

Introductory speech at the inter congress meeting and to the Council. Nanjing, October 2024

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The International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) stands as the central hub for soil scientists worldwide, a home that has been serving the global soil science community for over a century. Founded nearly 100 years ago, the IUSS today encompasses 79 National Soil Science Societies and Academies, representing an estimated 50,000 individual members through these organizations.

As the primary institution for soil science, the IUSS provides a collaborative platform that fosters excellence, supports communication and dissemination (C&D), and plays a key role in shaping policies on soil science. It encourages international cooperation, helps define critical soil science initiatives, and offers small financial support for projects that aim to advance specific research fields.

The IUSS has been instrumental in organizing a variety of scientific events, including 22 World Congresses of Soil Science (WCSS), inter-congresses, and numerous specialized meetings. Each year, its divisions, commissions, and working groups organize around 40 scientific events, further promoting research and dialogue in soil science. Additionally, the IUSS partners with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to organize over 2,000 events for World Soil Day on December 5th, emphasizing the importance of soil health globally.

A significant milestone in the IUSS's history is the recognition of China's remarkable investments in soil science. The IUSS's involvement in China marks the first time the Union has acknowledged the country's outstanding contributions to the field. Notable speeches by Chinese delegates in Rio de Janeiro (21st WCSS in Brazil) and Florence (Centennial celebration in Italy) highlighted the tremendous progress made, showcasing China's commitment to advancing soil science and environmental sustainability.

As the IUSS celebrates its centennial, it continues to be a vital force for collaboration, innovation, and progress in the field of soil science, shaping the future of research, policy, and environmental stewardship.

The IUSS is a non-governmental, non-profit organization officially registered in the United States. As a free and autonomous body, the IUSS operates independently, relying almost entirely on self-financing and voluntary contributions from its members. It does not receive significant financial support from governments or other external entities, allowing it to remain impartial and focused solely on advancing the science of soil. This autonomy is crucial in maintaining the integrity of its work and ensuring that all decisions and activities align with the interests of the soil science community rather than external political or economic pressures.

One of the IUSS's core missions is to promote the reputation of its members by recognizing scientific excellence and offering opportunities for collaboration. It provides spaces where scientists from all corners of the globe can gain recognition for their work, whether through awards, roles as officers in IUSS bodies, or simply by contributing to discussions at conferences and meetings. This culture of recognition helps elevate the visibility of members and fosters a sense of community among soil scientists, who are encouraged to engage deeply with the IUSS's initiatives and contribute to its success.

The time spent within the IUSS, whether in leadership roles or through participation in its various programs, must be considered a valuable investment in both personal and professional growth. In return, soil science thrives on the dedication and commitment of its members, and such commitment is essential for driving the field forward.

The IUSS's strengths lie in its large mobilizing capacity. With 79 full members and about 50,000 individual members, it commands a powerful network that spans across the globe. This network enables the IUSS to have a significant impact on the advancement of soil science, mobilizing resources and knowledge on an unprecedented scale. However, like many organizations that rely on volunteer work, the IUSS also faces challenges. Its financial resources are limited, and for some members, the time commitment required for voluntary work can be difficult to prioritize amidst other professional obligations.

Despite these challenges, the IUSS has a wealth of opportunities to strengthen its position in the global scientific community. Its central role is solidified by its strong relationships with key organizations such as the FAO, UNESCO, and the International Science Council (ISC), as well as other stakeholders in the environmental and development sectors. These connections place the IUSS at the heart of global discussions on sustainable development, climate change, and soil conservation.

However, the IUSS must be vigilant about potential threats. The attractiveness of the organization could be undermined by insufficient commitment from its officers and members, which could affect the organization's productivity and global standing. To mitigate this risk, the IUSS must focus on increasing engagement and ensuring that its leaders and members are fully dedicated to the mission of advancing soil science worldwide.

Looking ahead, there are several key targets for the IUSS to focus on. First, it must continue to promote scientific excellence through awards, recognition, and by showcasing high-quality research in its publications and on its social media channels. At the same time, it must elevate the reputation of its members by creating more opportunities for dialogue and engagement, both at its events and through other platforms. Another priority is to bridge the gaps between different regions of the world, as there are significant technological, economic, and social divides that limit opportunities for collaboration. The IUSS can play a crucial role in addressing these divides by fostering international partnerships, facilitating access to stimulus funds and grants, and supporting open-access publications that democratize knowledge sharing.

The IUSS also aims to increase both the number of full and individual members and its global impact. Recent additions to the organization, including members from Albania, Vietnam, Egypt, Moldova, and in the near future Morocco, reflect the growing recognition of the IUSS's value and its increasing global reach. With a larger membership base, the IUSS will be better positioned to influence international policy, attract funding, and support global soil science initiatives.

To further strengthen its role, the IUSS recognizes the need to improve its Secretariat. Enhancing operational capacity, particularly in areas like dissemination and communication, is essential for better engagement with members and stakeholders. Additionally, the IUSS must find ways to improve the commitment of its officers and increase its fundraising capacity, also through project-based initiatives.

The IUSS is more than just a professional body; it represents a global community united by a shared vision and a common ethic. Soil scientists from diverse backgrounds and countries come together with a common understanding: that we are all sons and daughters of Mother Earth. This shared sense of responsibility unites IUSS members in their work, driving them to protect and nurture the soil that sustains us all. Many of us are parents or grandparents, and we must always remember our fundamental task: to ensure that the Earth remains a beautiful and habitable place for future generations.

As soil scientists, we are not just researchers or professionals; we are caretakers of the planet, working together to preserve the health and vitality of the soil for the well-being of humanity and the environment. Our commitment today will shape the world our children and grandchildren inherit tomorrow.