



International Decade of Soils (2015-2024)

In the course of the highly successful conference *Celebration of International Year of Soils 2015 – Achievements and Future Challenges*, which attracted more than 120 participants from all over the world, a draft version of the Vienna Soil Declaration ‘Soil matters for humans and ecosystems’ was adopted and **the International Decade of Soils (2015-2024)** proclaimed by Rainer Horn, IUSS President.

In the ‘Vienna Soil Declaration’ of Dec. 7, 2015, the IUSS has identified the key roles played by soils in addressing the major resource, environmental, health and social problems which humanity is currently facing. Given this situation, the IUSS believes that it is incumbent on IUSS members to not only maintain the level of activity generated in IYS 2015 but to increase the momentum and the extent of our contributions on these issues as we move towards the Centenary of the IUSS formation in 2024.

The Executive Committee and the Council of the IUSS will play a pivotal role in setting overall objectives and directions during this period. However, it is essential that all Divisions, Commissions, Working Groups, National, Regional and individual Members accept the challenge to undertake activities to ensure that the significance of soils in maintaining healthy life and environment remain continually at the forefront of political and scientific planning and decision making.

The International Decade of Soils shall thus be a continuation of the efforts made during the International Year of the Soils 2015. It will be marked by a number of activities on the national and international levels.

IUSS plans to play a key role in education, dissemination of information, issuing informative press statement on key issues, co-ordinating activities across the world through our National Members (e.g. World Soils Day) and maintaining a historical record and collecting personal biographies.

Recent developments:

As a first step, a **logo** was designed:



The basic concept of the logo design describes a healthy soil profile. The logo is made up of ten lines - each representing one year in the international decade of soils. Each line also represents a decade of IUSS, leading up to the organisation's centenary in 2024. The brown of the soil horizons in the logo is darker towards the top and gradually becomes lighter further down, demonstrating a soil organic matter content declining with depth. A green plant sprouts out of the soil - demonstrating soil as the

origin of life itself. Earthworms symbolize the vitality of soil life, weaving the letters IUSS into the healthy soil.

Secondly, the **Vienna Soil Declaration was translated into Spanish and Portuguese**. Its key messages will be used for dissemination purposes. Furthermore, a new version of the **Soil Globe** showing the IDS logo was produced, which will be distributed by IUSS presidents at several events. And, last but not least, upon the initiative of the Latin American Society for Soil Science (SLCS) the first outreach campaign via social media was launched in which the global soil science community is invited to participate. In the framework of a project called **iThus are Soils of my Nation®!** a **'Soil's Friends Virtual Network'** will be created to generate public awareness of the need to preserve soil.

Planned future activities:

Public outreach: It is important to show the emotional and cultural relevance of soils to reach the general public and other target groups. **Partnerships** will be forged with other international organisations (e.g. IAEA, CGIAR, UNEP, Worldbank, WWF, Friends of the Earth, ...) who could help propagate IDS messages and support us in our endeavours. Furthermore, interested media (National Geographic, Discover, ...) will help us to reach the general public and companies who share the same values, as well as others who wish to propagate IUSS IDS messages through their own channels by becoming "soil ambassadors"; all working together with potential sponsors, who would benefit from publicly showing their interest in protecting soil etc.

Education: The main focus of our activities should be on school age children (who will be teenagers and young adults in 10 years' time). Some young children's books already exist; we could assist with their translation into other languages. Web-based material needs to be developed (together with teachers notes) that would target several age groups (including adults). When this material has been developed it could again be translated into other languages. Another idea put forward was to create a soil jigsaw which would allow every person doing the jigsaw to make their own world of soils.

Dissemination of information: The IUSS will act as an independent, reliable source of information about soils and their role in key areas affecting humanity, such as: food production, food security, climate change, carbon sequestration, nuclear contamination, etc. It is important that we communicate regularly and directly with the general public on these and many other issues.

Soil book series: Following the very successful publication of *Soil Matters- solutions under foot*¹, a series of books on new and upcoming topics is planned. The next book in this series will be on urban soils and shall be published by the end of 2016.

Personal biographies: IUSS has prepared documents to guide the collection of personal biographies through a series of interviews or personal statements and plans to run trials over the next few months using an initial template. Following this initial period the process will be refined based on the feedback from interviewers and the project will be disseminated more widely through international contacts and National Member Societies. Based on these interviews it will be possible to publish a collection of Personal Biographies for the Centenary celebrations.

¹ Edited by Stephen Nortcliff on behalf of the IUSS, Nov. 2015, Catena Verlag, GeoEcology Essays. 160 pages, ISBN 978-3-923381-63-0.