

## So much depends on so little Soil, A Global Common under Threat

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### A. The main message: Towards setting and monitoring a target of “Zero net Land Degradation Rate”

- Soils have become a global common good and that’s not yet anchored on decisions makers mind;
- They are pivotal for our life system;
- The challenge: depletion of fertile land/soils is a major threat to mankind;
- Scope of the problem: Land degradation or the depletion of soil nutrients depletion is not just a local problem: links to other issues such as biodiversity, climate food security and markets; trends at global scale, transboundary aspects;
- Policy response up to date has been national action (e.g by-laws on soils, national programs and policies etc). The only existing international and legally binding framework is UNCCD, (ambiguous as formally restricted to dry lands, but realities on the ground are already different).
- Many affected country-parties have both dry and non-dry areas, and socio-economics (including vulnerability) assessment will not make any sense unless done by covering the whole land. This is also true at (sub) regional and global levels.

### B. Our Position: the global dimension of soil degradation needs international acknowledgement because without protecting, restoring and managing soils sustainability:

- We will miss biodiversity and climate change targets;
- We will not alleviate rural poverty/hunger, ensure long-term food security, build resilience to drought and water stress, with implications on social and political stability, geopolitical conflict;
- We are not taking advantage of opportunities (e.g. climate mitigation);
- National action is mandatory but insufficient; we do not even have an operational, approved, consensual assessment of land degradation and soil depletion, just bits and pieces of research, but no global picture.

### C. The needs for action

- a) The international community need to move towards a target of **“Zero net land degradation rate”** by protecting, restoring and managing soils sustainability
- b) **The establishment of An Intergovernmental Panel/Platform on Soil (IPLS) to assess and review trends in land and soil degradation and restoration.** IPCC is the proof of the advantage of such a solution; advantages: independence, more public attention, focus on the specific issues of land and soil, even if there is some overlapping with IPCC and IPBES, etc.
- c) **The establishment of an international policy and monitoring framework.** Several options are discussed: independent soil convention (this has been discussed in the late nineties, but rejected, as you can hardly dissociate soils and land) ; broadening the scope of UNCCD, non-legally binding instrument;
- d) Decentralizes initiatives might be considered (arguments from the climate convention), as part of an iterative process, not a hierarchical one.

#### Others Initiatives

- Global soil forum (IASS)
- Global soil partnership (FAO)

- The German Federal Environment Agency is planning a workshop (working title: Soil Protection - A Global Challenge for a Greener Future) on 26 September 2011 in Berlin

#### [Futures Possible Milestones](#)

- The UNGA High Level Meeting on Sept 20<sup>th</sup> in NY on “Addressing Desertification Land Degradation and Drought in the context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development”
- High Level (Ministerial) Segment of UNCCD COP-10; 18-19 October in Changwon, Republic of Korea. Round table III
- The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (or Rio + 20 Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, June 2012