

June 2020



## Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



### **Eighth session**

**Virtual, 3-5 June 2020**

**World Soil Day: report and theme for 2021 (GSPPA:VIII/2020/5)**

#### **Executive Summary**

- World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soils and to advocate for the sustainable management of soils.
- Since 2013, the Secretariat has given due priority to supporting observance of World Soil Day as the main platform for awareness raising on soils. In 2019, the WSD celebration and campaigns under the theme “Stop soil erosion, save our future” were the most successful ones as involving 100 countries. This is due to the active commitment of partners, including via the Regional Soil Partnerships and all soil passionate.
- As before, the Glinka World Soil Prize and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award were delivered during World Soil Day celebrations.
- It is recalled that the PA needs to decide on the themes for successive World Soil Days, hence at this session that for 2021.

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

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

- Take note of the successful WSD celebration on 5th December 2019 and the programme foreseen for WSD 2020 under the theme “Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity”.
- Endorse the theme proposed for WSD 2021 “Halt soil salinity, boost soil productivity”.
- Invite countries, other partners and stakeholders to organize fulsome WSD celebrations using the 2020 and 2021 themes.
- Call on resource partners to contribute to the implementation of the sustained communication plans envisaged by the Secretariat.
- Take note of the prize given in 2019 and the programme foreseen for the Glinka World Soil Prize 2020 ceremony.

- Invite partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the Glinka World Soil Prize so that the process is fully inclusive and ensure submissions from the different regions of the world as well as to financially contribute to the implementation of the Prize beyond 2020.
- Take note of the successful organization of the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award in 2019 and the programme foreseen for the 2020 award ceremony.

### 5.1 Report on the implementation of World Soil Day 2019

1. WSD 2019 official ceremonies (under the theme 'Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future') were organized in Rome at FAO headquarters, in New York at the UN secretariat (both broadcasted live via FAO and UN channels), while co-organized formal events took place in Tunis, Uppsala, Lisbon, Dhaka, Bangkok, and Sochi (read [more](#)). Thirty FAO regional, sub-regional and country offices joined in the celebrations. More than 560 events in 100 countries were registered on the [WSD interactive map](#), and many event organizers shared their photos ([photogallery](#)).
2. The [campaign material](#) - translated in 15 languages and consisting of posters, long infographic, postcards, banners, videos and printable logos for T-shirts - was widely disseminated through FAO corporate and GSP partners' channels, and was used by large numbers of participants at different public events. The World Soil Day logo is now available for downloading in 91 languages ([here](#)). The contest '[Greening the future](#)' invited a wide range of stakeholders to take concrete steps to fight erosion in the field ([photogallery](#)).
3. The campaign was covered by over 300 online articles on 5 December with most coverage coming from China, United States, Italy and Thailand. Broadcasters such as BBC, NDTV.com and Al Jazeera covered extensively WSD theme. Major outlets such as the New York Times, Washington Post, the Guardian, the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, the Huff Post, CNN World, Times of India, Sidney Morning Herald, the Telegraph, da Spiegel, le Monde Diplomatique, Corriere della Sera gave prominence to soil on and beyond 5 December ([more](#)). Media coverage is estimated to have reached 653 million users.
4. The web story on [soil erosion](#), published on the FAO homepage received 11 500 views while the dedicated website doubled its use compared to 2018, with over 150 000 sessions on 5 December only. Since the campaign launch in September 2019, FAO soil-related websites totalized around 1.5 million views.
5. It is estimated that the organization reached 400 million social media users. On Twitter, the hashtag #WorldSoilDay was trending worldwide in the afternoon of 5 December and the 42 second video on [soil erosion](#) – went viral. See the [media report](#).

### 5.2 Planned celebrations in 2020

6. WSD 2020 theme: 'Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity' presents the challenge of engaging more people and countries in the celebrations. The theme will no doubt facilitate the active support of the public and WSD organizers, relying on key messages, short animations, and action-oriented communication materials.
7. The digital and media strategy remain the most crucial element in the WSD awareness-raising platform. However, in order to effectively deliver pertinent soil-related knowledge and promote learning hubs across multiple platforms, it is important to go beyond the single occurrence and trigger public attention throughout the year with scheduled launches of new communication products and activities, but also contests and ad-hoc storytelling targeting different stakeholders. The GSP Secretariat will strive to reach a wider audience while continuing to nurture the interest and attention that was built in the past years.

### 5.3 Glinka WSP

8. The Glinka World Soil Prize, named after the prominent Russian scientist Konstantin D. Glinka, receives financial support from the Russian Federation. It consists of a Glinka Medal and a check of USD 15 000. It honors individuals and organizations whose leadership and activities have contributed to the promotion and implementation of sustainable soil management in different regions of the globe.
9. After the annual call for nominations (twenty-two were received and analysed to assess compliance with established criteria) the Glinka World Soil Prize Selection Committee designated the winner of the Prize who was invited to attend the awarding ceremony during the World Soil Day celebration at FAO headquarters.
10. The 2019 Laureate is Xu Minggang, Director and Professor at the South Subtropical Crops Research Institute, the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) and Professor (Soil Science) and Research Leader at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), China. Due recognition and promotion was granted through a dedicated [webpage](#), [factsheet](#) and [video](#).
11. In 2020, 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. A call for nominations will be issued at the end of June 2020. National focal points and partners are strongly invited to further disseminate it through their local, national and regional networks.

### 5.4 King Bhumibol WSD Award

12. The government of the Kingdom of Thailand has decided to establish and sponsor the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award (WSDA). The Award aims at encouraging organizers of WSD events at all levels to facilitate challenging and outstanding celebrations across the globe. It prizes 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.
13. Following the call for applications issued in July 2019, thirty-six nominations were received and the pertinent Award Selection Committee designated the winner and its representative was invited to attend the ceremony during the World Soil Day celebration in Bangkok, at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative of Thailand on 4 – 7 December 2019.
14. The winner of the second WSD Award was the Association of soil science from Costa Rica (Asociación Costarricense de la Ciencia del Suelo ACCS) with its programme Manos al Suelo. Due recognition and promotion was ensured through a dedicated [webpage](#), [factsheet](#) and [video](#).
15. In 2020 information on this Award will be further disseminated through digital media, including social media networks, and will constitute an important element of the World Soil Day campaign with more communication material prepared around it. A call for nominations will be issued shortly after the 8th PA and it is hoped that national focal points and partners will further disseminate it.