GLOBAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP

Draft Plan of Action for Eurasian Subregional Partnership

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**Plan of action of the Eurasian Soil Partnership**

**(Zero draft)**

***Preamble***

In 2009, the external high-level expert committee (HLEC) introduced the report to the FAO Secretary General, which noted that FAO paid insufficient attention to soil, a non-renewable resource critical for agriculture. On 7-9 September 2011, after long discussion between FAO and the European Commission, the launch of the Global Soil Partnership (**GSP**) took place at the FAO headquarters in Rome. The program was supported by the delegations of many countries, including Russia, but at that time had not yet acquired the official status. It still had to go through a stage of development and adoption of the basic document (terms of reference) of GSP. On 21-26 May 2012, after lengthy consultations, the FAO Committee on Agriculture resolved to approve the basic document of GSP, and on 5 December 2012, FAO program was supported at the 145th Council meeting. The documents necessary for normal functioning of the program formally approved at the 38th FAO Conference were adopted at the Plenary Assembly of the GSP, which was held on 11-12 June 2013.

The basic document indicates that Global Soil Partnership is based on regional soil partnerships. Proposed framework for such partnerships is based on the FAO classification of the world regions: North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, Africa and Australia and Oceania. At the same time, it is indicated that other regional partnerships based on a common language, culture, geographical location or other criteria can be created.

European soil partnership established on October 13, 2013 in the framework of the Global Week of soils in Berlin covers a vast area from the British Isles to Kamchatka, including countries that greatly differ in their physical and geographical conditions, economic development, history of soil reclamation and many other parameters. That is why, as it is noted in the Berlin communiqué, the creation of sub-regional Eurasian soil partnership is an expedient measure.

On November 20, 2013 in Moscow (Russian Federation), within the framework of the international conference "Eurasian network on food security and Eurasian Soil Partnership", Eurasian partners of the Global Soil Partnership met to discuss the prospects of establishing a sub-regional Eurasian Soil Partnership (**EASP**) in the framework of the Global Soil Partnership supported by FAO.

After intensive discussions, the participants agreed to the following:

* Establish the Eurasian soil partnership with the secretariat located in Moscow (Russian Federation).
* Establish a working steering committee for the Eurasian sub-regional soil partnership comprising the following members:
  + Eurasian Center for Food Security of M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University (Moscow, Russia),
  + V.V. Dokuchaev Soil Science Institute (Moscow, Russia),
  + Institute of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic (Bishkek),
  + O.N. Sokolovskii Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry National Research Center (Kharkov, Ukraine),
  + General Directorate of Agrarian Reform, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (Ankara, Turkey).
* Assign the MSU Eurasian Center for Food Security as the Secretariat of the Eurasian sub-regional soil partnership.
* Hold the next meeting of the Eurasian Soil Partnership in May 2014.
* Prepare the working documents for the next meeting necessary for information support of the discussion. If possible, these documents should be sent to the participants in the four weeks prior to the meeting.

***Basic statements***

1. The partners agree that EASP will be organized around five main pillars of action of the Global Soil Partnership, i.e.:
   1. Promote sustainable management of soil resources for their protection, conservation and sustainable productivity.
   2. Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils.
   3. Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities in conjunction with the relevant actions to improve productivity, environmental security and social development.
   4. Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information: data collection, analysis, verification, representation, monitoring and integration with other disciplines.
   5. Support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management and protection.
2. Partners agree that the optimal way for concentration of efforts on the main pillars of the program is the development of issues relevant to all partners of the EASP. During the discussion, it was decided that such an issue for the Eurasian region was soil salinization.
3. Partners agree that due to the breadth of geographical coverage and the wide range of the goals, funding cannot be received from a single source, so they are prepared to make an effort to search for internal and external sources of funding.

***Plan of action on the main pillars***

*Pillar 1. Promote sustainable management of soil resources for their protection, conservation and sustainable productivity*

1. The development of guidelines on sustainable management of soils subjected to the risk of salinization.
2. Putting in to use the standards of assessment of water quality used for irrigation.
3. Distribution of drip irrigation systems.
4. Support to energy efficient irrigation systems.
5. The development of best agricultural practices in the domain of soil management.

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

1. Development of economics of soil degradation, cost assessment of action vs. inaction when managing salt-affected soils (i.e., comparison of losses caused by degradation vs. costs of remediation and sustainable use); investments attraction for soil protection.
2. Organization of "knowledge network", a series of workshops including international ones focused on soil salinity problems.
3. Development of the “soil doctor” program, i.e., small consulting firms and groups of experts coming on call to solve the problems of soil degradation.
4. The introduction of the basics of soil science, knowledge of degradation, protection and remediation of soils into the school curriculums.
5. Development of training courses, including e-learning courses, devoted to tillage, protection and remediation of salt-affected soils.
6. Create regional mechanism to capacity building of regional technical cooperation.

*Pillar 3. Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities in conjunction with the relevant actions to improve productivity, environmental security and social development.*

1. Development of experimental research into irrigation of soils potentially subjected to salinization.
2. Conduction of investigations on the use of alternative salt tolerant crops for cultivation on salt-affected soils.
3. Development of innovative irrigation methods, including drip irrigation.
4. Development of research in the field of remediation of salt-affected soils.
5. Develop decision support system for integrated fertilizing management.

*Pillar 4. Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information: sampling, analysis, verification, representation, monitoring and integration with other disciplines.*

1. Creation of harmonized soil database of the Eurasian soil partnership.
2. Development of digital soil mapping (DSM) including training of specialists in DSM.
3. Land Evaluation (especially in relation to agronomy and forestry).

*Pillar 5. Support harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management.*

1. Achieve harmonization in the assessment of the degree of soil salinity, methods of soil and irrigation water salinity assessment within Eurasian region, as well as discuss the problem of the worldwide correlation of methods.
2. Participate in the work of commissions on harmonization of values, gradations and methods used in soil science.
3. Enhance to capacity for harmonization of geospatial data.

***Plan of meetings***

Under the rules adopted by the Global Soil Partnership, the highest governing body of the GSP is the Plenary Assembly, which meets annually. Likewise for Eurasian Soil Partnership, the decision-making body will be the Regional Assembly, which will meet once a year as well. Between Assemblies, decisions will be made by the Steering Committee, which may be supplemented and / or updated at the Regional Assembly. The Steering Committee is responsible for preparation of the documents for the Regional Assembly. The Steering Committee shall meet at least once a year between the Regional Assemblies.

In March - April 2014, prior to the first Regional Assembly, the Secretariat of the EASP will hold the online consultations (will open online forum) devoted to the Plan of Action in order to obtain the additional proposals for inclusion into the Plan.

The First Regional Assembly of the EASP is suggested to be held in June 2014 in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan).

The next meeting of the Steering Committee is scheduled for October 2014 in Analia (Turkey).

The further plan of meetings will be approved during the First Regional Assembly.