

ASOCON holds its 14th Network Consultative Board (NCB) meeting in the Philippines

Written by Administrator

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Delegates of the WOCAT-ASOCON Workshop held in Antipolo City, Philippines on March 26 – 28, 2011.

The ASOCON 14th Network Consultative Board (NCB) meeting was also held in conjunction with the workshop.

Recognizing the need to review its structure and functions amidst changing natural and socio-political environment, the national coordinators of the Asia Soil Conservation Network for the Humid Tropics (ASOCON) held its 14th Network Consultative Board (NCB) meeting in conjunction with the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)-ASOCON workshop in Antipolo City, Philippines on March 26-28, 2012. This three-day event was a collaborative effort of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) to harmonize regional initiatives on sustainable soil and water resources conservation and management.

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The holding of the workshop and the 14th NCB meeting was very timely as ASOCON is now facing a new task of revitalizing itself to better respond to new challenges brought about by the alarming rate of land and watershed degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and changes in leadership among member countries and funding constraints. The current ASOCON's network structure consists of a Coordinating Unit (CU) and national coordinating committees of member countries (China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam). Each country has a National Coordinator who serves as the ASOCON Focal Point in his/her country and responsible for the implementation of ASOCON activities at the national level. National coordinators form the NCB which is considered as the steering committee and policy-making body of ASOCON.

As one of the important highlights of the 14th NCB meeting, member-countries signed a resolution to renew its commitment by reviewing and revising the Joint Memorandum of Understanding including the network's membership, structure and functions. They also agreed to expand their membership to include countries not within the humid tropics zone of Asia such as but not limited to Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. Furthermore, to harmonize ASOCON and WOCAT initiatives within the region, ASOCON members agreed to utilize the WOCAT standardized methodology and tools for documentation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable land management (SLM) practices in the region.

ASOCON members also decided that after 23 years, the time has come to transfer the CU from Jakarta, Indonesia to Manila, Philippines with the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) as the host agency. ASOCON National Coordinator and Director of BSWM, Dr. Silvino Q. Tejada, accepted this new role with high hopes that the Philippines could be equally effective as Indonesia in coordinating the programs and activities of the network. The transition stage sets in with the transfer of the management of ASOCON website from Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry to BSWM.

The WOCAT-ASOCON workshop was held back-to-back with the Philippine Land Degradation Assessment (LADA) project workshop, and so ASOCON members also attended a joint session on Philippine LADA project updates that initially focused on the preparation of land use system map in the Philippines. They also presented and shared their respective country report on the status of land degradation, interventions made, and success stories on soil and water conservation. A field visit of existing Soil and Water conservation Guided Farm Project was also organized for the participants to appreciate the efforts of the Philippines to promote SLM.

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