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Abstracts of Presentations

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The living soil
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Soil is, due to its heterogeneity, the beholder of life, particularly microscopy life in all its diversity. Hence, the quality of soil must be defined as the capacity of the matrix to support current forms of life and be a site of genomic new life. Two lines of actions are suggested. First, communication about soil to the public must focus on the various roles of soil. This way, the general public must become much more aware of the intrinsic value of soil. Secondly policy making about soil should take the full biological diversity into account, without becoming ‘ecotopia’. It is proposed that time has come to establish biological sites where soils, both natural and man-made, are preserved as a genuine patrimony. It is also argued that we should steer away from practices such as landfilling and vaguely defined ‘natural attenuation’ approaches. Finally two major levers to step up worldwide the incentives for proper soil management are addressed, i.e. the issue of global warming linked to soil carbon sequestration and the issue of food safety linked to tracking the soil of origin.