

## MANIFESTO FOR THE SOIL & LAND ALLIANCE OF EUROPEAN CITIES AND TOWNS

### Preamble

Soils, together with air and water, are the central basis of life on earth. The characteristics and functions of soils are very different regarding their site and composition. Increase of buildings and sealing by settlement and transport areas as well as by the continuing exploitation of the soil and land resources and the overuse, soils are regionally endangered and highly endangered globally, too, by the sum, the extent and the spreading of all damages. The far-reaching consequences of land consumption and the degradation as well as the fact of irretrievability and very slow process of soil formation correspond to the impacts of global climate change and the loss of biodiversity. In addition, there is a close linkage of soil change to climate change.

There is an urgent need of action seen at the global level. All countries have to contribute to a sustainable improvement of soils and land on a national, regional and local level. In this context the cities and municipalities (local authorities) are especially important as they are directly related to the local land and nearest to its owners. It is their task to improve soil awareness, to protect the natural soil functions as well as to follow social justice. They have instruments of spatial planning and planning control law, which serve to foster and realise a sustainable use of soils and land in municipalities.

We, the local authorities, are conscious of these questions and issues and at the same time of the chances of a sustainable use of soils and land. Together we will take the initiative to work on the solutions of the problems. We, as local authorities, take the chance to realise this in an uniting Europe through the European Soil & Land Alliance.

### 1. The responsibility of the cities and towns

We, the local authorities, assume responsibility for a sustainable soil policy in our areas. This includes the ecological side by improving the natural soil functions as well as an economically and socially just soil and land use.

For that we want to

- exploit our scope of action for a sustainable development,
- set a good example as local authorities,
- integrate all stakeholders according to the Agenda 21 into the planning and management of urban and other local areas and constitute a participation process in the solution of the specific urban and rural soil and land problems,
- contribute to public awareness for a sustainable use of soils and land.

We acknowledge that the problems of soil and land not only have local and regional significance, but that we furthermore - in the prospect of global responsibility - cause global effects on soils in other parts of the world by our life style.

### 2. Objectives of the Soil & Land Alliance

*Our overriding objective* is the sustainable use of all types of soils for the conservation and improvement of all soil functions as well as the land resources and the natural and cultural heritage for the present and future generations and the socially just and fair use of soils and land.

The Soil & Land Alliance of European Cities and Towns is in agreement with the objectives of the Tutzing proposal for a "Convention on Sustainable Use of Soils" (Soil Convention) and the "UN-Convention to Combat Desertification".

### 3. Guidelines and strategies

Our overriding objective will be especially realised by the following guidelines and strategies.

#### 3.1. *We foster our independence and identity by a responsible local soil and land policy.*

For that

- we raise awareness for the chances but also the problems of a sustainable use of soils,
- we register land consumption and re-usable fallow land,
- we make every effort to reverse the trend towards land consumption and soil degradation,
- we define priority objectives for sustainable development and pursue actively an economical use of soil and land resources,
- we support educational measures concerning soils and land use,
- we inform the public about the above-mentioned objectives and strategies to be taken and promote public awareness.

#### 3.2. *We promote qualitative growth or stabilisation in responsibility for environment, society and culture.*

For that

- we restrict soil and land consumption, direct the settlements development inwards and promote the quality of the settlement management,
- we register and redevelop dangerous old waste deposits and prepare the land for an appropriate reuse,
- we take questions of social justice and gender fairness into consideration when using soils and land,
- we employ intensified efforts to conserve and improve soil fertility and soil formation processes, whereby special importance is attached to soil care and the unsealing of areas,
- we take measures for soil conservation, soil improvement and soil regeneration, safeguarding especially valuable soils, protect soils from erosion and compaction and reduce pollution,

- we maintain the function of soil as carbon (and nitrogen) storage taking into account of the major natural material cycles,
- we take measures for the improvement of the microclimate and the water balance, thus contributing to the enhancement of the quality of life in the settlement area,
- we promote the marketing of regionally grown products,
- we take care of the natural and cultural heritage,
- we promote the ecological networks of the biosphere.

#### 3.3. *We trust in the innovative empowerment of co-operation in a spirit of partnership.*

For that

- we co-ordinate soil-improving and spatially relevant projects with regard to an optimal expediency and sustainability,
- we support the realisation of the objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) on sustainable spatial development and soil protection,
- we include the concerns of neighbouring municipalities and regions,
- we improve the relation between urban and rural areas mutual coordination,
- we work together as partners across borders.

#### 3.4. *We support the sustainable use of soils by means of spatial planning and planning control law instruments.*

For that

- we keep and enhance the specific character and quality of the soils and land when used or intruded and upgrade their value,
- we use soils through effective assignment for diverse uses as well as differentiated rules for their use, so that soils, nature and landscape can develop optimally,
- we include the requests of the population and the interests of the land users and land owners and take them into consideration when realising measures,
- we contribute to the specification and implementation of additional instruments according to the market economy as rules for a sustainable use of soils and land.

#### 4. Benefits of a Soil & Land Alliance

The benefit of a Soil & Land Alliance for Cities and Towns is first of all to declare the cities' and municipality's support for having a share of the responsibility for a sustainable use of soils and land on a local level.

The sustainable use of soils and land improves soil fertility, microclimate, and water balance, may lead to enormous cost savings, especially with regard to the extension and maintenance of infrastructure, saves resources for future development and future generations, improves the full use of existing areas and the stabilisation of the settlement density, revives public spaces and, on the whole, contributes to an improvement of the quality of life and the image of the municipality.

The member cities and municipalities of the Soil & Land Alliance profit from the advantages of the cooperation and the exchange of experiences with other cities and towns.

#### 5. Global responsibility and partnership

Soil problems are specific for local conditions and sites and have to be solved primarily at the local level. At the same time they also have an international dimension, that comprises the ecological as well as the social, economical and legal aspects.

In many countries the question of the availability of soils, the rights for land use, and the rights of indigenous nations on their traditional territories is prone to conflicts. Especially in the arid and rainforest regions of the south serious problems arose through soil and land degradation.

We contribute to these problems by our way of economy and way of life, as we clearly claim more land than is available and in use in our countries. We see partnerships with indigenous nations and other local communities in all parts of the world, e.g. local authorities and organisations, as a very important objective of the Soil and Land Alliance. We want to take into consideration the soil problems in our partnerships and try to use our potentials to contribute to problem solving, especially in areas which are strongly affected by soil and land degradation.

The international work of the Soil & Land Alliance is specially based on the "Convention 169" of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It grants the indigenous tribes and people rights on their land and their resources, their own way of life, culture and language.

#### 6. The relation between Soil & Land Alliance and Climate Alliance

There is a close and direct relationship between the world-wide soil and land degradation and the global climate change. The soil bears all resources and stores materials that influence the climate. Climate changes have a far-reaching effect on the condition of soils. Soil & Land Alliance and Climate Alliance see themselves as complementary initiatives under the overriding objective of a sustainable development. They focus jointly on responsible local action in cities and municipalities and the inclusion of the north-south dimension in municipal action.

#### 7. Commitment of the members of the Soil & Land Alliance

As member cities and towns we commit ourselves, fully using our responsibility and competence to establish the objectives of the Soil & Land Alliance and to decide and realise the appropriate measures according to its guidelines.

We are determined to initiate a *reversal of the trend* in the still growing land consumption and soil degradation and to be active in continuing the improvement of the situation of soils and land. For the solution of these tasks we include all stakeholders according to the Agenda 21.

We commit ourselves to regular reporting, fixing appropriate targets, and controlling the success of our soil policy.

In addition we foster an open exchange of information and experiences with the member local authorities within our country and internationally, and develop joint projects and standards.

We ask the higher political levels to support a sustainable use of land and soils and to set the needed framework for the realisation of the objectives of the manifesto.

**We regard all associations, public institutions and business actors, which support these guidelines, obligations and measures of the Soil & Land Alliance, as our allies.**

*Bolzano on 24 October 2000*

#### Further informations / Address

Soil & Land Alliance of European Cities and Towns  
c/o Agency for Environment and Health and Safety Standards  
Amba Alagi Street 5, I-39100 Bolzano  
Phone +39-0471-291-225 / Fax +39-0471-291-230  
E-mail: [mail@bodenbuendnis.org](mailto:mail@bodenbuendnis.org)  
Internet: [www.bodenbuendnis.org](http://www.bodenbuendnis.org)

*This Manifesto is published in English, German, French,  
Spanish, Italian and Slovenian  
Other languages are available on request.*

© May 2001 Soil & Land Alliance of European Cities and Towns

