

Sustainable Soil and Desertification

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Year in Review

First and foremost, objective of this Specialist Group is to contribute to and implement their work based on the parameters of the first “Soil” Resolution of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, Amman Jordan 2000, which requests the IUCN Environmental Law Program – “in its development of legal guidelines and explanatory material, and investigation into a global legal instrument for the sustainable use of soils, to pay particular attention to the ecological needs of soil and their ecological functions for the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of human life[1]”.

The work of the specialist group is critical to several of IUCN’s Core and Thematic Program Areas, including “Conserving Biodiversity”, through policies and governance that are concerned with the achievement of biodiversity in nature; “Changing the climate forecast”, in particular through the SG’s work in assisting various countries with natural resource management policies and strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change; and finally “Managing Ecosystems for Human Well-being”, by contributing to sustainable environmental management to reduce vulnerability to natural hazards and reduce conflicts.

Throughout 2015 the specialist group was active in investigating and discussing various options for an international instrument for soil and discussing the legal aspects of land degradation neutrality (LDN)[2] with UNCCD Secretariat, international environmental law groups and soil science groups.

In addition to preparing and contributing to a number of publications, the specialist group members were representative at several of global events during 2015 and were involved in several important projects including:

- Global Soil Week in April 2015 in Berlin (Dialogue Session on “Global Soil Policy” discussed the current situation at the global level on soil legislation and policy); [3]
- Joint IUCN-UNCCD Action Plan meeting Gland[4];
- Contribution to IUCN Technical Brief on Land Degradation Neutrality (with IUCN Dryland Initiative);
- Prepared chapter on Pastoral Land Law for UNFAO Technical Guide to Governance of Pastoral Land[5] (compiled by IUCN Dryland Initiative);
- Prepared reports on spatial planning for various countries for IUCN Environmental Law Centre Project (IUCN ELC Legal Consultancy) Integrated Spatial Planning Project;
- Contributions to 2016 International Yearbook on Soil Law and Policy (International Soil Law Experts Group);
- Prepared a workshop proposal for 2016 IUCN WCC Hawaii – “Developing a Global Soil Regime”;

- Contribution to the land degradation and restoration assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (chapter 2 "concepts and perceptions").

During 2015 the specialist group also contributed to national environmental law reform in Mongolia, including the implementation of the Soil Protection and Prevention of Desertification Law, and drafting the Mongolian Pastureland Law.

Active at the national and international levels, and as global interest continues to grow in the investigation of an international instrument for soil and the legal aspects of the concept of land degradation neutrality, the specialist group continues to develop initiatives in national soil legislation and policy reform.

Moreover, the specialist group is a member of the IUCN Core Group advising the [IUCN Dryland Initiative](#), which is ongoing.

[1] IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) has passed three “Soil Resolutions”: Amman Jordan 2000; Bangkok Thailand 2004; and Barcelona Spain 2008. These Resolutions have given the imprimatur of the IUCN to investigate international and national legislative aspects of sustainable use of soils, and calls upon members of the Union to support this work.

[2] Concept of LDN was first introduced at Rio+20 by UNCCD and has since been discussed at Global Soil Week and UNCCD COP12.

[3] <http://globalsoilweek.org/global-soil-week/gsw-2015>; Soil SG represented by Dr. Irene Heuser, Dr. Harald Ginsky, and Dr. Elizabeth Dooley

[4] Soil SG represented by Dr. Irene Heuser

[5] The Technical Guide will be part of the implementation process of the UNFAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, Rome 2012.