



RECENT MEA ACTIVITIES

▶ FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND

UNCCD ORGANIZES LAND DAY

On 6 June 2009, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat hosted “Land Day” at the Gustav-Stresemann-Institut, in Bonn, Germany. The event, attended by 170 participants, aimed to help climate change negotiators and other stakeholders attending the concurrent Bonn climate change talks consider the linkages between climate change and desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). During the opening session, Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, argued that soil restoration and soil carbon sequestration offer “win-win-win” opportunities for climate change, biodiversity and desertification, and Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, highlighted possibilities including: reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD); improved crop and grazing management; and restoration of organic soils. Jeffrey Sachs, Earth Institute Director, Columbia University, called for, *inter alia*: better science on the effects of climate change in dryland regions; increased understanding of human systems, such as the impacts of climate change on herders’ livestock assets; and increased understanding of intervention measures that are needed for adaptation and climate change preparedness.



L-R: Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary and Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, greet one another prior to the opening of Land Day.

Participants then attended three panels, entitled: “How does sustainable land management support climate change adaptation?”; “What options can soil carbon sequestration offer for mitigating and adapting to climate change?”; and “Sustainable land management in climate change policy frameworks: what is the way forward?” Executive Secretary Gnacadja closed the event by highlighting that: adaptation financing is a sound way to secure everybody’s future; synergies will not occur by accident but must be promoted and monitored; carbon sequestration is measurable, cost-effective and provides multiple co-benefits; agriculture must be integrated into a future climate regime; and a comprehensive study on the economics of sustainable land management should be conducted (<http://www.iisd.ca/climate/sb30/enbots/06.html>).

MEA Clusters In This Issue

- **Forests, Deserts and Land**
White Papers for UNCCD Scientific Conference Open for Review; ITTO Co-Organizes Conference on Forest Tenure in Africa Page 2-3
- **Sustainable Development**
DSD Calls for Articles Page 3
- **International Organizations**
UNEP Launches Climate Heroes Platform Page 3
- **Chemicals and Wastes**
Basel Seeks Information on Ozone Depleting Substances Waste; Rotterdam Posts Fifth Chemical Review Committee Report Page 4
- **Water, Oceans and Wetlands**
New Ramsar Site Designated; UNDOALOS Celebrates World Oceans Day Page 4
- **Trade, Finance and Investment**
GEF Posts Documents for June Council Meeting; World Bank Approves First Climate Investment Fund Project Page 4
- **Climate and Atmosphere**
UN Climate Change Talks Near End; Montreal Protocol Releases Documents Page 5-6
- **Biodiversity and Wildlife**
Plant Treaty Governing Body Concludes Successful Session; CBD Secretariat Launches New Outreach Initiative Page 6

GUEST ARTICLE

GlobalSoilMap.net – A New Digital Soil Map of the World

By Alfred Hartemink, ISRIC - World Soil Information, Wageningen, The Netherlands, et al.*

Abstract

Knowledge of global soil resources is fragmented and dated. There is a need for accurate, up-to-date and spatially referenced soil information, as frequently expressed by the modeling community, farmers and land users, and policy and decision makers.

Continued on page 2

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

THE NATURAL FIX? THE ROLE OF ECOSYSTEMS IN CLIMATE MITIGATION

(UNEP, 2009) UNEP released this Rapid Assessment report to mark World Environment Day, on 5 June 2009. According to the report, boosting investments in the conservation, rehabilitation and management of the Earth’s forests, peatlands, soils and other key ecosystems could deliver significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and avoid even more being released to the atmosphere (http://www.unep.org/publications/search/pub_details_s.asp?ID=4027).

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GUEST ARTICLE (cont.)

This need coincides with an enormous leap in technologies that allow for accurately collecting and predicting soil properties. A digital fine-resolution global soil map would enable climatologists, hydrologists, crop modelers, foresters and agricultural scientists, among others, to better predict the effects of climate change or new technologies on food production and environmental health.

We are working on a new digital soil map of the world using state-of-the-art and emerging technologies for soil mapping and predicting soil properties. Our aim is to map the global land surface in five years. The resulting maps will depict the primary functional soil properties at a grid resolution of 90x90 m. They will be freely available, web-accessible and widely distributed and used.

GlobalSoilMap.net is being developed to provide primary soil data in a form that will meet the demands of a broad range of users, including governments, natural resource managers, educational institutions, planners, researchers and agriculturalists. The online system will provide access to the best available soil and land resource information in a consistent format across the globe. A priority



GlobalSoilMap consortium participants on a field trip to Western Kenya (photo courtesy of GlobalSoilMap.net)

will be to provide the global scientific community with soil information in a format that can be readily used for modeling and evaluation studies (e.g. options for climate adaptation, carbon dynamics, potential food production). The process will also enable scientists from all parts of the world to exchange information and benefit from the rapid changes in technology.

The maps will be produced by a global consortium with centres in each of the continents: NRCS for North America, Embrapa for Latin America, JRC for Europe, TSBF-CIAT for Africa, ISSAS for parts of Asia and CSIRO for Oceania. This new global soil map will be supplemented by interpretation and functionality options that aim to assist better decisions in a range of global issues like food production and hunger eradication, climate change, and environmental degradation. In November 2008, a grant of US\$18 million was obtained from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to map most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and make the underlying data available. This grant also includes funds for coordinating efforts in the global consortium. However, additional funds are

needed to ensure the project can help rectify years of under-investment in one of our most fundamental resources for life on Earth – the soil.

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To read the full article and for the authors' contact information, visit: <http://www.iisd.ca/mea-l/guestarticle71.html>

Editor's note: MEA Bulletin invites articles from practitioners, MEAs and academics on issues that are of interest across the MEA community. Please contact the Editor, lynn@iisd.org, for further information.



GlobalSoilMap consortium leaders at the January 2009 inauguration ceremony in Nairobi, Kenya (photo courtesy of GlobalSoilMap.net)

► FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND



Logos courtesy of the UNCCD Secretariat

WHITE PAPERS FOR UNCCD'S SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OPEN FOR REVIEW

The Dryland Science for Development Consortium (DSD), which is helping to organize the first scientific conference for the UNCCD Committee

on Science and Technology (CST), has invited scientific colleagues and stakeholders of the UNCCD to review the drafts of scientific analysis papers that will feed into the 22-24 September 2009 conference on "Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management."

The Conference, popularly known under the shorter title "Understanding Desertification and Land Degradation Trends," will take place at the ninth session of the UNCCD Conference of

Parties in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In preparation for the Conference, three Working Groups have drafted 'white papers' summarizing leading scientific knowledge relevant to the topic assigned by the Convention that leads towards recommendations that can support decision-making in land and water management by the Convention and its parties. The drafts will be open for review by scientists and stakeholders worldwide from 28 May-28 June 2009 (<http://www.drylandscience.org/>; <http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/cstsciconf/menu.php>).