



Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



Fifth session

Rome, 20-22 June 2017

Implementation of the World Soil Day and its celebration in 2017

The GSP Plenary Assembly (PA) deals with the selection of themes of successive World Soil Day (WSD) celebrations, and more generally, the related communication campaign, while keeping abreast of WSD-related developments. Accordingly, the PA endorsed WSD themes for 2016 and 2017: i.e. respectively “*Soils and pulses: symbiosis for life*” and “*Caring for the planet starts from the ground*”. The desirability of close coordination with Regional Soil Partnerships and national focal points in the celebration of WSD has also been underlined.

In 2016, the World Soil Day celebration was organized on the 5th of December to pay tribute to *His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand* in recognition of his lifelong work on soils. It was fittingly merged with the International Year of Pulses 2016 through the theme “Soils and pulses: symbiosis for life”. The main official events took place at UN HQ in New York, FAO HQ in Rome and the COP12 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cancun, Mexico. These events focused on highlighting the multifaceted benefits of pulses not only for human health and nutrition, but also for their contribution to soil health and sustainable agriculture. The FAO event also featured the launch of the book “*Soils and pulses: symbiosis for life*” and the award of the first annual Glinka World Soil Prize. It coincided with the formal endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM) by the 155th session of the FAO Council.

The WSD campaign material, consisting of infographics, banners, videos, posters and printable logos for T-shirts, was shared with various networks and social media, and used by thousands of people participating in public events.

In effect, WSD 2016 celebrations involved more than 120 lively events including lectures, workshops, soil parades, poems, childrens’ workshops, soil-shaped cake baking parties, tree-planting ceremonies, conferences, round-table discussions and seminars, carried out in over 70 countries worldwide. National stakeholders were able to register activities celebrating global soils on an interactive map developed by the Secretariat, which enabled later sharing of event pictures. It would seem that within 3 years of its establishment, WSD has become an important feature of national and international agendas, thereby gaining increasing public outreach.

For WSD 2017 it is intended to organize an equally rich range of activities, culminating in celebrations at FAO headquarters in Rome and all FAO regional offices, while involving an increasing number of countries across the planet.

A dedicated website (in preparation) and use of social media, together with the award of the second Glinka World Soil Prize on the 5th of December 2017, will constitute the main WSD awareness building platforms. During this

particular WSD celebration, the Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOCMap) will be released in support of the Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 15.3.1.

In order to truly deliver knowledge and promote education across multiple audiences while continuing to foster the interest and attention built in the past years, it may be recalled that one cannot rely on a single occurrence such as WSD. Indeed, there is the need to establish continuous interaction with the public. Only through a dedicated team can one maintain this level of public attention, delivering appealing educational material that can be used across a variety of audiences in several languages.

The theme chosen for WSD 2017 “*Soils, Caring for the planet starts from the ground*” will facilitate regular exchanges with the public, mostly through the use of social media, producing key messages, short animations, and awareness raising material. Beyond the global and regional events, the GSP Secretariat will provide support for national celebrations as usual *via* the printing and shipment of several key publications and information material, as well as offering its website and a social media platform as a global sounding board for local activities. A more detailed presentation of plans for WSD2017 will be provided by the Secretariat during the PA.

Finally, the following theme is proposed for the WSD occurrence in 2018: *Be the solution to soil pollution!*

Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

- The Plenary Assembly may wish to:
 - take note of the successful WSD celebration on 5th December 2016 and the programme foreseen for WSD 2017;
 - endorse the theme proposed for WSD 2018;
 - encourage member countries and partners to organize WSD celebrations using the 2017 and 2018 themes;
 - invite resource partners to financially contribute to the implementation of the sustained communication plan envisaged by the Secretariat.