



5th Conference of the Africa Soil Science Society - ASSS -

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Communiqué of the 5th Africa Soil Science Society (ASSS)

25 November, 2009.

1. The Africa Soil Science Society (ASSS) held its 5th international conference on "Soils and the new challenges of sustainable development in Africa" from 22-28 November, 2009, in Yaoundé, Cameroon.
2. The ASSS was founded in 1986 as a non-profit making scientific organization grouping scientists working in the area of soil science and application of soil information in Africa. The Society promotes and fosters Soil Science in all its facets and gives support to regional and national societies.
3. The conference, which was opened by the representatives of the Cameroonian authorities and international organizations, was attended by over than 120 participants from 26 countries.
4. The soil scientists belonging to ASSS firmly support: 1) the African Union's/NEPAD comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, in particular pillar no 1 "sustainable land and water management"; and 2) the Nairobi Declaration on the African Process for Combating Climate Change.
5. Responding to these processes, the Conference discussed current and future challenges on: Soils, food crisis and food security; soil degradation and sustainable land management in Africa; soils and mitigation/adaptation to climate change; upscaling Conservation Agriculture in Africa; soil and database development in Africa and land renewable energies. Up-to-date information on these topics has been shared among participants and will be published in proceedings and in a special issue of an international journal.
6. Recognising and re-affirming the expertise and commitment of its members, the ASSS is ready to support widespread dissemination and use of knowledge from research and from experiences of projects dealing with sustainable land management; and also to implement urgent actions to meet the current and future challenges in Africa. For this purpose, African soil scientists call for a political support and for a significant increase of investments to result in a increased productivity and preservation of soil resources, in particular by African governments. Increasing investments from national resources would be an expression of an important political willingness of African states, which may help catalyse contributions from development partner agencies and the international community.

7. It is paramount that the role of soils and Soil Science in ensuring food security and providing other key ecosystem services are given appropriate recognition. These are fundamental for sustainable production and adaptation to climate variability and climate change.
8. In this context ASSS and its members are committed to:
 - a. Speed up the collection and upscale of African tested best practices that could lead to: halt or reverse land degradation; reduce risks associated to climate variability; increase the resilience of agriculture and communities to climate change; and promote integrated practices that save inputs and foster other benefits as carbon sequestration.
 - b. Further engage ASSS members and other relevant national institutions into generating, improving and disseminating quality soil data for supporting actions and policies particularly with regard to land transactions with foreign multinational enterprises.
 - c. Strengthen the role of integrated soil nutrient management and soil quality preservation in national policies and development plans.
 - d. Explore the possibilities for scaling up Conservation Agriculture principles given their success in some areas as one of the means for promoting better management of natural resources.
9. During the conference a parallel meeting for the preparation of the Soil Atlas for Africa took place. This initiative is an outcome of a multi-stakeholder partnership (FAO, ISRIC, IUSS, etc.) coordinated by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and ASSS. By being actively involved in the production of the Soil Atlas of Africa, the utmost aim is to build on the knowledge and expertise of the African specialists, and to contribute to capacity building at individual and network levels which will pave the way for enhancing the visibility of African expertise at international level. This will also ensure that the final product will be useful and relevant for all stakeholders including researchers, land managers, students, public at large, and policy makers who all need good baseline information about soils and land – for research and education, for development planning, avoidance of natural hazards, investment, and management.
10. The new Executive Bureau for the period 2009-2011 was elected as follows: Dr. Martin Yemefack (President); Dr. Robert Zougmore (Secretary General); Dr. Hanadi El Dessougi (Vice Secretary General); Dr. Barrack Okoba (Treasurer); Dr. Vide Adedayo (Vice Treasurer); Dr. Lamourdia Thiombiano (Ex-Officio); Dr. Vincent Aduramigba-Modupe (Auditor); Mr. Boubakar Likiby (Auditor). The Conference agreed that the position of the Vice President will be reserved for the host country of the next Conference, scheduled for 2011 with South Africa or Kenya as candidate countries.
11. The Conference also approved the new bylaws and statutes of the ASSS.
12. The ASSS acknowledges, with appreciation, the efforts and contributions of the Cameroonian government, IRAD and the Cameroon Soil Science Society for hosting a successful Conference. ASSS also expresses its gratitude to the

contributions or support of the following: African Union Commission, AGRA, CTA, FAO, IUSS, JRC and OSS.

13. We are convinced that through better knowledge of soil functioning and of sustainable use of lands at national and continental levels, soils and soil science will offer a future for sustainable development and food security. Participants therefore expressed their commitment to strengthen their national and sub-regional soil science societies in order to actively contribute to the ASSS business. We need actions, not words!