IUSS SUITMA 6 International Symposium 2011

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Soils in urban, industrial, traffic, mining and military areas (SUITMA) is a working group of the International Union of Soil Sciences created in 1998 to increase and promote soil science in strongly anthropized areas (Morel and Heinrich 2008). Originally dedicated to basic soil science aimed at the description, analysis, classification, and mapping of soils developed in human-transformed environments, i.e., the SUITMAs, which exhibit contrasting features in comparison with natural soils, the SUITMA group interest has shifted towards the study of soil functions, their status and restoration, and their role in the functioning and evolution of urban ecosystems.

Every 2 years, the SUITMA group organizes a conference (i.e., Essen, Nancy, Cairo, Nanjing, New York City, Marrakech) which gathers 100–150 scientists and professionals whose activities are centered in urban and peri-urban environments. The 2011 conference (SUITMA 6) was held

in Marrakech, Morocco. It was co-organized by the *Faculté des Sciences et Techniques* of Marrakech and the GISFI (<http://www.gisfi.fr>). One hundred participants attended the conference and a total of 45 communications and 48 posters were presented in four sessions: session 1: SUITMA properties and diversity, contamination, and remediation; session 2: role of SUITMAs in global change and water quality; session 3: biodiversity in SUITMAs; and session 4: SUITMAs as buffer for human health and social stability. Eleven peer-reviewed papers are being published in this special issue of the *Journal of Soils and Sediments*, which focus on the properties, processes, evolution, and management of soils in urban and human-altered environments. Targets of study include soils with technic materials (Abakumov et al. 2013; El Khalil et al. 2013; Houben et al. 2013; Huot et al. 2013; Nehls et al. 2013; Schonsky et al. 2013), those with elevated metal contents (Aboudrar et al. 2013; Jean-Soro et al. 2013), soils in storm water infiltration basins (Coulon et al. 2013; El-Mufleh et al. 2013), and soils with landmines (Preetz et al. 2013).

The conference was completed with a 2-day field trip in Marrakech and its vicinity to study the impacts of mining activities on soils, the consumption of agricultural soils by urbanization (e.g., the *Palmeraie* of Marrakech), the management of water in arid zones, and the creation of urban parks.

During the meeting, Torun, Poland, was selected for the next conference (SUITMA 7, September 16–22, 2013; <http://www.suitma7.umk.pl>). SUITMA will also be present in 2014 at the 20th World Congress of Soil Science in Jeju, South Korea, with a symposium entitled “Urban soils—properties, functions, and evolution.” We look forward to welcoming new members and old friends at both events.

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Guest Editors of this special issue are: Nicholas Dickinson, Jean-Louis Morel, Richard Shaw, and Gerd Wessolek.