

**Global Soil Partnership**  
**First meeting of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)**

**Item 7.1: Preparation of a workplan and timetable for providing guidance on: “Soils and the post 2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”**

**Background**

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (often referred to as Rio+20) which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, was the agreement by UN Member States to launch a process of developing a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

An Intergovernmental **Open Working Group** (OWG) was established by the UN for preparing proposals on the SDGs. Considering the challenges posed by population growth and taking into account the alarming current soil degradation status in many regions, it is imperative to reflect the importance of soil conservation into the ongoing SDG dialogue and formulation effort.

The Open Working Group on the SDGs has been meeting monthly since March 2013, discussing specific themes in each session. (The OWG schedule of meetings and background materials are available at the following link <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549> ). Different agencies lead on specific issues papers and all are prepared jointly by multiple agencies. FAO led or contributed to papers on food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, land, and water in close coordination with the Rome Based Agencies (RBAs) and other UN agencies and was key note speaker in the May session. In bilateral meetings in Rome and New York, members are increasingly encouraging FAO to define critical targets and indicators, in close coordination with the other RBAs.

Meanwhile, another key body the **High Level Panel of Eminent Persons** released its final report (available at the following link <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf> ), in which many FAO messages feature prominently, including in the illustrative goals. The report will inform the UNSG report on progress towards the MDGs and on Post 2015 to be presented at the UNGA in September 2015. The High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) collected the views of UN agencies on the report, and will compile consolidated comments for the UNSG and members’ consideration.

In the report, the Panel calls for the new post-2015 goals to drive five big transformative shifts:

- *Leave No One Behind*. After 2015 we should move from reducing to *ending* extreme poverty, in all its forms. We should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied basic economic opportunities and human rights.
  
- *Put Sustainable Development at the Core*. We have to integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. We must act *now* to slow the alarming pace of climate change and environmental degradation, which pose unprecedented threats to humanity.
  
- *Transform Economies for Jobs and Inclusive Growth*. A profound economic transformation can end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods, by harnessing innovation, technology, and the potential of business. More diversified economies, with equal opportunities for all, can drive social inclusion, especially for young people, and foster sustainable consumption and production patterns.

- *Build Peace and Effective, Open and Accountable Institutions for All.* Freedom from conflict and violence is the most fundamental human entitlement, and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies. At the same time, people the world over expect their governments to be honest, accountable, and responsive to their needs. We are calling for a fundamental shift – to recognize peace and good governance as a core element of wellbeing, not an optional extra.

- *Forge a New Global Partnership.* A new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability must underpin the post-2015 agenda. This new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, based on mutual respect and mutual benefit. It should be centred around people, including those affected by poverty and exclusion, women, youth, the aged, disabled persons, and indigenous peoples. It should include civil society organizations, multilateral institutions, local and national governments, the scientific and academic community, businesses, and private philanthropy.

The following provides an FAO's vision on Post 2015 Development Agenda:

***The vision for Post 2015 is of a world that guarantees – for all human beings – freedom from want, including their fundamental right to food and a life free from hunger and malnutrition in all their forms. I see a world in which all the earth's ecosystems --its soils, its oceans and waters, its forests, its flora and its fauna-- are healthy and resilient in the face of climate change. My vision is of an interconnected world and yet a peaceful, equitable and culturally diverse world.***

*A world in which quality matters as much as quantity. Where the economy, the environment and the society support each other to eliminate deprivation and to moderate excess. An inclusive world which all nations and all people --rural and urban, women and men-- have an opportunity to create and share a responsibility to sustain.*

The following FAO corporate messages on the Post 2015 development agenda and the SDGs have been formulated:

1. The cornerstone of sustainable development is food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.
2. We must build healthy and dynamic ecosystems that are resilient to stresses and shocks.
3. Food consumption and production systems need to center on small producers and achieve more with less.
4. Inclusive sustainable development requires rural development, gender equality and improved rural-urban linkages.
5. The transition to a sustainable future requires fundamental changes in the governance of food and agriculture production systems.

## **Opportunities**

This process provides an opportunity for the soil community to influence it, based on sound professional and technical advice on soils. The GSP Secretariat is currently providing advice on Land and Soils within FAO as part of the SDG process. Now that the ITPS has been formally established, its advice and guidance will be highly appreciated. This requirement was fully recognized by the Plenary Assembly (PA) which looks forward to the ITPS to ensure such provision of scientific guidance to the SDG process and eventual subsequent implementation and impact assessment.

## **Suggested approach**

There will be an introduction on the status of the Post2015 Development Agenda and SDGs by the FAO Secretariat working on this, so that ITPS is fully aware of where we are, what is next and how it could contribute to the process. The brief on land and soils prepared by FAO will be also distributed.

The ITPS may wish to have a preliminary discussion about how to approach its task. Obviously, the proponents and constituencies of every sector, sub-sector or discipline pertinent to economic and social development in all regions of the world would seek to be recognized in the first instance in the phrasing of the SDGs and secondly in the inclusion of appropriate indicators to monitor progress in implementation.

Hence, the soil community would need to find ways to capture the most essential dimensions of needed sustainable soil management (and reversal of soil degradation) in clear and simple language, and select the most pertinent and easily measurable indicators.

The ITPS may appoint a small group of its members to follow developments in the SDG process and come out with specific proposals which would be transmitted to the pertinent instances. This group could draw more particularly on those ITPS participants (and eventual additional resource persons) who may have been exposed to such delicate negotiations at national, regional or global levels.