Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 14, EGU2012-142, 2012
EGU General Assembly 2012

Victor Kovda, Soil Science and Biosphere

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Victor Kovda (1904-1991) was one of the most famous soil scientists at the national and international soil science community. He published more than 500 scientific works including about 400 papers, 17 collective monographs, 30 personal monographs, and more than 200 interviews and popular papers describing the role of soils not only for food production, but for the functioning of the biosphere.
Victor Kovda was a talented organizer, who founded the new Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry (known at the present time as the Institute of physico-chemical and biological problems of soil science in Pushchino, Russia). During six years from 1959 to 1964 he was the head of Science Department in UNESCO, where he initiated a set of international projects (ex. Soil World Map of FAO-UNESCO, Source-book on irrigation and drainage). He continued his international activity after UNESCO as a President of the International Soil Science Society (1968-1974), organizer of the X international Soil Science Congress in Moscow (1974), president of SCOPE (1973-1976), working for ICSU.
The last three decades of his national and international activities Victor Kovda initiated and was strongly involved in the popularization of biosphere role and functions of soils and soil cover. The start point for this activity was his special talk “Biosphere and man” presented during the intergovernmental conference in the framework of the international program “Man and Biosphere” organized by UNESCO in 1968 in Paris. The next key presentation “Soil as a component of biosphere” Victor Kovda gave as a plenary lecture during the X International congress of soil scientists. This presentation determined the focus of soil science for the next decades: at least Russian soil science became oriented towards the investigation of biosphere functions and role of soils. Soils science was accepted not only for agriculture and food production, but also as a fundamental science with a large environmental application.