

Thursday 8th September 2011

Press release
The Global Soil Partnership
- for immediate release-

Representatives of the British Society of Soil Science attended the launch of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) at the FAO headquarters, Rome on 7 – 9th September 2011.

Dr Helaina Black, President of the British Society of Soil Science offered support to the GSP in engaging with our national soil science researchers, practitioners and policy-makers who work in areas relevant to the GSP pillars of action.

She said “We only need to look to global initiatives in biodiversity conservation, climate change and water management to see that the soil science community needs an effective single voice to ensure that soil issues are taken seriously at the international policy negotiating table when different agendas are being addressed. Thus, we think an Intergovernmental organisation focussed on soil is vital, and the British Society of Soil Science offers its support to the GSP in fulfilling this role. In this context we would support a straightforward focus on soils. Specifically using the term land alongside soil only serves to dilute the message that we wish the GSP to communicate.”

In introducing the partnership FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf warned that pressure on the world's soil resources and land degradation are threatening global food security. He called for a renewed international effort to assure sufficient fertile and healthy soils today and for future generations. The pressures for land dictate that we must address the fact that current markets favour bringing into use those soils which provide the greatest economic return over short time scales without due consideration of the longer term costs of degrading these non-renewable soil resources. Many of the problems we face today have occurred because this was not properly considered in past land use and natural resource use planning. We must learn from the past and not make the same mistakes again.

For and on behalf of the British Society of Soil Science
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Additional information

About the Society

The **British Society of Soil Science (BSSS)** is a membership charity which together with its professional body **The Institute of Professional Soil Scientists (IPSS)** seek to promote the study and profession of soil science. Further information can be found on their websites www.soils.org.uk and www.soilscientist.org

About the Society President, Dr Helaina Black, M.I. Soil Sci, CSci

Dr Black's research experience in soil ecology and soil science spans over 20 years with extensive practical experience in temperate and tropical ecosystems and in the delivery of multidisciplinary projects. Helaina coordinated the cross-institute work-package on Management of soils to enhance function and value (WP3.3) as part of the Scottish Government commissioned research programme on Environment - Land Use and Rural Stewardship at the James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen

Background of Global Soil Partnership

On the basis of the recommendation of FAO's High-Level External Committee (HLEC) on the Millennium Development Goals to the Director-General and the discussions and conclusions from the 22nd Committee on Agriculture (COAG), preparatory activities have been initiated to develop a vision statement, strategy and action plan towards the **establishment of a Global Soil Partnership (GSP) for Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.**

Through enhanced and applied knowledge of soil resources as well as improved global governance and standardization, the Partnership will:

- Create and promote awareness among decision makers and stakeholders on the key role of soil resources for sustainable land management and sustainable development
- Address critical soil issues in relation to food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Guide soil knowledge and research through a common global communication platform incorporating real local challenges
- Establish an active and effective network for addressing soil crosscutting issues
- Develop global governance guidelines aiming to improved soil protection and sustainable soil productivity

Further information available at <http://www.fao.org/landandwater>