

MEETING MINUTES

FOURTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS (IYS) STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)
FAO HEADQUARTERS (KING FAISAL ROOM, D263)
MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2015, 10:00 – 11:30

MEETING ATTENDEES:

Sompong Nimchuar (Chairperson, Thailand), Marcela Villarreal (IYS Secretariat, FAO), Yon Fernandez Larrinoa (IYS Secretariat, FAO), Ronald Vargas (IYS Secretariat, FAO), Gustavo O. Infante (Argentina), Rosemary Navarrete (Australia), Mafizur Rahman (Bangladesh), Tarekegn Tsegay Haile (Ethiopia), Olthof Willem (European Commission), Georg Friedel Cramer (Germany), Jirapa Inthisang Trochim (Thailand), Narumon Wiangwang (Thailand), Pavel Krasilnikov (ECFS), Barrie Bain (IFA), Robert Delve (IFAD), Cristina Grandi (IFOAM), , Andrea Ferrante (La Via Campesina), Sven Walter (UNCCD), Marco Marzano de Marinis (WFO), Auxtin Ortiz (WRF), Claudia Nicolai (FAO), Craig Chibanda (FAO), Oscar Ruiz (FAO), Ana Saez (FAO), Isabelle Verbeke (FAO), Michela Baratelli (FAO), Gerda Verburg (Netherlands)

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ITEM 1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND THE MINUTES OF THE THIRD IYS-SC MEETING;

- The agenda of the meeting was approved with no changes, and the minutes, which were available in advance, were approved with some minor changes.

ITEM 2. REPORT ON COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE IYS

- The Chairperson gave the floor to Ms. Claudia Nicolai (Information and Communication Officer, OCC, FAO) who informed the members about the IYS communication plan and the various types of communication tools that were already in place to support the IYS.
- Ms. Claudia Nicolai made particular reference to the IYS website which contains the key messages of the IYS, communication and advocacy materials, relevant publications and information on IYS related activities (e.g. events). Members were also informed about a weekly blog on soil related issues that enabled dialogue amongst different people from various regions.
- The IYS-Secretariat urged members to contribute to the content of the IYS website by providing the Secretariat with information on IYS activities being organized in the various regions and countries.
- Members expressed their satisfaction with the IYS communication plan, however, made the following remarks and suggestions:
 - Key messages on the website: there is a need to establish a clear link between the importance of Soils and Family Farming;
 - The use of other media channels such as TV and radio could help reach a wider audience. Some members highlighted that a documentary on soils could be useful in getting the message out to a broader audience.

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- The Secretariat informed members that, although, much is being done to produce and disseminate advocacy materials, there is still room for increasing the efforts through members' collaboration in the translation and dissemination of the materials. The Secretariat called for the involvement of members in the translation of materials into their languages, printing of materials for specific events etc.
- It was underscored that the Year is also an opportunity for sharing resources that were already available in the various countries (videos, publications, etc.)

ITEM 3. REPORTING ON IYS IMPLEMENTATION AND RECENT IYS EVENTS

- The Secretariat informed the members about the key IYS events that had occurred and also those that would take place in the near future. Specific reference was made to the ongoing Regional Soil Partnership Workshops which are being used as a platform to mainstream the IYS.
- The Secretariat also informed members about forthcoming FAO technical publications related to the IYS, such as, *'Healthy soils for a healthy life'*.
- Some members highlighted that although other regions were actively involved in organizing IYS activities and events, there are still others that are lagging behind. There was a request to explore ways in which those regions could be stimulated to be more active.
- Some members proposed that the Secretariat could come up with a search engine, which people can use to search for IYS events by geographic location.
- Members organizing various activities linked to the IYS, notified the SC and also agreed to send more details about these events/activities to the Secretariat so that the information could be disseminated to all partners through the IYS website.

ITEM 4. GLOBAL SOIL WEEK (19TH – 23RD APRIL 2015, BERLIN, GERMANY)

- The Secretariat informed Members of FAO's participation at the Global Soil Week which will be held in Berlin, German from 19 to 23 April 2015. The event is being organized by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS).
- Members highlighted that the event presents an opportune platform for advocating and garnering support for the International Year of Soils (IYS) to various stakeholders.
- Members inquired whether it was possible for them to receive invitations to the event.
- Germany informed Members that it would recommend IASS to send official invitations to them.

ITEM 5. NEW PROPOSALS FOR ACTION AT COUNTRY, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL (INCLUDING THE ORGANIZATION OF SIDE EVENTS)

- Members underscored the importance of raising awareness about the profound importance of soils at grassroots level, especially, among farmers who are the main users of soil. The Secretariat reminded Members that the involvement and active participation of three farmers' networks (La Via Campesina, WRF and WFO in the IYS-SC) is an effective mechanism for mainstreaming messages to farmers on the ground.

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- The Secretariat informed Members about the possibility and importance of collaborating in organizing side events during various FAO meetings and conferences such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- Some Members reiterated the importance of finding synergies between IYS and Family Farming in order to build upon the success of the International Year of Family Farming, whilst others highlighted that this could lead to an overload on the work to be done.
- Members pointed out that this was the time to start cogitating about the legacy of the IYS.

ITEM 6. ANY OTHER ITEMS

- Members did not raise any other items for discussion and the Chair moved directly to the next item.

ITEM 7. PRESENTATIONS BY THE ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL INSURERS (AIAG) AND THE SOCIETY FOR NEW INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES (SONIA)

- As discussed in previous IYS SC meetings, it was agreed that new requests for Steering Committee membership will be analyzed and approved by the Steering Committee, on a case by case basis..
- As informed in the communication to all IYS SC members, the IYS secretariat had received requests for IYS SC memberships from two organizations: The International Agricultural Insurers (AIAG) and The Society for New Initiatives and Activities (SONIA). Both Organizations were invited to present to the IYS SC about their work in relation to soils.
- The Chairperson gave the floor to Dr. Kurt Weinberger, President of the Association of International Agricultural Insurers (AIAG), who presented about AIAG's activities and their intended contributions to raise awareness on the importance of soils through various activities.
- Ms. Vanda Altarelli, President of Society for New Initiatives and Activities (SONIA), presented SONIA's work and emphasized the importance of including an organization that represents the Indigenous Peoples constituency, in particular due to the crucial role that they play in soil management and conservation.
- After the two presentations, some IYS SC members recommended the committee to make a final decision about the two organizations' request for membership during this meeting, whilst others suggested that the decision be made in the next meeting which would include an agenda item.
- It was agreed that members would provide their comments (in writing) about AIAG and SONIA to the IYS Secretariat, while the IYS Secretariat would share with the IYS SC members the selection criteria agreed by the members for admitting new members before the next meeting.
- The decision to accept/decline these two organizations will be made during the next meeting which will be held on 09 April 2015.

The Chairperson briefly summarized the main discussions of the meeting, thanked the Members for their contributions, and concluded the meeting at 12.45 pm.