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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



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## Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

### Twelfth session

Hybrid, 3–5 June 2024

**World Soil Day (theme for 2025), awareness raising on soils and Prizes  
(GSPPA: XII/2024/10)**

### Executive summary

- World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December to raise awareness on the importance of healthy soils for a healthy life and to advocate for the adoption of sustainable soil management (SSM). The topic is aligned with the theme of the annual global soil symposium.
- In 2023, WSD was marked under the theme *Soil and water: a source of life*, and 10 000 events were held in more than 180 countries. Media coverage was extensive, reaching over one billion individuals and 600 articles were published online. The eighth Glinka World Soil Prize and the sixth King Bhumibol WSD Award were delivered during the WSD 2023 celebrations.
- Preparations for WSD 2024 to be held on the theme *Caring for soils: measure, manage, monitor* will begin in September 2024 with the launch of the advocacy and outreach campaign, which will include awareness raising materials, various contests, and calls for nominations for the two soil prizes: the Glinka World Soil Prize and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award - edition 2024.
- WSD 2025 will be held on the topic of soil sealing and urban soils, as agreed at the 11th Plenary Assembly. The GSP Secretariat proposes the following theme for WSD 2025: *Healthy soils for healthy cities*, as suggested in document GSPPA: XII/2024/7.

### **Suggested actions by the GSP Plenary Assembly**

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

- appreciate the successful WSD celebration held in December 2023 and the programme foreseen for WSD 2024 under the theme *Caring for soils: measure, manage, monitor*;
- encourage countries, other partners and stakeholders to organize WSD celebrations under the 2024 theme;
- decide the theme for WSD 2025 by selecting the proposal made by the GSP Secretariat or any other proposal made during the 12th Plenary Assembly;
- appreciate the successful organization of the Glinka World Soil Prize in 2023, invite partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the Glinka World Soil Prize 2024, ensuring a fully inclusive process through submissions from all regions, and call on resource partners to contribute financially to the prize beyond 2024; and
- appreciate the successful organization of the King Bhumibol WSD Award in 2023, invite partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the 2024 Award, and call on resource partners to contribute financially to the prize beyond 2024.

## Report on the observance of World Soil Day 2023

1. More than 180 countries observed World Soil Day (WSD) 2023 in some form, with media engagement reaching over 1 billion people taking an interest in the theme: *Soil and water, a source of life*. More than 10 000 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.
2. The official WSD23 celebration was held on December 5, 2023 at FAO headquarters (read [more](#)). In addition, several FAO Regional and Subregional Offices actively participated in the celebrations and organized official events.
3. A [photo gallery](#) with 300 photos (out of the 500 received) of the multiple events was created.
4. One-hundred and forty-six ad hoc communication materials and products were prepared and made available on the [WSD website](#) in more than 12 languages, including two new videos: [Soil and Water: a source of life](#) and [The symbiotic dance of soil and water, a source of life](#).
5. The [WSD logo is now available in 105 languages](#), including in local dialects, thanks to the support of soil enthusiasts, education ministries, teachers, soil science societies, and families.
6. A [Soil and Water, a source of life Book Contest](#) with the motto “Soil and Water: a source of life” was launched under the sponsorship of the GSP and the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS). Forty-nine entries were received from soil scientists and graphic designers.
7. The GSP and the IUSS also launched the [Soil and Water, a source of life Poster Contest](#). Over 200 posters were received from children aged between 5 and 14 years old. A selection of 10 posters was submitted to an online public ballot for seven days that reached a total of 10 000 votes.
8. A [Soil and Water, a source of life Photo Contest](#) was also launched with the objective to raise awareness on the precious link between soil and water. Over 500 submissions were received from occasional or professional photographers. A selection of six photos was submitted to the online public ballot for seven days, reaching a total of 12 000 interactions.
9. Media coverage was strong. More than [600 online articles](#) were identified globally between 5 and 12 December 2023, reaching over one billion people worldwide. Across the globe, magazines and news outlets featured stories and informational pieces covering the importance of soil and water as well as explanatory articles on why we celebrate WSD, including [TN.com](#) (Argentina), [Sohu](#) (China), [Radio Rebelde](#) (Cuba), [Hindustan Times](#), [The Quint](#) and [NDTV](#) (India), [ADNkronos](#) and [Wired.it](#) (Italy), [The Nation](#) (Nigeria), [National News Bureau of Thailand](#) and [The Bangkok Post](#) (Thailand), [Forbes](#) and many others. [The Bangkok Post](#) (Thailand) reported about the two soil prizes awarded on 5 December.
10. A [FAO press release](#) highlighted the importance of the link between soil and water and its crucial role in facing climate change. A second [FAO press release](#) welcomed the additional funding of USD ten million from the United States of America for soil fertility mapping projects that was announced during the official ceremony.
11. 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.

12. It is also estimated that the Organization reached 134 million social media users with 337 multilingual posts around December 5. Meanwhile, the hashtag [#WorldSoilDay](#) was picked up by over 450 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 2023 campaign report](#).

### **Plan for WSD 2024 and proposed themes for WSD 2025**

13. The WSD 2024 theme: *Caring for soils: measure, manage, monitor* will be an opportunity for the Secretariat and partners to engage even more people and countries in the celebrations, as the theme of soil data and information is very high on the agenda and relevant to all countries worldwide.
14. The GSP Secretariat will prepare and disseminate key messages, short animations, and action-oriented communication materials in several languages to keep engaging a wider audience.
15. 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.
16. 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 Sealing and Urbanization in 2025, the GSP Secretariat invites the Plenary Assembly to support the proposed theme for WSD 2025 *Healthy soils for healthy cities*, or to suggest other possible slogans related to the theme.

### **Glinka World Soil Prize**

17. The [Glinka World Soil Prize](#), named after the prominent Russian scientist Konstantin D. Glinka, was established in 2016 and 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 sustainable soil management in different regions of the world.
18. Following the annual call for nominations, nine 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 2023 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.
19. The 2023 laureate, Professor Ravendra Naidu, is described as a global leader in contamination studies who has made monumental contributions within research and beyond. In his career spanning over three decades, he has published over 900 articles, contributing breakthrough research in fundamental knowledge of contaminant-soil interactions, with significant implications for soil management. Moreover, Professor Naidu translates his research into practical action through capacity building, raising millions of dollars in external funds, and organizing workshops to foster the remediation of contaminated sites. Due recognition was granted through a dedicated [webpage](#) and a [video](#).
20. In 2024, 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 2024 and will close in September 2024. National focal points and partners are encouraged to promote the call through local, national, and regional networks.

### **King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award**

21. The [King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award](#) (WSDA) was established in 2018 and is sponsored by Thailand. 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.
22. Following the call for applications issued in July 2023, 47 submissions were received from 31 countries and the Selection Committee announced the winner on WSD 2023.
23. The winner of the fourth WSDA was the Soil and Fertilizer Society of Thailand for its exceptional dedication to engaging a wide audience on the importance of soils. This received coverage through a dedicated [webpage](#) and a dedicated [video](#).
24. Throughout 2024, information on this award will be disseminated through digital media, including social media networks, and will constitute an important element of the WSD 2024 campaign with more communication materials prepared. The call for nominations will be launched in July 2024 and will close in early September. National focal points and partners are encouraged to distribute it far and wide.