

**ASP-III/16/Report**



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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**GLOBAL SOIL  
PARTNERSHIP**

**Report of the Third  
Asian Soil Partnership Workshop**  
*“Towards a Regional Implementation Plan for Asia”*

**Bangkok, Thailand, 14-16 December 2016**

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“TOWARDS A REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR ASIA”**

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## 1. Opening of the workshop

The third workshop of the Asian Soil Partnership (ASP) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 14 to 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2016. The workshop was jointly organized by the Land Development Department of Thailand, which is currently chairing the ASP, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The meeting was opened by General Patamapong Prathompat (Vice Minister for Agricultural and Cooperatives, Representative of the ASP Chair, Thailand), Mr. Jongjin Kim (Deputy Regional Representative of the FAO) and Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs (Assistant to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives).

General Patamapong Prathompat underlined the importance of healthy soils in agriculture and the consequences of soil degradation on food production. These topics were particularly important to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who opened several study centers in Thailand for promoting sustainable soil management and cared of transferring knowledge on soil to farmers. In this regard, the General referred to the scheduled visit to the Khao Hin Sorn Royal Development Study Center and left the floor for Mr. Jongjin. The Deputy Regional Representative of FAO defined the soil as a core component of land resources and the foundation of agricultural development and ecological sustainability. The goal of improving global food security and nutrition, in the context of population growth, land degradation and climate change, cannot be satisfactorily achieved unless soils are placed at the very top of the development agenda. Mr. Jongjin also recalled the role of the regional soil partnerships, which should provide guidance on regional goals and priorities and on the required implementation mechanisms, and should regularly review progress in reaching common objectives and targets. A tribute was paid to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who fostered the establishment of the World Soil Day and the International Year of Soils 2015. Special thanks go to the Land Development Department of Thailand for taking the Secretariat role of the ASP and organizing the workshop.

In his role of functional Chair of the meeting, Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs welcomed the participants and thanked the Global Soil Partnership, FAO for contributing and jointly organizing the workshop. Mr. Chandarasrivongs stated that it is a great honor for Thailand to be appointed as Chair of the ASP and that it is promising to see Asian countries working all together towards the development of a regional implementation plan and a better future for Asia. Reference was then made to the agenda of the workshop and to its overall objectives: (1) to endorse the 5-year implementation plan for Asia; (2) to plan the execution of core activities in the plan; and (3) to consolidate the Asian Soil Partnership by running the first meeting of the Steering Committee and (4) introducing national focal points to the Chair and Secretariat for the region. The hope is that the meeting will create a strong interactive partnership and enhance the sharing of

experiences and collaboration between all stakeholders. Asia should be ready to face new global challenges and promote sustainable soil management towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At this regard, attention should be paid to stimulate donors to invest on strengthening capacities and stabilize the regional development taskforce.

## 2. The Global Soil Partnership, an overview

Mr. Vargas, GSP Secretary, opened his presentation by reaffirming the importance of soils for adapting to and mitigating climate change, and contributing to food security and nutrition. Additionally, he underlined how soils play a key role on emerging issues such as the contribution of sustainable soil management (SSM) to address water scarcity in agriculture, soil borne diseases, and soils and microbial resistance. At this regard, it was highlighted how soils contribute to human health and why it is important to address soil degradation and restore degraded soils. Thereafter, the objectives of the GSP were listed linking to the five Pillars of Action of the GSP: (1) promote SSM 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, 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, and (5) harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources.

Mr. Vargas also described the governance of the GSP and paid special attention to describe the role of the GSP national focal points. In this context, national focal points are designated by FAO member countries (partners by default to the GSP) at the purpose of collating and distributing relevant communications, GSP information material and invitations to meetings and consultations to the most appropriate government authorities and/or national institutions, as well as any other relevant body not already registered as a GSP partner, dealing with soil matters within their country.

Thereafter, the main achievements and activities for the coming future of the GSP were listed. Referring to the year 2015, the GSP was successful in implementing the International Year of Soils 2015, and launching the Revised World Soil Charter and the Status of the World's Soil Resources Report. To acknowledge also the inclusion of soils in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. At this regard, a special target on land degradation neutrality was established. The year 2016 was characterized by the production and endorsement by the FAO Council of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM), which are now in the process of being implemented globally. A high level publication on "Soils and Pulses: symbiosis for life" was also developed and launched on the World Soil Day. The book wanted to

create a link between the International Year of Soils 2016 and the International Year of Pulses 2016. In response to the need to enhance soil organic matter for adapting to and mitigating climate change, the activities of the GSP are focusing on soil organic carbon (SOC) and the achievement of the SDGs in 2017. One of the greatest objectives of the GSP is indeed that of developing a global SOC map by December 2017 as baseline for SDG indicator 15.3.1. At this regard, several trainings and workshops on SOC mapping are to be organized worldwide and a global symposium on SOC is planned on 21-23 March 2017.

### 3. Status and governance of the Asian Soil Partnership

Mr. Vargas, GSP Secretary, briefly described the path that led to the establishment of the Asian Soil Partnership (ASP) and its governance.

The ASP was established in 2012 through the Nanjing Communiqué. The partnership consists of the following countries:

- **East Asia:** China, DPR Korea, Japan, Mongolia and Republic of Korea
- **Southeast Asia:** Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam
- **South Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

Priorities of the partnership were identified to be:

- a) Sharing and transferring soil knowledge and new technology within and beyond the region;
- b) Providing soil information to all those with an interest in the sustainable use of soil and land resources;
- c) Building consistent and updated Asian Soil Information Systems and starting to contribute to the Global Soil Information system through initiatives such as GSM; and
- d) Training new generations of experts in soil science and land management.

In May 2015, the partnership recognized soil degradation as a driver of food insecurity and poverty, and called for attention on the need to invest in the promotion of sustainable soil management. These considerations were written down in the Bangkok Communiqué, which also identified the Chair of the ASP (Thailand), the members of the ASP Steering Committee (Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and the members of the working groups for the five Pillars of Action of the GSP. Their terms of reference are reported in the Asian Soil Partnership functional statement (<http://www.fao.org/3/bb370e>). Similarly to the other RSPs, the ASP was called to compile a regional implementation plan encompassing the implementation of the five pillars of action in the region.



Mr. Vargas, concluded his intervention by mentioning the main challenges that the ASP is called to face not only during the workshop but also in the near future: (1) strengthening the ASP (governance, partners and actions), (2) endorse the Asian Implementation Plan and pursue its execution, (3) resource mobilization for executing the actions (also mobilization of national investments), (4) implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management, (5) implementation of the Soil Doctors programme, (6) development of the Soil Atlas of Asia, (7) development of National Soil Organic Carbon Maps, (8) and more.

#### 4. Introduction to the regional Implementation Plan for Asia

Ms. Lucrezia Caon, Chair of the ASP for the GSP, described the process that led to the development of the implementation plan for the region and guided participants through the reading of the document.

Following the resolution of the second ASP workshop (Bangkok, 2015), the ASP implementation plan started to be developed in March 2016. The plan looked at the priorities of the region as identified in 2015:

- Promotion of sustainable soil management practices at all levels and in all land use types;
- Restoration/rehabilitation of degraded soils with focus on soil erosion, nutrient imbalance, soil acidification, soil salinity and alkalinity, soil pollution, and loss of organic carbon; and
- Enhancement of soil information by using state of the art methods of digital soil mapping and advocating for having national soil information systems.

Additionally, countries were asked to provide inputs on national priorities and strengths, successful experiences that could contribute to the execution of activities in other countries after the endorsement of the plan. Thereafter, information were translated into actions to be implemented at the regional level. The process was participatory, and importance was given to the Chairs of the working groups as identified at the second ASP Workshop (Bangkok, 2015). Working groups were called to work on the implementation plan following the herewith reported guidelines:

- The plan is for the region, therefore activities cannot refer to specific countries;
- When possible, activities should link to the global implementation plans (this is important especially for fund raising);
- Implementation period: 2017-2021;
- Activities should be realistic, feasible (time and budget), so that ambition should be controlled;
- Avoid repetitive activities so that each activity should refer to only one pillar;
- Details for each activity should be contained as these will be provided during the implementation phase.

Ms. Caon, concluded her intervention by reporting on the composition of the working groups and listing the issues that had to be addressed at the workshop with reference to the endorsement of the implementation plan:

- Review and endorse the ASP implementation plan: (i) solve the issue of overlapping activities, and (ii) discuss technical issues especially related to Pillars 4 and 5; and
- Set-up the next steps for the execution of the activities in the implementation plan.

## 5. The ASP Implementation Plan

This section reports on both the presentation of each Pillar by the appointed Chair and the conclusions of the discussion that followed.

### 5.1 Pillar 1

Mr. Dhermesh Verma, Chair for Pillar 1, highlighted the importance of Pillar 1 for the Asian region. In this regard, SSM is of critical importance to maintain critical soil functions and soil biodiversity, and ultimately address food security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In order to promote the practice of SSM, investments on education, awareness raising and extension are needed. This would also lead to restoring degraded soils and soil protection and conservation. Priorities of the Asian region in relation to Pillar 1 are:

- identification of appropriate sustainable soil management practices for all land uses;
- balanced soil fertility management for sustainable agriculture production;
- assessment of all barriers preventing the implementation of sustainable soil management practices and proposal of policy and technical solutions;
- develop a monitoring system to measure progress achieved in the implementation of SSM; and
- facilitate the development of a capacity building strategy amongst stakeholders to promote the adoption of SSM.

These priorities can be addressed by (1) implementing the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM), (2) identify appropriate SSM practices and systems, (3) produce guidelines and tools for Soil Fertility Management, (4) assess barriers and policy technical solutions, (5) establish monitoring systems for land degradation and SSM implementation, and (6) developing a capacity building strategy for the promotion of SSM. Monitoring and evaluating would serve to (1) assess the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of project design and implementation, (2) identify actual outputs, potential outcomes, impacts and sustainability of a project, (3) define project performance on gender mainstreaming and achievements on gender equality, (4) identify lessons learned about project design, implementation and management, and (5) highlight achievements and practices worth up-scaling and/or replication.

Mr. Verma continued his presentation listing the issues on Pillar 1 that had to be addressed during the workshop and pointing out activities that are overlapping with other pillars. In this

regard, suggestions on how to address these issues were presented as well as national examples on how to implement activities in the plan. Beyond specific activities, challenges and eventual problems related to the implementation of the plan for the pillar in the region were identified: (1) ensure adequate and sustained funds to support -5 years, (2) obtain sufficient in-kind and co-funding regional and national institutions and governments, (3) mobilize funds in close collaboration with the GSP Secretariat, (4) get active participation by regional and national ASP partners, and (5) ensure political will at government level.

During the discussion that followed, the activities in the table were reviewed and changes were directly made to the text. The Sufficient Economy Theory was added to the introduction and overlapping activities were addressed.

## 5.2 Pillar 2

Dr. Milkha Singh Aulakh, Chair for Pillar 2, highlighted the importance of Pillar 2 for the Asian region by linking it to education especially. Indeed, soil science is mostly not included in the school curricula at all educational levels and the literacy rate is low in Asia (especially among farmers, soil managers and other stakeholders). Hence, public awareness is nominal. This relates to the other elements constituting Pillar 2: investment, technical and scientific cooperation, policy and extension on soil. Adding to education and awareness raising, these interlinked elements are the backbone of the successful implementation not only of Pillar 2 but the entire implementation plan.

Priorities of the Asian region in relation to Pillar 2 are:

- Halting and reversing high threats to soil sustainability;
- Informing and educating politicians, policy makers and governments;
- Review existing laws and develop new laws on soil protection and rehabilitation ultimately leading to SSM;
- Include soil science in the school curricula at all educational levels; and
- Enhance public awareness on soil functions.

These priorities can be addressed by (1) creating awareness among key political stakeholders on soil functions and soil-related ecosystem services, (2) support policy development by reviewing, developing and endorsing new laws on soil protection and rehabilitation at the national and regional levels, (3) promote education on soil by including soil science in the school curricula at all educational levels and providing support to young professionals in building international experience, (4) sensitize the society on the role of soils for life on Earth through, for instance, developing public awareness campaigns and initiatives, and establishing national and regional awards for the practice of SSM and advances in research, (5) support, develop and revitalize extension services to ensure that sufficient sound extension services are available in the region, (6) promote and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation through, for instance, conferences, workshops and the creation of a dedicated platform for information sharing and

project proposal writing, and (7) encourage investments on soil by, for instance, attracting investors by proving/show-casing high returns from healthy soils.

Dr. Aulakh continued his presentation listing the main challenges related to the achievement of activities for Pillar 2 in the region: (1) lack of financial support, (2) lack of political and economic stability of countries in the region, (3) lack of political will and commitment to implement activities in the plan, (4) limited availability of technical personnel/support, (5) lack of coordination and cooperation within and among countries, and (6) limited conjoint actions between the five on interlinked and interdependent activities. Challenges can be addressed by promoting discussion among all the five pillars, assess/inform on the strengths and weaknesses of each member country, and build on the “three-legged stool”. Therefore, activities should be economically viable, socially responsive and ecologically sound.

During the discussion that followed, the activities in the table were reviewed and changes were directly made to the text, taking care of addressing overlapping activities.

### 5.3 Pillar 3

Dr. Kazuyuki Yagi, Chair for Pillar 3, highlighted the importance of investing on Pillar 3 for the Asian region. Pillar 3 aims to stimulate the implementation of targeted soil research as a response to emerging demands for implementing sustainable soil management practices and for increasing soil productivity. This should lead to a strategic combination of basic and applied research to generate knowledge for the development of new or improved technologies, for supporting development agendas, economic growth, environmental sustainability and social development. As identified in the Status of the World’s Soil Resources report, rapid socio-economic change and resulting changes in land use and its management, as well as climate change, have had great impacts on the soil resources in Asian countries. Since the GLASOD and ASSOD (Status of human-induced soil degradation in South and South-East Asia) projects of the 1980s and 1990s, no extended assessment of the status of the soil resources has been carried out in the region.

Based on these assumptions, the ASP implementation plan for Pillar 3 should focus on: (1) identify knowledge gaps for identifying/developing indicators for assessing the economic cost of soil degradation and the value of its rehabilitation (stocks taking and gaps analysis), (2) facilitate the coordination of regional soil research and policy support to launch target R&D programs aimed at answering the identified knowledge gaps for indicators development, (3) identify regional and local emerging priorities of R&D activities by compiling databases for R&D initiatives and outputs, and (4) foster synergy and engagement between research and end-user communities, and donor agencies, to facilitate active collaboration in a joint-learning approach.

Challenges to the execution of activities in Pillar 3 are related to (1) stocking and gap analysis of evidences for soil research in each country, (2) networking institutes and experts in the region to launch target R&D, (3) developing databases to identify regional and local emerging priorities, and (4) promote active collaboration between research and other stakeholders. This considering

that the timeline for stocktaking and networking is 2017-2018, while that for R&D promotion and multi-stakeholder collaboration is 2019-2021. Additionally, the limited mobilization of resources to the activities, the weak domestic network among researchers in different organizations, and the presence of few collaborations between research and other stakeholders, can hamper the execution of the implementation plan for Pillar 3.

Before concluding his intervention by listing the issues that had to be addressed during the workshop, Dr. Kazuyuki identified the greater participation in the activities and the roles of chairs, working groups and national focal points as the keys to success. During the discussion that followed, the activities in the table were reviewed and changes were directly made to the text, taking care of addressing overlapping activities.

#### 5.4 Pillar 4

Dr. Rodelio Carating, Chair for Pillar 4, highlighted the importance of Pillar 4 for the Asian region. In this terms, Pillar 4 is viewed to sustainably glue and further strengthen current moves to harmonize soil database and information in the region (link to Pillar 5). Cooperation and technical exchange improves relations and capacity to respond of the respective soil information institution to the issue at hand. Additionally, accurate, timely and reliable soil information for research, decision making, and policy formulation contribute to food security and provides appropriate response to global environmental issues.

Priorities of the Asian region in relation to Pillar 4 are:

- Sharing and transferring soil knowledge and new technology within and beyond the region;
- Providing soil information to all those with an interest in sustainable land resources;
- Building consistent and updated soil information systems; and
- Training new generation of experts in soil science and land management.

These priorities can be addressed by (1) establishing and updating soil information systems of ASP members, (2) establishing an Asian soil portal, (3) agreeing on soil data sharing policy, (4) conceptualizing a soil status monitoring system and initially testing it on economically advanced members, and (5) enhancing the geo-spatial data management capacity of member soil information institutions.

Dr. Carating continued his presentation by identifying the main topics of discussion at the meeting for Pillar 4: (1) the need to commit to produce national soil organic carbon maps by December 2017, (2) the possibility to produce a Soil Atlas of Asia, (3) invest on capacity building, and (4) agree on regional soil data consolidator. However, the following challenges should be addressed in order to execute these and other activities: (1) ensure adequate and sustained funding support, (2) harmonize Asian databases specifically looking into the soil classification system, (3) look into the mandate of the national experts for Pillar 4, and (4) meet the need for soil data consolidator.

In conclusion, Dr. Carating stressed the importance of communicating effectively also by making use of new information technologies, social media and dedicated homepages. Hence the importance to have an ASP-Pillar 4 homepage where institutions, map portals, soil database and roster of soil information system experts can link. Regional and international conferences should also be used to conduct sub-meetings as the forum of discussion cannot rely only on the organization of annual ASP-GSP meetings.

During the discussion that followed, the activities in the table were reviewed and changes were directly made to the text, taking care of addressing overlapping activities.

## 5.5 Pillar 5

Dr. Audthasit Wongmaneroj, Chair for Pillar 5, highlighted the importance of Pillar 5 for the Asian region linking it to similarities in soil, climate and plant species among Asian countries. Building on that, experiences and sustainable management practices could be shared after that data have been harmonized. In order to develop a common harmonization concept for soil description and classification, national and regional reference laboratories for soil analysis and classification should be enhanced. At this regard, harmonization can be distinguished in (a) harmonization and standardization of soil surveys, and (b) harmonization and standardization for soil testing and interpretation. Therefore, activities should focus on building a laboratory network, mapping information, and develop work-direction guidelines for extension officers to transfer site-specific nutrient management (SSNM) knowledge to community soil and fertilizer management centers (CSFMCs).

Looking at the priorities of the region, the ASP implementation plan for Pillar 5 should aim at: (1) developing an over-arching system for harmonized soil characterization, (2) developing reference information into the GSP harmonization system, (3) developing reference systems for soil profile description, soil classification and soil mapping, (4) reviewing existing practices for field sampling, sample preparation and measurement (including laboratory standardization and QA/QC) and prepare specifications and guidelines for harmonized approaches, and (5) reaching agreements on a global soil information model, vocabulary service and meta-data standards. Major outcomes should be the development of an Asian Soil Database, the standardization of soil survey procedures and the endorsement of Southeast Asia Laboratory Network (SEALNET) for harmonizing soil test methods, interpretation and quality control to support and guide national initiatives.

Close cooperation and information exchange between laboratories can lead to (1) developing funding opportunities (e.g. joint research programming), (2) shared lab infrastructures for improved soil research (link to Pillar 3), (3) reliable soil analysis for management advice (link to Pillar 1), and (4) reliable quality controlled soil information for national soil data bases (link to Pillar 4).

During the discussion that followed, the activities in the table were reviewed and changes were directly made to the text, taking care of addressing overlapping activities. Discussions raised

around the ISO 17025, which can be troubled by the current status of the instruments and lab testing methods. Mr. Vargas reassured countries by offering the support of a FAO expert for executing activities on ISO. Still, Mr. Vargas underlined the need to have the financial support of individual governments for in-kind investments, and other donors. Therefore, the execution of Pillar 5 should be high in the agenda for action. The idea of producing guidelines for soil-site specific nutrient management (SSNM) was approved also in view of the contribution they could give to the Volunteer Soil Doctors programme.

## 6. Execution of the ASP Implementation Plan

This session went into the details of the execution of core activities in the implementation plan.

### 6.1 Implementation of the Soil Doctor Programme for Asia

Ms. Nisa Meesang (LDD) and Mr. Somsot Sumnoengam (LDD) presented the Volunteer Soil Doctor program. Ms. Meesang took over the role of Ms. Lucrezia Caon in presenting the global programme, who could not attend the last day of the meeting.

The “Volunteer Soil Doctors” programme was first developed by the Land Development Department (LDD) of Thailand to provide farmers with technologies and recommendations for soil improvement and conservation practices to promote sustainable agriculture. At the beginning, “soil doctors” were LDD staff in charge of training farmers. However, due to the increasing participation of people and communities to the programme, LDD decided to involve champion farmers in the process of educating and supporting rural communities on the practice of sustainable agriculture. Therefore, the so called “volunteer soil doctors” have been recruited to work in partnership with the LDD’s staff at village, sub-district, district and provincial level. By making use of the technical and financial support offered by LDD, Volunteer Soil Doctors cooperate in assisting farmers to obtain better understanding and practice soil conservation and sustainable soil and land resources management. The initiative appeared to be successful in improving fertilizer and organic material application, and overall increase soil fertility and productivity.

Therefore, it was decided to extend the programme not only to the other countries in Asia but worldwide. At this regard, a Volunteer Soil Doctors toolbox has to be developed by the GSP Secretariat building on the experience and material provided by LDD. The toolbox should be easy to use everywhere, no matter the level of education and the access to technology of the community. It will consist of a booklet, brochures and posters on practical issues, which would be implemented by technical schedules designed for running practical classes. Additionally, it will provide Volunteer Soil Doctors with a soil testing kit for preliminary soil analysis and soil maps (especially on soil fertility). Guidelines for implementation will be also provided to countries joining the programme.

In order to improve the programme and promote scientific and technical cooperation, a mechanism will be established for collecting and sharing farmers’ inputs and technological

innovations within the same country and between countries in the region (potentially the world). This should also add value to local knowledge and the adaptation capacity of regular farmers and Volunteer Soil Doctors.

Following the presentation, the discussion highlighted how programmes similar to the Volunteer Soil Doctors are already being implemented in the different countries in the region. At this regard, it was agreed that the Soil Doctors is an alternative to extension services in soils and will be implemented in those countries that request it. A proposal was made for collecting inputs from those countries and to use them to enrich and better shape the Volunteer Soil Doctors programme. Inputs have to be sent to Ms. Caon, who is currently developing the programme. In view of the outcomes of the discussion, different degrees of integration of the Volunteer Soil Doctors programme in ongoing programmes and projects can be expected in the different country. The Volunteer Soil Doctors programme is seen as a way to strengthen and support local programmes.

## 6.2 Towards the compilation of the Asian Soil Atlas

Mr. Vargas presented the proposal for compiling a Soil Atlas of Asia, which would be jointly produced by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission (JRC-EC), who is to fund this activity, and the FAO-GSP with inputs from scientists from Asia, Europe and other regions. The Atlas would add to those already compiled the EC on the other continents and would aim to (1) raise the awareness of the general public, land managers/owners, policy makers, politicians, NGOs and other scientific communities of the importance of soil in Asia, (2) support policies and instruments for investment, agriculture, environmental issues, climate change, development and aid assistance, urban planning, etc., (3) provide educational material to schools and universities to support learning, and (4) baseline for further assessments. Overall, the book should lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of soil across Asia.

Important would be to agree on the definition of Asia and its geographical boundaries. This also links to the production of soil maps and to the soil data harmonization process and database update initiated within the execution of activities in Pillars 4 and 5. The Atlas would then be composed of nine chapters: chapter 1, "Introduction"; chapter 2, "The soils of Asia"; Chapter 3, "Soil maps"; Chapter 4, "Geographical view"; Chapter 5, "Issues affecting soils in Asia"; Chapter 6, "Measures to combat soil degradation"; Chapter 7, "National summaries"; Chapter 8, "Policies, education and outreach"; and Chapter 9, "Concluding statements". It will be mostly distributed for free and launched at high-level political and scientific events. Alternative language versions will be produced as well as e-book/Kindle versions and related gadgets (soils of Asia wall chart, fridge magnets, puzzles, etc.).

A positive response was received by participants and was agreed that an email will be sent to all focal points providing links to the two atlases for them to understand the content and for inviting them to join the Editorial Board for operating, on average, for three years. The dates for the



launch of the activity will be agreed together with the EC. However, a kick-off meeting for starting the writing of the Atlas is planned in the first quarter of 2017.

### 6.3 Soil Organic Carbon mapping

Dr. Carating presented the rationale behind the development of the Global Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC) Map, a contribution to the Soil Organic Carbon Initiative, also linking to the outcomes of the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII) meeting (November 2016).

Precise and reliable global view on soil organic carbon (SOC) is needed under different UN conventions and related processes (SDG, 4per1000). This is because soil carbon is key indicator related to water and nutrient dynamics of soils, its decomposer activity, and the physical soil structure/stability. At this regard, a combination of reliable national SOC estimates around the globe can provide a new baseline on the currently existing SOC density. Therefore, the UNCCD-SPI and GSP-ITPS initiated the compilation of a reliable SOC map starting from the development of guidelines for sharing data/information to compile a Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOC17). The guidelines have a country-driven approach. They aim at generating SOC soil grids and develop a first indicator for the Global Soil Information System (GSIS). They build on UNFCCC/IPCC GHG definitions and reporting methods, and on existing national capacities and extend these. Overall, they are a specification of what the SOC map contains and provide options of how it can be developed.

Regarding the data sharing procedure, data shared by countries will be collected by the GSP Secretariat. The GSP data policy will ensure that the national terms of condition are fully respected. Data can be shared using common GIS formats and metadata should be compiled in an Excel file (template to be provided through the cookbook), which will be made available in January 2017. Looking at the timeline, contributions are expected by March to showcase at the GSOC17 Symposium. Thereafter, maps will be collected by the Secretariat on August 2017 and the compilation and launch of the global product is expected on the World Soil Day (5 December) 2017.

It is expected that every member country could contribute with its national SOC map following the agreed technical specifications by INSII (International Network of Soil information Institutions). Following the request for help on capacity development on SOC mapping techniques, the GSP together with the Soil and Fertilizer Society of Thailand and the Land Development Department of Thailand agreed to sign a Letter of Agreement for providing a regional training on SOC mapping for ASP member countries to be implemented between April-May 2017. An invitation will be sent to request the nomination of an expert per country to participate in this training.

## 6.4 Implementation of SEALNET in the region

Ms. Nopmanee Suvannang (LDD, Thailand) and Dr. Christian Hartmann (IRD, France and Lao PDR), researchers in soil science and initiators of SEALNET, guided the committee through the origins, outcomes and future expectations of the project.

In 1995, SEALNET was launched with the purpose of facilitating the sharing of experience among lab managers. Attention was focused on soil analysis practices and interpretation for agricultural and environmental samples (soil, plant, fertilizer and water). A manual on this same topic was prepared at a workshop in 1998 and another workshop on lab analysis and quality assurance (QA) was organized in 2000. In that period, a pre-draft of the manual on “Analytical methods for agricultural and environmental samples: soil, plant, fertilizer and water” was prepared to support capacity building of SEALNET lab staff to undertake soil analysis underpinned by a quality assurance/quality control programme (QA/QC).

Outcomes were accomplished thanks to the financial support of IBSRAM (CGIAR), IRD (France), Crawford Fund (Australia) and LDD (Thailand) for the period 1995-2000, and that of IRD and LDD for the period 2001-2014. The end of institutional support induced the end of collective activities, and only occasional relations between initial participants have been possible post-2014.

In 2014, Ms. Nopmanee Suvannang and Dr. Christian Hartmann were supported by IRD and LDD to revise the network that was called ‘SEALNET2.0’, indicating they intended to follow up the initial SEALNET objectives but also emphasizing the need for users to actively participate in the activities, i.e. not only relying on external support. Initially three ASEAN countries (Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam) worked on the execution of SEALNET 2.0 for harmonizing their laboratory analysis. Their first meeting was organised in Vientiane (Lao PDR) in 2014. In 2015, the FAO regional office supported the 2nd annual meeting organised in Bangkok Thailand, for the participation of Indonesia, Vietnam and Lao. Moreover, Dr Philip Moody (Science Leader at the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation of the Queensland Gov., Australia) supported SEALNET 2.0 by joining the initial committee and by promoting SEALNET to the Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council (ASPAC). ASPAC is the peak body representing soil and plant testing labs in Australia and New Zealand and ASPAC offered free registration for five laboratories suggested by SEALNET to participate in the ASPAC Inter Laboratory Proficiency Program (ILPP) for 2016: DALAM (Lao PDR), SFRI (Vietnam), LDD (Thailand), BSWM (Philippines) and ISRI (Indonesia). Participation of the SEALNET labs in the ASPAC ILPP provided the following insights: (i) initial assessment of lab performance of soil testing in South-East Asia, (ii) acknowledgement of good lab analytical proficiency through official ASPAC certification of successful labs, and (iii) identification for lab improvement where needs existed for which SEALNET could provide training/capacity building.

SEALNET 2.0 aims to (1) calibrate and harmonize soil testing procedures and practices in laboratories in the ASEAN and wider Asian regions in the context of the Asian Soil Partnership,

and (2) set up a regional inter-laboratory proficiency program to implement QA/QC procedures and processes. Ultimately, the same soil test result should be obtained for the analysis of the same soil sample carried out in different laboratories, and the same interpretation should be provided for these soil test results. Another expected benefit is to get measures of uncertainty associated with analytical results (in particular for key soil properties such as pH and organic carbon) so that modelers and soil surveyors producing soil maps can provide documents indicating the precision of the outputs as was made for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), or it is currently made for the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) predictions. It is important to stress that most of the evaluations of soil constraints to productivity, soil degradation/improvement, and the provision of advice on soil management options to mitigate/ameliorate the soil constraints, heavily rely on the quality and reliability of analytical soil data.

The strategy of SEALNET 2.0 relies on (1) facilitating contacts and networking, (2) developing harmonized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for key soil tests, (3) providing training and capacity building for lab staff- workshops and technical communications, and (4) implementing a regional inter-laboratory proficiency program to facilitate harmonized quality assurance/control (QA/QC) in labs. These goals are seen as complementary to those in Pillar 5, especially with reference to the need for (1) identifying national and regional reference labs for training, soil analysis and sample exchange, (2) harmonizing procedures and guidelines on methods of soil description, sampling, and (3) building an ASP lab network of which SEALNET could be an expansion. Therefore the decision was taken to include the project in the implementation plan and to extend it to the ASP countries.

In the period 2014-2016 the project was successful in organizing workshop training for capacity building and network development. This led to increased performance of lab technicians and managers, and preparation of draft standard operation procedures (SOPs) for organic carbon and available phosphorus. In 2016, a soil lab capacity survey was launched in preparation for the activities planned in 2017. The survey highlighted how labs in the region differ one from the other not only in terms of personnel and internal organization but also with respect to the analytical techniques used, with consideration that 50% of the labs responding to the questionnaire do not have staff trained for soil testing. Additionally, even if labs applied the same procedure, there were variations in local practices (e.g., shaking time) and the unit to express the results (SOC/OM).

When integrating SEALNET in the ASP implementation plan, attention would be paid to addressing the following problems:

1. Lack of standard soil tests procedures; no harmonized soil test interpretation guidelines. Solution: implement SOPs for a basic suite of soil tests used for the indicators (organic C, pH, NPK, etc.), and provide guidelines to harmonize soil tests and also their interpretation;

2. Many labs do not measure the quality of their data and do not know how to solve the problem of having poorly reproducible data. Solution: implement Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) and standard QA/QC procedures, similarly in all ASP labs;
3. Many labs are isolated from the international context so that managers follow their own procedures and practices. Solution: implement international standards of lab management and participate in international proficiency testing (external control);

Assumptions for SEALNET to be successful in the region are the need to have (1) an international committee with active and motivated experts, (2) funding to organize workshops and trainings (national participants, trainers, soil samples, etc.), and (3) funding to buy certified soil samples from the proof institution and certify the quality lab that can provide the internal soil samples for the PT. Out of the successful implementation of the project, countries could count on reliable data for producing maps, quality indicators, future scenarios and developing monitoring systems.

At the end of the presentation, countries agreed on joining SEALNET by nominating one central lab per country and to motivate their managers to work with the GSP/ASP and SEALNET leader(s). Therefore, the GSP will send a message requesting the nomination of a head of the reference national soil laboratory to be part of SEALNET and the fill in of a questionnaire. From there, trainings and activities will be planned.

Activities to immediate follow are:

- The GSP Secretariat to send the lab survey questionnaire to lab managers; and
- FAO to financially support the organization of the first meeting of the lab managers to clarify the lab situation with a focus on harmonization, standardization and priority actions. Laboratory standards and soil survey standards will also be discussed at the lab manager meeting.

## 6.5 Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management

Because of lack of time, Mr. Vargas verbally presented the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM), which were endorsed by the FAO Council on 5 December 2016. However, a presentation is made available on the GSP website.

The VGSSM were produce with the purpose of presenting generally accepted, practically proven and scientifically based principles to promote SSM and to provide guidance to all stakeholders on how to translate these principles into practice, be it for farming, pastoralism, forestry or more general natural resources management. The guidelines are of voluntary nature and are not legally binding. They elaborate the principles outlines in the revised World Soil Charter and take into account the evidence provided in the Status of the World's Soil Resources report (SWSR). In particular, they are the backbone for the writing of technical manuals on the practice of SSM with reference to the 10 soil threats identified in the SWSR. Therefore, the focus on: (1) minimize soil

erosion, (2) enhance soil organic matter content, (3) foster soil nutrient balance and cycles, (4) prevent, minimize and mitigate soil salinization and alkalization, (5) prevent and minimize soil contamination, (6) prevent and minimize soil acidification, (7) preserve and enhance soil biodiversity, (8) minimize soil sealing, (9) prevent and mitigate soil compaction, and (10) improve soil water management. At this regard, the VGSSM do not provide detailed recommendations, but are designated to inform strategic and context-specific decision-making at all relevant levels.

Guidelines are addressed to government officials, policy makers, farmers, pastoralists, forest and land managers, extension services and agricultural advisors, development partners, the civil society, the private sector, academia, etc. They cut cross all the 5 GSP Pillars but are especially related to Pillar 1 which also aims at identifying site-specific priorities, systems and practices for implementing SSM. Because of their voluntary nature the implementation of the VGSSM is up to the national institutions which could rely on the tools provided by the GSP Secretariat.

During the discussion that followed, it was agreed about the need to allow members to study carefully and reflect on how the VGSSM could be implemented in their national context. A message will be sent to collect suggestions on how to implement them.

## 7. Conclusions

The meeting was successful in getting the implementation plan for Asia endorsed by the focal points attending. Major activities at the global and regional level were embraced and the following actions were identified for immediate execution:

- Countries will study and reflect on how to implement the VGSSM at the national level. In order to support countries in their task, the GSP will develop a strategy for implementing the guidelines worldwide;
- The Editorial Board for the writing of the Asian Soil Atlas will be formed and activated in the first quarter of 2017;
- Countries will share their experiences on programmes similar to the Volunteer Soil Doctors in order to finalize the preparation of the Volunteer Soil Doctors Programme at the global and regional level. Information will be added to those already provided by Thailand and will be used to improve the current concept note. Thereafter, the Volunteer Soil Doctors will be implemented in those countries that request it;
- The GSP together with LDD will organize a training on SOC mapping (Thailand, April 2017) for capacity development on SOC mapping techniques. The training is thought to support countries in addressing the request of the GSP to have national SOC maps ready by August 2017 as a contribution to the Soil Organic Carbon Initiative; and
- Countries will nominate a head of the reference national soil laboratory to be part of SEALNET and respond to a questionnaire distributed by the GSP Secretariat. From there, a meeting of the lab managers to clarify the lab situation with a focus on harmonization, standardization and priority action, trainings and activities will be planned.

It was also decided to draft a financial strategy aimed at raising funds for the region (also regional TCP). In addition, Annex 2 in the implementation plan will be kept open for editing even after the endorsement of the plan. The Annex aims to share successful experiences among countries and promote South-South technical and scientific cooperation. The report of the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Asian Soil Partnership is reported in Annex 3.

## Annex 1: Agenda



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



Land  
Development  
Department  
of Thailand



GLOBAL SOIL  
PARTNERSHIP

**Draft Agenda of the Third Asian Soil Partnership Workshop  
“Towards a Regional Implementation Plan for Asia”**

14-16 December 2016, Land Development Department, Bangkok, Thailand

14 December 2016 (Room Krungthep 2)	
08:00 – 09:00	<b>Registration</b>
09:00 – 09:20	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b> General Patamapong Prathompat Vice Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives Mr. Jongjin Kim, Deputy Regional Representative, FAO Mr. Suradesh Teawtrakool, Chair of the ASP Steering Committee Director General of Land Development Department, Thailand
09:20 – 09:35	<b>Press Conference by MOAC and FAO RAP</b>
09:35 – 09:45	<b>Group photo</b>
09:45 – 10:10	<b>Coffee/tea break</b>
10:10 – 10:30	<b>The Global Soil Partnership - an overview</b> Mr. Ronald Vargas, GSP Secretary
10:30 – 10:50	<b>Status &amp; Governance of the Asian Soil Partnership</b> Mr. Ronald Vargas, GSP Secretary
10:50 – 11:20	<b>Introduction to the Regional Implementation Plan for Asia</b> Ms. Lucrezia Caon, Chair of the ASP Implementation Plan
11:20 – 12:00	<b>Plenary discussion</b>
12:00 – 13:30	<b>Lunch Break</b>
<b>Session 1: The ASP Implementation Plan</b> This session presents the work of the working groups for the five pillars of action of the GSP <i>Chair: Ms. Lucrezia Caon</i>	

13:30 – 13:50	<b>Pillar 1 “Promote sustainable management of soil resources for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity”</b> Mr. Dharmesh Verma (India), Chair of the working group for Pillar 1
13:50 – 14:10	<b>Pillar 2 “Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soil”</b> Mr. Aulakh (India), Chair of the working group for Pillar 2
14:10 – 14:30	<b>Pillar 3 “Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities and synergies with related productive, environmental and social development actions”</b> Mr. Yagi (Japan), Chair of the working group for Pillar 3
14:30 – 14:50	<b>Pillar 4 “Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information: data collection (generation), analysis, validation, reporting, monitoring and integration with other disciplines”</b> Mr. Carating (Philippines), Chair of the working group for Pillar 4
14:50 – 15:30	<b>Coffee/tea break</b>
15:30 – 15:50	<b>Pillar 5 “Harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources”</b> Mr. Wongmaneroj (Thailand), Chair of the working group for Pillar 5 Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivong, Head of Thailand Delegation
15:50 – 17:30	<b>Plenary discussion and Endorsement of the Implementation Plan</b>
18.00 – 20.30	<b>Welcome Dinner hosted by LDD</b>

<b>15 December 2016</b>	
<b>Field trip: Sustainable Land Management &amp; Soil Doctor Learning Center</b> Host: Land Development Department (LDD), Thailand	
7:00 – 12:30	Site visit for sustainable land management at Khao Hin Sorn Royal Development Study Center, Chachoengsao Province
12:30 – 14:00	<b>Lunch Break</b>
14:00– 17:00	Site visit: Soil Doctor Learning Center
17.30 – 19.30	<b>Dinner hosted by Soil and Fertilizer Society of Thailand</b>



16 December 2016	
<b>Session 2: Execution of the ASP Implementation Plan</b>	
Discussion on the execution of the ASP Implementation Plan <i>Chair: Mr. Ronald Vargas</i>	
09:00 – 10:00	<b>Implementation of the Soil Doctor Programme for Asia (Pillars1 &amp;2)</b> Ms. Lucrezia Caon and Mr. Somsot Dumnoenngam
10:00 – 11:00	<b>Towards the compilation of the Asian Soil Atlas (Pillars 2 &amp; 4)</b> Ms. Lucrezia Caon
11:00 – 12:00	<b>Soil Organic Carbon mapping (Pillars3 &amp; 4)</b> Mr. Rodelio Carating
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch Break
13:30 – 14:30	<b>Implementation of SEALNET in the region (Pillar 5)</b> Ms. Nopmanee Suvannang and Dr. Christian Hartmann (IRD)
14:30 – 15:30	<b>Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Sustainable Soil Management in Asia</b> Mr. Ronald Vargas
15:30 – 15:40	Closure of the workshop
15:40 – 16:00	Coffee Break

<b>Extra session: ASP Steering Committee</b>	
<i>Chair: Mr. Suradesh Teawtrakool</i> <i>Functional chair: Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs</i>	
16:00– 18:00	Meeting of the Steering Committee of the ASP

## Annex 2: List of Participants

Full name	Country	Institution	Role
Dr. Karma Dema Dorji	Bhutan	National Soil Services Centre, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture & Forests	National focal point
Dr. Koy Ra	Cambodia	Department of Agricultural Land Research Management	National focal point
Dr. Suresh Kumar Chaudhari	India	Indian Council of Agricultural Research	National focal point
Dr. Ohkura Toshiaki	Japan	NIAES/NARO	Representative of the National focal point
Dr. Nivong Sipaseuth	Lao PDR	Department of Agricultural Land Management (DALaM), Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF)	National focal point
Dr. Asari Bin Hassan	Malaysia	Soil Resource Management and Conservation Division Department of Agriculture Malaysia	National focal point
Dr. Durga Prasad Dawadi	Nepal	Soil management Directorate	National focal point
Dr. Roshan Babu Ojha	Nepal	Soil Science Division, Nepal Agricultural Research Council	Assistant of the National focal point and member of the WG for Pillar 4
Dr. Sonia M. Salguero	Philippines	DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management	National focal point
Dr. Sonn Yeonkyu	Republic of Korea	Department of Agricultural Environment of Korea	Representative of the National focal point
Dr. Kim Keuntae	Republic of Korea	Department of Agricultural Environment of Korea	Representative of the National focal point
Dr. Ajantha de Silva	Sri Lanka	Natural Resources Management Center	National focal point
Dr. Pitayakon Limthong	Thailand	Soil and Fertilizer Society of Thailand	National focal point
Dr. Tran Minh Tien	Vietnam	Soils and Fertilizers Research Institute (SFRI)	National focal point
Dr. Amanullah	Pakistan	The University of Agriculture Peshawar	ITPS member
Dr. Brajendra Parmar	India	Department of Soil Science, ICAR-Indian Institute of Rice Research	ITPS member
Dr. Sopon Chomchan	Thailand	Land Development Department	ITPS member
Dr. Kazuyuki Yagi	Japan	Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences, NARO	ITPS member, Chair for Pillar 3
Dr. Dharmesh Verma	India	AgriNet Solutions	Chair for Pillar 1
Dr. Milkha Singh Aulakh	India	Banda University of Agriculture & Technology	Chair for Pillar 2
Dr. Rodelio Carating	Philippines	Bureau of Soils and Water Management	Chair for Pillar 4

Dr. Audthasit Wongmaneeroj	Thailand	Kasetsart University	Chair for Pillar 5
Mr. Suradesh Tiewtrakool	Thailand	Land Development Department	Chair of the Steering Committee
Ms. Benjaporn Chakranon	Thailand	Land Development Department	Deputy Director General
Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivong	Thailand	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC)	Functional Chair
Ms. Nopmanee Suvannang	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 5
Dr. Sathaporn Jaiarree	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Mr. Somsot Dumnoengam	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 2
Mr. Somsak Sukchan	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 1
Mr. Satira Udomsri	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 4
Ms. Ruamporn Moonjun	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 5
Mr. Wattana Pattanathaworn	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 4
Dr. Sumitra Watana	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Dr. Naruekamon Janjirawuttikul	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Mr. Pramote Yamclee	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 2
Mr. Pirach Pongwichian	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 3
Dr. Nisa Meesang	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 3
Ms. Tanomkwan Tipvong	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 2
Dr. Wanraya Suthumchai	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 3
Ms. Wichita Intharasri	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 3
Ms. Pornpat Nopmalai	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 3
Mr. Nuntapon Nongharnpitak	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 1
Ms. Sasirin Srisomkiew	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 1
Mr. Rattanachart Chuaybudda	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 5
Dr. Chanida Charanworapan	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 5
Ms. Tipanun Upanisakorn	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 5
Ms. Saowanee Prachansri	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Ms. Kaesorn Jumpa	Thailand	Land Development Department	Member of the WG for Pillar 1
Ms. Kreeyaporn Devahastin	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Dr. Ratchanok Sangpenchan	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat
Ms. Kanokthip Wacharalekagool	Thailand	Land Development Department	ASP Secretariat

### Annex 3: Summary report of the Steering Committee meeting

The first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Asian Soil Partnership was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 16 December 2016, with the purpose of reviewing the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the Steering Committee and the process of electing the countries in the Steering Committee, and brainstorming ideas for the execution of the ASP implementation plan. Additionally, hot topics of discussion were: (1) raising funds to support the partnership in executing activities in the implementation plan, (2) promoting activities for immediate execution in the implementation plan, and (3) promoting the ASP in the region. Ultimately, the date and venue of the next ASP workshop were discussed.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Rabiphat Chandarasrivongs (Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Kingdom of Thailand), Mr. Ronald Vargas (Global Soil Partnership of FAO), Mr. Yuji Niino (FAO RAP) and Dr. Sathaporn Jaiaree (ASP Secretariat Thailand).

The Steering Committee was composed of the focal points of Thailand (Chair), Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Japan (to be confirmed), Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which were called to serve in the Steering Committee for the period 2015-2018 as agreed in the Bangkok Communiqué (2015). The meeting participants are herewith reported:

Full name	Country	Role
Mr. Rabiphat Chandarasrivongs	Thailand	Functional Chair of the ASP Steering Committee
Dr. Ronald Vargas	GSP/FAO	GSP Secretariat
Mr. Yuji Niino	FAO RAP	GSP/ASP Secretariat
Dr. Amanullah	Pakistan	Observer for Pakistan
Dr. Suresh Kumar Chaudhari	India	Committee – National Focal Point
Dr. Sonn Yeonkyu	Rep. of Korea	Committee – Representative of the National Focal Point
Dr. Kim Keuntae	Rep. of Korea	Committee - Representative of the National Focal Point
Dr. Ajantha de Silva	Sri Lanka	Committee - National Focal Point
Dr. Ohkura Toshiaki	Japan	Committee - Representative of the National Focal Point
Dr. Pitayakon Limthong	Thailand	Committee – National Focal Point
Dr. Koy Ra	Cambodia	Committee – National Focal Point
Dr. Sathaporn Jaiaree	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Mrs. Nopmanee Suvannang	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Mrs. Kreeyaporn Devahastin	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Ms. Saowanee Prachansri	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Dr. Sumitra Wattana	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Dr. Naruekamon Janjirawuttikul	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Dr. Ratchanok Sangpenchan	Thailand	Observer - ASP Secretariat
Ms. Kaesorn Jumpa	Thailand	Observer
Ms. Tipanun Upanisakorn	Thailand	Observer
<b>Excused</b>		
Dr. Haryono	Indonesia	Committee - National Focal Point
Dr. Tuul Dooshin	Mongolia	Committee - National Focal Point

Linking to the objectives of the meeting:

### **Governance of the ASP**

- The Steering Committee adopted the Terms of Reference for the positions of Chair, Secretariat, Steering Committee and the working groups for the five pillars of action of the GSP. In this regard, the Chair of the ASP is expected to participate to the Plenary Assembly of the GSP with the purpose of reporting on the progresses of the region in executing the activities in the implementation plan. The participation of the Chair to the GSP Plenary Assembly will be financially supported by GSP/FAO;
- The mandate for the position of Chair of the Steering Committee and the ASP started at the time of appointment on 15 May 2015 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bb369e.pdf>) and will end on May 2018. This is in accordance with the Asian Soil Partnership Functional Statement (<http://www.fao.org/3/bb370e>), based on which the Chair is in charge for a period of three years and can serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- The committee agreed that the GSP Secretariat should act as Permanent Secretariat of the ASP and coordinate actions with the Hosting Secretariat at the purpose of ensuring continuity in action in the region. The Permanent Secretariat should play a key role in facilitating the execution of activities in the ASP implementation plan. The Hosting Secretariat should provide support services to the ASP in coordination with the GSP Secretariat and with the limits of its mandate (3 years);
- Japan stressed that its involvement in the Steering Committee is not officially confirmed yet due to its domestic circumstances;
- Physical meetings of the Steering Committee will take place only in the presence of complicated and unsolved issues. Otherwise, the Steering Committee will meet every six months on Skype or other online communication tools. During this time, countries should report on the progresses they made in executing activities in the implementation plan to the Chair. The Chair will then gather the information and report back to the countries.

### **ASP Implementation Plan**

- The Steering Committee acknowledges the presence of 13 countries in the Third ASP workshop (14-16 December 2016) and the endorsement of the implementation plan for the region. In this context, five core activities were identified for immediate execution: implementation of the VGSSM; implementation of SEALNET; implementation of the Volunteer Soil Doctors programme; development of the Soil Atlas for Asia; and the development of national SOC maps;
- Special attention should be paid to developing the SOC maps because of the commitment taken by the GSP in addressing target 15.3.1 in the SDGs. Deadline for this activity is 5 December 2017. In order to support countries in executing this activity, FAO will sponsor the organization of a workshop on digital soil mapping to take place in April 2017.

- Countries should invest in raising awareness and promoting the work of the ASP within and outside their own country with the purpose of ensuring their full engagement and commitment to the partnership

**Fund raising**

- The meeting stressed on the importance for countries to commit and share responsibility on the sustainable management of soil resources. Therefore, countries should secure adequate in-kind funding to achieve at least those targets in their national implementation plan;
- Responding to the request of Mr. Chandarasrivongs to look for donors in other regions, Mr. Vargas informed the Committee that usually donors are most willing to invest in their own region instead of others. Therefore, an appeal was made for countries to identify potential donors within their country. Attention should be paid to the private sector and international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Based on the inputs received from individual countries, the GSP will prepare grant proposals and other documents relevant to mobilizing financial resources for the region.
- It was underlined how the financial resources mobilized in the region will be managed by ASP/GSP (even when coming from private donors).

In conclusion, the venue of the Fifth ASP workshop was discussed following the need to have regular meetings for monitoring and reviewing progresses in executing the activities in the implementation plan. In this regard, it was agreed to rotate the hosting country of the meetings. Possible hosts of the Fourth ASP workshop are Japan, India and the Republic of Korea. However, due to their unclear position in the Steering Committee, Japan requested the GSP to submit an official letter to the Japanese government on the possibility to host the next ASP meeting.