

Global Soil Week: Policy Messages for HLPF 2017

Reviewing the SDGs through a soil and land lens for eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

This document includes the main policy outcomes of the Global Soil Week 2017 by introducing 1) the principles and methods utilized, 2) the five key policy messages discussed in plenary with the participants and 3) Considerations from the discussions at the Global Soil Week supporting the five key policy messages. We respectfully submit the messages below, for consideration by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), and reinforce our commitment to contribute to strengthening the work and role of the HLPF. We also stand ready to work together with Member States aiming to strengthen the emphasis on soil- and land-related issues in their National Voluntary Reviews and also with platforms aiming to conduct similar reviews.

Global Soil Week 2017: a contribution to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2017: At the Global Soil Week 2017 (22-24 May 2017, Berlin), twenty three co-hosting partners from four governments, intergovernmental and academic organizations and civil society networks convened almost 300 people from around the globe to review the subset of SDGs under special consideration by the HLPF17 (1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17)¹ focusing on main progress and challenges related to soil and land issues.

Preparatory processes, such as this, provide an opportunity to strengthen the HLPF by reviewing and synthesizing information ahead of it. In particular, we would like to submit the experience of the Global Soil Week for consideration by stakeholder communities dedicated to other issues related to sustainable development, and especially to other natural resources, such as water, forests, and biodiversity. Natural resources and their ecosystem services are the basis for the SDGs. Their cross-cutting role needs to be addressed by the HLPF. Preparatory events dedicated to other natural resources could assume an important role in this regard.

1 Our Principles and Methods

While piloting this exercise and assuming this thematic focus, we intend to contribute to the efforts of the HLPF in navigating the complexities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More precisely, the Global Soil Week aimed to:

- i) adopt an approach framed by 2030 Agenda principles of Universality, Inclusion to Leave No One Behind, and Integration;
- ii) highlight gaps, synergies and progress, and complementing available data with other forms of knowledge complementary to the SDGs indicators;
- iii) empower different actors to share their priorities on the SDG implementation, thus raising accountability and awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ SDG1 No Poverty, SDG2 Zero Hunger, SDG3 Good Health and Well-Being, SDG5 Gender Equality, SDG9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG14 Life Below Water, SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals.

We were able to create linkages between sustainable soil and land management and governance and the six SDGs up for the Thematic Review in 2017, as well as to crucial issues under SDG 15, 16 and 17.² We acknowledge the need to abstract the findings of the multi-stakeholder discussions and presented case studies at this year's Global Soil Week to draft global policy messages while aiming to stay true to the unique conditions and context of different countries. The internal governance structures of soil and land resources are just one example in this regard. We also acknowledge and believe that similar exercises will be required for a comprehensive review of the role of soil and land to achieve the 2030 Agenda. As the SDG Thematic Reviews at HLPF continue, there will be an opportunity to further review the SDGs from a soil and land perspective, in an integrated way. At the same time, the methodological conclusions that we have drawn from the Global Soil Week might be beneficial for thematic reviews in general.

We believe that the policy messages presented below are made stronger by the diverse composition and expertise of Global Soil Week's participants, with governments' representatives from Ministries of Economic Cooperation, Agriculture and Sustainable Development taking the lead. A complete overview of the Global Soil Week's results is made available in the accompanying Final Report.

2 Land and Soils to Eradicate Poverty and Promote Prosperity in a Changing World: Five Key Policy Messages for the High Level Political Forum 2017

In order to ensure the contribution of soil and land to the achievement of the SDGs, we must:

1. Increase investments in sustainable land management and responsible governance. It will be critical to design investments and monitor them in line with international human rights-based instruments such as the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (VGGT), and internationally accepted environmental and social safeguards;
2. Make the entire production chain sustainable and change consumption patterns that have an impact on land degradation both locally and in other parts of the world. High-consuming countries have a particular responsibility in this regard;
3. Enhance spatial planning and adopt territorial approaches to address the rural-urban continuum in an integrated way that contributes to food security and the sustainable and the integrated management of natural resources such as the land-water nexus; as well as to improving regional value chains to offer better opportunities for the youth;
4. Improve land rights and land tenure, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups, and acknowledge that vulnerable populations are rights holders whose rights need to be upheld. This implies adopting specific measures to protect civil society, since human rights are under pressure from the shrinking space for civil society; and

² SDG15 Life on Land, SDG16 Peace, justice and strong institutions, SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals

5. Build a bridge between SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG15 (Life on land) to ensure food security through avoiding, reducing and reversing soil and land degradation to achieve SDG target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality, and sustainably managing landscapes for people. Entry points for this are community empowerment, and high-quality and accountable extension services that embrace the youth and open data access.

3 Protecting Land Resources, Sustainable Land Management, and Responsible Land Governance: Considerations from the discussions at the Global Soil Week supporting the five key policy messages.

The five messages above capture the essence of the more detailed discussions at the Global Soil Week on the following topics presented below:

- Land resource protection, addressing in particular the principle of universality and the question of limited availability of land and soils resources.
- Sustainable land management, addressing in particular the need for integrated approaches and up-scaling successful soil rehabilitation practices.
- Right to defend land, addressing in particular the principle of inclusion as a necessary step to raise accountability.

There is a consensus emerging from the Global Soil Week: Sustainable land management and responsible land governance are crucial to reduce poverty and to promote shared prosperity. The following paragraphs provide a more detailed account of the recommendations emerging from the Global Soil Week.

Land Resource Protection

- The demands on land from various sectors compete and add up. Also, in a globalised world, demands, policies and land use in one place are interconnected with and have impacts on other places. Adding up these demands from the various sectors shows that we do not have enough fertile land to fulfil all the projected demands. “Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a changing world” can only be achieved if we constantly address the trade-offs in land use, and balance the demands with the availability and capacities of land resources, thereby considering that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for a country or region;
- Beyond the inter-linkages between different countries, we are also far from addressing the linkages between soil, land, and the oceans. The SDGs offer the opportunity to advance an integrative oceans governance regime that is yet to be developed;
- Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) has initiated a unique policy process that includes local participation and multi-stakeholder involvement. LDN therefore serves as an example of how SDGs can successfully be translated into national targets and action. The LDN principles can foster an enabling environment for integrated land use planning and sustainable management to halt degradation at the national level. However, LDN is being implemented at national levels and strives to achieve LDN within national borders. To arrive

at LDN at a global level, it is important that externalities between countries are avoided. Therefore, efforts to achieve LDN in one country should be accompanied by an analysis of that country's impacts on land degradation in other countries;

- Current consumption and production patterns undermine shared prosperity for all and often lead to externalisation of the impacts and costs of land use. High-consuming countries shall lead initiatives to avoid externalising costs of land use. Education on the value of food and virtual land use is an important avenue for altering youth consumption patterns. To live up to the principle of universality, tools and mechanisms to account for and monitor consumption and production, such as the Land Footprint, should be used to link displaced land use to national and local land use decisions. LDN and SCP are two concepts that could complement each other.

Sustainable Land Management (SLM)

- Soil and land protection and rehabilitation are crucial for achieving many SDGs (SDG 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17, and 15): there are synergies with other fields of policymaking, which can contribute to more widespread uptake of SLM and vice versa. Examples include community empowerment, tenure reforms, responsible land governance, investments in high-quality and accountable extension services, and access to quality data for agriculture;
- Coordination and cooperation across different sectors and different levels of land use and decision-making need to be achieved through multi-sectorial, multi-actor task forces (or teams) for design, financing, capacity building, and communication of implementation and evaluation of SLM programs;
- There is a strong link between soil quality and human health. Soil pollution is an example. The way soils are managed influences the availability of micronutrients for plants and, hence, the availability of nutritious food. Soil and land management practices need to go beyond a productionist paradigm;
- While soil rehabilitation is crucial to achieving the SDGs, responsive, high-quality, and accountable extension services are key to achieving and sustaining soil rehabilitation. Investment in building such services, and ensuring the reach of resource-poor households and mainstreaming of SLM, is therefore a multi-win strategy;
- Extension services sensitive to SLM must include a higher percentage of youth in their targets. SLM practices tend to deal with just one part of the agricultural value chain. Farming has to be made attractive to the youth. Extension services should therefore address a broader set of capacity-building measures to facilitate and incentivise youth involvement at all stages along the value chain;
- A tremendous wealth of biophysical, agricultural and social-economic data already exists at global, regional, national and local scales. However, these data are often not readily accessible or adjusted to the needs of policy-makers, practitioners, and end-users. Providing access to existing data and incentives as well as assurances for informed decision-making and action – in support of national and global efforts of soil and land protection,

rehabilitation, and productive use – is a success factor for the SDG agenda. Ensuring accessible and appropriate data requires public attention and investment.

Land Governance

- It is crucial that the follow-up and review process of the SDGs be transparent, inclusive and based on international human rights-based instruments such as the VGGT;
- It is important to have coherent policies for accountability in land governance, and that this is reflected in National Voluntary Reviews at the HLPF. In several contexts, accountability in land governance can only be achieved by addressing the issue of shrinking democratic space. This requires target support to protect land rights defenders, build capacity in civil society and governments, and investments to facilitate the participation by civil society in policy processes;
- Use existing legally binding reporting mechanisms of the human rights system to enhance accountability in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda;
- Several actor groups in society, such as women and youth, have limited access to land. Land-grabbing exacerbates this problem. Access to land should be addressed through better-tailored government regulation, easing processes for land acquisition by disadvantaged groups of society, and/or awareness raising of existing alternatives for land access;
- Besides the SDGs reviewed at HLPF17, progress in accountability of land governance is directly linked to SDG 16;³
- Implement follow-up and review through human-rights based instruments and through the SDG indicators as complementary, mutually reinforcing ways to increase accountability in the 2030 Agenda;
- Human-rights based follow-up and review is a catalytic investment to enhance accountability. This, in turn, is important for the goal of leaving no one behind in other aspects of land governance, such as participatory land use planning.

Rethink the concepts we use in sustainable development to align them with an integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs articulate an integrated perspective on development. This perspective also assists in reviewing commonly used concepts in sustainable development. Soil and land, for example, tend to be thought of as a rural issue. However, innovation will be inhibited if there is not a systemic integration of policies across the urban and rural continuum. A circular economy, urban food security, and adapted infrastructure solutions depend on an awareness of actual interdependencies within the rural-urban-continuum. Similarly, concepts such as the nexus communicate a vision of

³ SDG16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

integrated natural resource management that takes services as its starting point, not particular resources.

4 Way Forward

We submit these messages and conclusions for the consideration by the HLPF and reinforce our commitment to contribute to strengthening the work and role of HLPF. We also stand ready to work together with Member States aiming to highlight soil and land related issues stronger in their National Voluntary Reviews and also with platforms aiming to conduct similar reviews.