

NENA- Extraordinary/22/Report



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Near East and North African Soil Partnership

Online meeting, 3 August 2022

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African Soil Partnership**

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 2022

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1. Introduction

As agreed at the seventh meeting of the Near East and North African (NENA) Soil Partnership in March 2022 (report available [here](#)), an extraordinary meeting of the NENA Soil Partnership was organized on 3 August 2022 (agenda available in Annex I; list of participants available in Annex II). The meeting aimed to align the structure and work plan of the Partnership to the new Action Framework 2022-2030 of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), which was endorsed at the [10th GSP Plenary Assembly](#) in June 2022.

Compared to previous NENA Soil Partnership meetings, the extraordinary session was opened to national focal points and to GSP partners and members of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) from the NENA region. In order to welcome GSP partners and ITPS members to the partnership, Ms. Lucrezia Caon (NENA Soil Partnership coordinator at the GSP) gave a short presentation on what the GSP is and what are the main activities, action plans, initiatives and programmes it implements in NENA.

2. The new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030

Ms. Caon introduced participants to the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030, which is available in Annex I of the GSP Plenary Assembly document number 2 ([here](#)). The GSP proposed for its members and partners to endorse a new action framework because:

- Progress in executing the global implementation plan (GIP) of the 5 Pillars of Action has not been the same for all pillars;
- Funding to implement the pillar GIPs did not materialize as planned, and implementation was therefore slow;
- Changes and new priorities have been introduced over the years according to the outcomes of global symposia and emerging issues;
- The pillar structure and their implementation plans have proven to be useful for the instalment of the GSP Framework and general objectives but have limited the execution of activities and the mobilization of resources;
- The pillars address cross-cutting issues that allow progress towards the ambition of the GSP;
- The current pillar organizational structure can be seen as an obstacle to engaging stakeholders less familiar with UN structures, procedures, and language, who considered the GSP structure to be overly formal and rigid;
- To focus on addressing the global societal and environmental challenges by improving soil health and mitigating soil threats by scaling up global SSM;
- To acknowledge and build on the key achievements and results of the GSP over the last ten years;
- To recognize the role of the many existing international commitments and initiatives, which partially recognize the role of soils in addressing global challenges but whose implementation is still rudimentary; and
- To further develop the GSP towards a flexible action-oriented or outcomes-oriented approach.

In the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 (see figure 1), Pillars of Action have been replaced by Action Areas linked to concrete actions, initiatives and programmes. In this regard, the new action framework is made up by clear actions and targets focused on addressing the different global challenges – from food insecurity, climate change, pollution, land degradation and the loss of biodiversity – through the improvement and enhancement of soil health. Robust indicators will be developed and agreed with GSP members and partners to allow for the implementation of such activities to be monitored so that objectives can be achieved. GSP members and partners will also be supported to build their capacities to report progress based on indicators when needed.

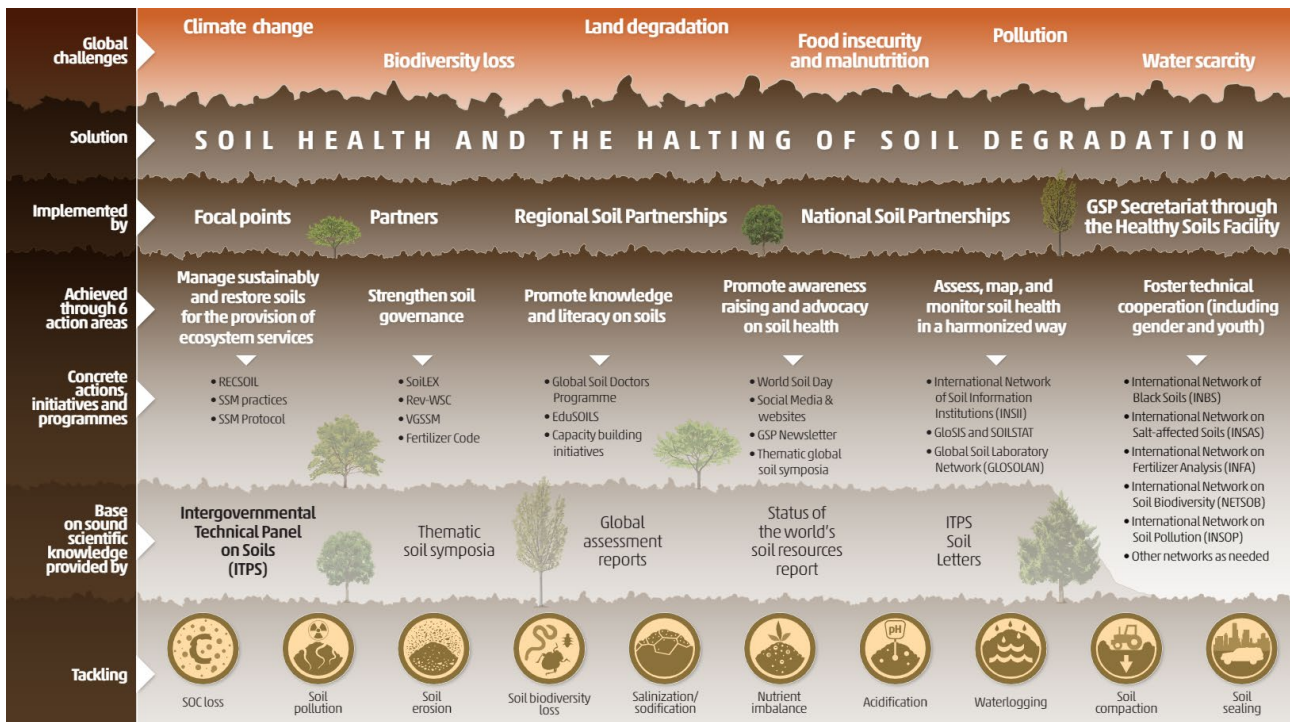


Figure 1. GSP Action Framework 2022-2030

The development and collection of quantifiable information on the impact of the GSP on the status and trends of soil health and on people's lives, as well as on the capacity of countries to collect data and information to assess and monitor soils, will:

- Provide a real measure of the impact of the GSP on sustainable soil management and soil governance;
- Facilitate Resource Mobilization efforts;
- Increase ownership;
- Multiply the reach of the Partnership's activities; and
- Allow for a more comprehensive assessment and monitoring of soil health and its' contribution to all global environmental challenges thanks to the development and adoption of targets and indicators in line with international agreements.

Detailed information on targets and indicators is available in Annex I of the GSP Plenary Assembly document number 2 ([here](#)). The key performance indicators will be further developed by a dedicated technical working group and with the support of the ITPS and all GSP technical Networks, and that the GSP will leverage those targets and indicators defined by the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development that are relevant to monitor soil health and for which countries are already generating information.

The Action Framework also proposes the development of a Soil Health Index (SHI), as a composite index including the indicators endorsed in the SSM Protocol to provide a proxy on the soil health status at global level. The Global Soil Information System (GloSIS), and the Global Soil Health and Soil Biodiversity Observatory (GLOSOB), will be the main global data platforms to provide soil data and statistics for data driven indicators (3 and 5) sets, whereas SoilSTAT provides official national soil statistics for agreed indicators, following existing UN standards.

The new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 will not change the financing of the GSP.

3. NENA Soil Partnership governance

Because of the disappearance of the Pillars of Action and the introduction of Action Areas, the entrance into force of the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 imposes some changes to the governance of the NENA Soil Partnership.

Several proposals were discussed during the meeting and ultimately explored through an online survey. The main results of the online survey are herewith reported. The majority of the NENA focal points, partners and ITPS members that responded to the survey suggested:

- To establish a **NENA Soil Partnership Steering Committee**;
- To elect a **coordinator for the implementation of awareness raising activities**; and
- NOT to elect **Action Areas' Chairs**.

Because of the need for all Regional Soil Partnerships to move in the same direction, a final decision on the new NENA Soil Partnership governance was not made at the meeting. Indeed, regional inputs collected through the online survey will be brought to the attention of the GSP at an inter-regional meeting that will be organized as soon as all Regional Soil Partnerships have expressed an opinion on how to respond to the new GSP Action Framework.

To note that the ITPS members from the region asked for information on how they could further support the partnership in addition to representing it in the ITPS. This request will be further discussed within the ITPS and at the next NENA Soil Partnership meeting, when a final decision on the governance of the NENA Soil Partnership will be made.

4. Urgent activities

The meeting represented a good opportunity to remind or inform countries, partners and the ITPS members from Asia on urgent activities that require their attention.

- **Data management and mapping activities.** Mr. Yusuf Yigini (GSP Secretariat) introduced participants to the Global Soil Nutrient and Soil Nutrient Budget Map (GSNmap) that will provide soil nutrient as well as soil nutrient budget maps to optimize the sustainable management of soil nutrients. The map will be produced using a two-phase approach (see Figure 2).

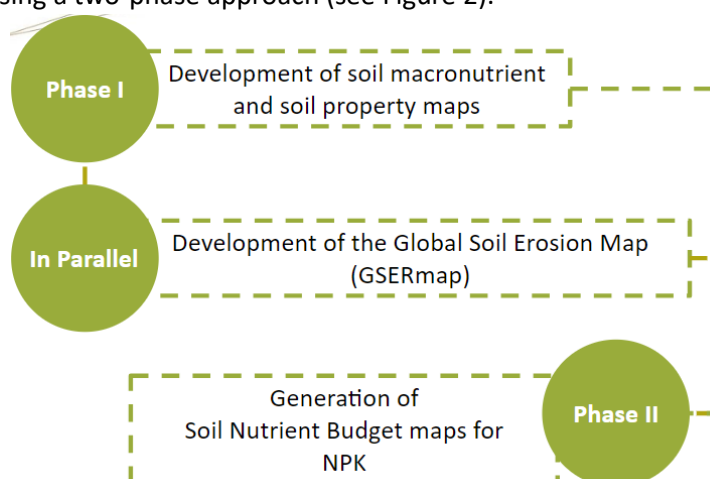


Figure 2. GSNmap - two phase approach

As done for other GSP maps (e.g. global soil organic carbon map, global soil organic carbon sequestration potential map), countries will be provided with technical specifications and country guidelines, and a capacity building programme will be established. All countries were kindly asked to submit the name of their expert to work on this map at <https://forms.gle/PADLtfB3nqEApifU9>.

A reminder to submit the name of the experts to work on the global soil erosion map was also made. Countries can proceed at the following link <https://forms.gle/fe7VcQPPvWVMhHYi7>.

- **TCP RAB 3802 project – closure of the project meeting and organization of the 8th NENA Soil Partnership meeting.** Ms. Caon updated participants on the implementation of the TCP RAB 3802 project “Capacity development for the sustainable management of soil resources in NENA regional to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, which is coming to an end in December 2022.

In terms of soil laboratories, activities (laboratory assessment and training) were finalized in Lebanon, Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia. Oman, Yemen, Palestine and Syria are about to start the training. Iraq is about to endorse their laboratory assessment report and training programme, thus also to start planning the implementation of training. Jordan is still working on their laboratory assessment. Iran and Egypt are not participating in the implementation of this component of the project.

In terms of data management and mapping activities, all national consultants were recruited and are working on the preparation of their national maps and action plan. Three regional workshops were organized on the preparation of the national maps for the global soil organic carbon sequestration potential and salt-affected soils maps, and on soil data management. The international consultant on the topic is currently writing the regional report.

In order to close the project, a high-level Ministerial meeting will likely be organized in December 2022. The meeting will aim to present and discuss project findings, get to the signature of a Ministerial resolution on soil, launch the Soil Atlas of Asia that includes countries in the Near East, celebrate World Soil Day and hold the 8th NENA Soil Partnership meeting. Additional information on the event will be shared with countries as the programme is confirmed.

5. NENA Soil Partnership work plan

Mr. Filippo Benedetti (GSP Secretariat) led the discussion over the alignment of the NENA Soil Partnership work plan agreed at the seventh NENA Soil Partnership meeting to the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030, see table 1.

Table 1. NENA Soil Partnership work plan adapted to the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030

Pillar	Activities in the NENA Soil Partnership work plan 2022-23	Current status	New action areas according to the new GSP Action Framework
1	RECSOIL	Interested countries are encouraged to contact Ms. Natalia Rodriguez for further information at natalia.rodriquezeugenio@fao.org	Manage sustainably and restore soils for the provision of ecosystem services
2	Soil Atlas	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-launch at the 22nd World Congress of Soil Science (August 2022) • In-person workshop in Vietnam on digital soil mapping and data management (12-16 September 2022) • Official launch (December 2022) 	Promote knowledge and literacy on soils

2	Policy brief	Ongoing	Strengthen soil governance/ Promote awareness raising and advocacy on soil health
2	Global Soil Doctors Programme	Contact the Soil Doctors programme coordinators (Silvia.Pioli@fao.org , carolina.oliverasanchez@fao.org) to get more information about the possibility of implementing the programme in more NENA countries	Promote knowledge and literacy on soils
3	Database on soil research and development	Not feasible under the new GSP action framework	NA
4	Digital soil mapping and INSII	Follow up with country representatives	Assess, map and monitor soil health in a harmonized way
5	NENA Soil Laboratory Network (NENA)	NENALAB work plan ongoing.	Assess, map and monitor soil health in a harmonized way

6. Conclusions and way forward

Taking advantage of the launch of an online survey, participants were asked for an opinion on how to improve the agenda of the NENA Soil Partnership meetings. Respondents asked the NENA Soil Partnership coordinators to include the following items in the agenda of the next NENA Soil Partnership meeting (in order of preference):

1. Presentations on specific GSP project findings (e.g. the outcomes and findings of the TCP RAB 3802 project);
2. With an equal score:
 - Presentations on innovative/high impact actions on sustainable soil management (from partners or specific countries);
 - Invite external speakers, including donors to provide lectures on e.g. innovative techniques on SSM, financial resource mobilization, etc.;
 - Individual country reports (as done until now). Each country to present on what they have been doing on soil during the year;
3. With an equal score:
 - Network specific presentations (GLOSOLAN, INFA, INSAS, INSOP, NETSOB, INBS, INSII, etc.);
 - More time for discussion.

Additionally, the suggestion to include rainwater actions in soil management was made.

The next NENA Soil Partnership meeting will be organized as soon as the chairs of the Regional Soil Partnerships meet with the GSP Secretariat and agree on a coordinated way to implement the new GSP Action Framework 2022-2030.

Annex I. Agenda



Food and Agriculture
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Extraordinary Session

NENA Soil Partnership Meeting

3 August 2022

from 10AM to 12PM CEST (Rome time)

Virtual meeting

3 August 2022	
10:00 – 10:20	Welcome presentation [for GSP partners especially] <i>Ms. Lucrezia Caon, GSP Secretariat</i>
10:20 – 10:40	Item 1. The new GSP Action Framework <i>TBC, GSP Secretariat</i>
10:40 – 11:00	Item 2. New NENA Soil Partnership governance <i>Mr. Filippo Benedetti, GSP Secretariat</i>
11:00 – 11:40	Item 3. Urgent activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data management and mapping activities, <i>Mr. Yusuf Yigini, GSP Secretariat</i>• 8th NENA Soil Partnership meeting and closure of the project TCP RAB 3802 workshop, <i>Ms. Lucrezia Caon, GSP Secretariat</i>
11:40 – 12:00	Item 4: NENA Soil Partnership work plan 2022-2023 <i>Mr. Filippo Benedetti, GSP Secretariat</i>
12:00	Closure of the meeting

Annex II. List of participants

Ms. Lucrezia Caon, Global Soil Partnership, FAO

Mr. Yusuf Yigini, Global Soil Partnership, FAO

Mr. Filippo Benedetti, Global Soil Partnership, FAO

First Name	Last Name	Role at the GSP	Institution	Country
Jahanbakhsh	Mirzavand	Focal Point	General director of soil department	Iran
Emad	Al-Qudah	Focal Point	Ministry of Agriculture	Jordan
Fatme	Beydoun	Focal Point	MoA	Lebanon
Ali	Madi	Focal Point	Agricultural Research Center(ARC). And the Head of the Soil Department at the Ministry of Agriculture.	Libya
Hana'a	Adel Burezq	Focal Point	Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research	Kuwait
Rachid	Moussadek	Focal Point	INRA	Morocco
Imad	Ghanma	Focal Point	MoA	Palestine
Manhal	Alzoubi	Focal Point	GCSAR	Syria
Riham	Zahalan	From the Focal Point office	GCSAR	Syria
Bayan	Athamneh	Focal Point	EAD	United Arab Emirates
Mohammed	Al-Mashreki	Focal Point	Renewable Natural Resources Research Center	Yemen
Saeed	Saadat	ITPS member	Soil and water research of Iran	Iran
Mostafa	Sherbiny	GSP partner	The Voluntary Team Foundation for Humanitarian Action	Egypt
Ahmed	Abdelaal	GSP partner	ARC	Egypt
Ahmed	El Baroudy	GSP partner	Tanta University	Egypt
Dhaval	Pandya	GSP partner	Shree Someshwar Education Trust	India (partner operating in NENA)
Alireza	Esmaili Falak	GSP partner	Ministry of agriculture, Deputy for Water & Soil	Iran
Karim	Ghorbani	GSP partner	Ministry of agriculture-JAHAD	Iran
Waleed	Al Shafie	GSP partner	Ministry of Agriculture	Iraq
Elham	Abbadi	GSP partner	albalqa innovation institute	Jordan
Shabbir Ahmad	Shahid	GSP partner	Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research	Kuwait
Abdelmonim	Elkanit	GSP partner	OCP	Morocco
Ghiath	Alloush	GSP partner	ITPS Member, Tishreen University	Syria