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E

Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

Eleventh session

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**World Soil Day report 2022, preparations for 2023 and theme for 2024,
awareness raising on soils and prizes (GSPPA: XI/2023/10)**

Executive summary

- World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December to focus attention on the importance of healthy soils for a healthy life and to advocate for the adoption of sustainable soil management (SSM). Since 2013, the GSP Secretariat has made it a priority to support the celebration of WSD as the main platform for awareness-raising in countries around the world.
- In 2022, WSD was marked under the theme, *Soils, where food begins*, and 2 366 events were held in more than 154 countries. Media coverage was extensive, reaching over 3.5 billion individuals and 728 articles were published online. The seventh Glinka World Soil Prize and the fifth King Bhumibol WSD Award were delivered during the WSD 2022 celebrations.
- Preparations for the WSD 2023 to be held on the theme *Soil and water: a source of life* will begin in September 2023 with the launch of the advocacy and outreach campaign which will include awareness raising materials, various contests, and calls for nominations for the two annual awards, the Glinka World Soil Prize and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award - edition 2023.
- As per current practice, the Plenary Assembly (PA) is expected to decide on the theme for the WSD 2024.

Suggested actions by the GSP Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

- appreciate the successful World Soil Day (WSD) celebration held in December 2022 and the programme foreseen for WSD 2023 under the theme *Soil and water: a source of life*;
- encourage countries, other partners and stakeholders to organize WSD celebrations under the 2023 theme;

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- select the WSD 2024 theme between *Soil; if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it* or *Digging deeper: Discovering and monitoring soils*;
- invite partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the Glinka World Soil Prize 2023, ensuring a fully inclusive process through submissions from all regions, and call on resource partners to contribute financially to the implementation of the prize beyond 2023; and
- appreciate the successful organization of the King Bhumibol WSD Award in 2022, invite partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the 2023 Award, and call on resource partners to contribute to the implementation of the communication activities envisaged by the Secretariat.

10.1 Report on the observance of World Soil Day 2022

1. More than 154 countries observed the WSD 2022 in some form, with media engagement reaching over 3.5 billion people taking an interest in the theme: *Soils, where food begins*. More than 2 300 events were registered on the [WSD interactive map](#). They brought together government representatives, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth organizations, the media, and other diverse audiences. The official WSD22 celebration was held on 5th December 2022 at FAO Headquarters (read [more](#)). Satellite official WSD 2022 ceremonies were organized by FAO country offices and/or FAO headquarters in coordination with or at the request of the national governments of Belgium, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. In addition, several FAO regional and sub-regional offices actively participated in the celebrations and organised official events. More than 2 000 photos were received and 1 500 were selected and placed in the [photo gallery](#).
2. Two-hundred and thirty six ad hoc communication materials and products were prepared and made available on the [WSD website](#) in more than 15 languages and downloaded 15 000 times, over 50 percent more than in 2020, including the new video: [Healthy soils: the foundation of healthy food and a better environment](#) which was produced in ten languages. As is the case every year, soil enthusiasts, education ministries, teachers, soil science societies, and families joined efforts to make the [WSD logo available in 106 languages](#), including in local dialects. Furthermore, the joint work of soil scientists and graphic designers led to the success of the [Children's booklet contest on soils for nutrition](#) with the motto “Soils: Where food begins” with a total of 24 entries, under the sponsorship of the GSP and the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS). The GSP and the IUSS also launched the [Kids2kids poster drawing contest on Soils, where food begins](#) and over 200 posters were received from children aged between five and 14 years old. A selection of 22 posters were submitted to an online public ballot for two days that reached a total of 25 695 votes. In order to bring soils closer to everyday life, a campaign [From soil to plate](#) was launched to highlight the fact that soils are the foundation of food and can take the shape of soil horizons. Nearly [200 photos](#) of sweet and savoury plates were received, showcasing a wide range of soil colours, textures, and consistencies, all in an appetizing 3D model.
3. Media coverage was strong. More than [700 online articles](#) were identified globally between 5 and 15 December 2022 reaching over 3.5 billion people worldwide. A [FAO press release](#) highlighted the launch of the first global report on black soils and the pre-launch of the Soil Atlas of Asia. In terms of broadcasting, the following can be mentioned: India's Hindustan Times and The Hindu, Uganda's Monitor, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's The Scotsman, Seychelles' The Nation, Italy's Corriere della Sera and Sky News, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s WAM News, including a UN Chronicle article (Soils, Where Food Begins) by Ronald Vargas, Secretary of the Global Soil Partnership.
4. A [webstory](#) was featured on the main FAO homepage. Attention and engagement were high thanks to four special announcements and two newsletters shared with the GSP mailing list to launch the campaign and inform soil supporters on how to participate in the multiple contests, join the campaign and vote for the online public contests.
5. It is also estimated that the Organization reached 145 million social media users with [400 multilingual posts](#) around 5 December. Meanwhile, the hashtag [#WorldSoilDay](#) was picked up by over 488 million users and was trending on Twitter on 5 December. Detailed statistics and a

comprehensive overview of WSD activities are available in the [World Soil Day 2022 campaign report](#).

10.2 Plan for WSD 2023 and proposed themes for WSD 2024

6. The WSD 2023 theme: *Soil and water: a source of life* will be an opportunity for the Secretariat and partners to engage even more people and countries in the celebrations, as the theme of water is very high on the agenda and relevant to all countries worldwide. The Secretariat will prepare and disseminate key messages, short animations, and action-oriented communication materials in several languages to keep engaging a wider audience.
7. The digital and media strategy remains the most crucial element in the WSD awareness-raising platform. However, to effectively deliver pertinent soil-related knowledge and promote learning hubs across multiple platforms, it is important to continue to position the theme throughout the year to trigger public attention with scheduled launch of new communication products, activities, and contests.
8. Considering that the annual theme for the WSD celebrations is the same as the theme of the symposium of that same year, and in view of the organization of the Global Symposium on Soil data and information to be held in 2024, the GSP Secretariat invites FAO Members and partners to support one of the themes proposed for WSD 2024: a) *Soil; if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it* and b) *Digging deeper: Discovering and monitoring soils*.

10.3 Glinka World Soil Prize

9. The Glinka World Soil Prize, named after the prominent Russian scientist Konstantin D. Glinka, is sponsored by the Russian Federation. It consists of a Glinka Medal and a check of USD 15 000. It honours individuals and organizations whose leadership and activities have contributed to the promotion and implementation of SSM in different regions of the world.
10. After the annual call for nominations, 11 applications from several countries were received and deemed to comply with the established criteria. The Glinka World Soil Prize Selection Committee designated the winner who was invited to attend an in-person award ceremony on WSD 2022 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.
11. The 2022 Laureate, Ashok Kumar, was described as "an outstanding soil scientist and a strong advocate of sustainable soil management in India and worldwide". Throughout 33 years of research, education, and extension, he has made significant contributions to the improvement of food security and nutrition through integrated nutrient management, while uplifting the research standards of the Indian Institute of Soil Science (ICAR-IISS) to the global level. Due recognition was granted through a dedicated [webpage](#) and a [video](#).
12. In 2023, more information on the Glinka World Soil Prize will be disseminated through digital media, including social media networks, and will be an important element of the WSD campaign. The call for nominations will be launched in July 2023 and will close in September. National focal points and partners are encouraged to promote the call through local, national and regional networks.

10.4 King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award

13. Thailand has decided to establish and sponsor the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award (WSDA). The award aims to encourage organizers of WSD events at all levels to facilitate challenging and outstanding celebrations across the globe. It gives a prize for the best

celebration held in the framework of the previous year's communication campaign. The award comes in the form of a plaque and a prize of USD 15 000.

14. Following the call for applications issued in August 2022, 22 submissions were received from 17 countries and the Selection Committee nominated the winner on WSD 2022.
15. The winner of the fourth WSD Award was The Institute of Geology, National Autonomous University of Mexico (IGI-UNAM) who won the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award with Proyecto Suelox, for its commitment to raising awareness of the importance of healthy soils, particularly during last year's World Soil Day celebration, which addressed soil salinization under the motto *Halt soil salinization, Boost soil productivity*. Once again, this received coverage through a dedicated [webpage](#) and a dedicated [video](#).
16. Throughout 2023, information on this award will be disseminated through digital media, including social media networks, and will constitute an important element of the WSD 2023 campaign with more communication materials prepared. The call for nominations will be launched in July 2023 and will close in early September, and it is hoped that national focal points and partners will distribute it far and wide.