carbon.