

007 Soil security law

AWARE of the fundamental roles that soils play in addressing the existential global challenges of food security, climate change, biodiversity protection and sustainable land use, as well as for rural livelihoods and vulnerable communities who depend directly on healthy soils, and recognising that soil security is a cross-cutting issue that underlies all of these challenges;

UNDERSTANDING the concept of soil security as the responsible management and preservation of soil to ensure its continued ability to perform vital functions, provide essential ecosystem and biophysical services, and protect against emerging threats to support life on Earth; this concept acknowledges five dimensions of (1) capacity, (2) condition, (3) capital, (4) connectivity and (5) codification, and encompasses the social, economic and biophysical sciences as well as policy and legal frameworks;

CONVINCED that soil security, including soil health, deserves a high level of priority and legal protection;

RECOGNISING the critical importance of protecting and restoring the physical, chemical and biological health of soils for their multiple functions, ecosystem services and contributions to people;

AWARE that unsustainable agricultural production, artificialisation including soil sealing and other land uses have escalated soil degradation, through multiple chemical, physical and biological threats, undermining its availability and capacity for food production and agricultural sustainability;

RECOGNISING ALSO the importance of Indigenous and local knowledge and the role of Indigenous peoples and Local communities as key stewards of soil restoration, soil health and traditional food sources, including, in particular, soil biodiversity;

AFFIRMING that soil security is integral to the right to a healthy environment, supporting sustainable ecosystems, food systems, human health and non-toxic environments;

STRESSING the importance of promoting soil security and in particular sustainable agriculture to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the land degradation neutrality target in SDG 15 (Life on Land);

ACKNOWLEDGING the potential of the three Rio Conventions to protect and restore soils, and emphasising the need to make use of technical information and strategic guidance developed under these fora, but emphasising also the need for an urgent development of a dedicated global instrument to address soil security, including sustainable agriculture, holistically;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the particular role of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Decision 19 taken at UNCCD COP16 on avoiding, reducing and reversing land soil degradation of agriculture lands;

FURTHER RECOGNISING the substantial work of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) and its Specialist Group on Soil and Sustainable Agriculture Law in advancing environmental law to promote soil security;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

REQUESTS the Director General to collaborate with WCEL as well as other relevant Commissions and interested members:

ALT 1 [a. to explore options for international legally binding and non-binding instruments on soil security;]

ALT 2 [a. to develop concepts and parameters for international frameworks on soil security;]

ORIG a. to develop concepts and parameters for an international convention or a global legal instrument on soil security;

b. to evaluate and propose national or regional laws and policies to protect, restore and rehabilitate soil ecosystems, with a focus on sustainable agriculture; and

c. to encourage States and regions to adopt appropriate measures and legal frameworks, addressing threats to soil and promoting soil security across all sectors (including but not limited to agriculture, mining and infrastructure), with attention to vulnerable communities, and aligned with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Neutrality targets.