

June 2018

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## Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



### Sixth session

Rome, 11-13 June 2018

### Implementation of World Soil Day and its celebration in 2018

The Plenary Assembly (PA) deals with the selection of themes of successive World Soil Day (WSD) celebrations, and more generally keeps abreast of developments related to WSD activities, including communication campaigns, digital and print materials. Accordingly, the PA has endorsed WSD themes for 2017 and 2018: i.e. respectively “*Caring for the planet starts from the ground*” and “*Be the Solution to Soil Pollution*”. In this overall effort of celebration of WSD, it is important to ensure as close an alignment as possible of actions by Regional Soil Partnerships, national focal points, and individual GSP partners. It is also important to seek and ensure an extensive media presence, including a solid presence on social media networks.

#### Summary of WSD celebrations in 2017

The GSP co-organized formal World Soil Day events in [New York](#) (UN Secretariat), [Rome](#) (FAO Headquarters) and at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 3) in [Nairobi](#). In these events, focus was put on pressing issues affecting soils, especially soil pollution. In Nairobi, an official announcement was made on the Global Symposium on Soil Pollution (GSOP18) and discussions culminated in the adoption of the [UNEA3 Resolution on managing soil pollution](#). The events in Rome ([webcast](#) and [photogallery](#)) and New York ([webcast](#) and [photogallery](#)) were broadcast live via FAO and UN channels.

Other celebrations were held for instance at the Lomonosov University in Moscow, in the Macro Testaccio in Rome with the “[Heart and Soil](#)” art exhibition, and at the FAO Regional Office in [Santiago del Chile](#).

The [Global Soil Organic Carbon map \(GSOCmap\)](#) was simultaneously launched on the occasion of WSD celebrations in New York, Rome, Nairobi, and Moscow ([video](#), [leaflet](#)) and drew vast coverage in the media, with more than 120 dedicated articles especially in English and Spanish-speaking countries. The new ITPS-sponsored report on the “[Global assessment of the impact of plant protection products on soil functions and soil ecosystems](#)”, was also launched on WSD17 while the [second award of the Glinka World Soil Prize](#) took place in Rome (cf. item 6).

For the first time, a [dedicated website](#) has been operating in the 6 UN official languages and [WSD campaign materials](#), consisting of [posters](#), [banners](#), [infographics](#), [videos](#) and printable logos for [T-shirts](#), were widely disseminated, including through various social media networks, and through shipments to 22 countries. These were used by a large numbers of participants at different public events. As a response to requests, it may be noted that the WSD logo is now available in more than [40](#) languages.

Concrete soil engagement activities worthy of note included the photo contest on Black Soils “*When Soils turn Black*” ([Announcement of the winners](#) and [Flickr photogallery](#)), the Soil Painting Competition “*Be Inspired take the Challenge and Celebrate Soils*” ([Announcement of the winners](#)) and the SoilLab Activity Book “*Soil Experiments for children*”. A three-day corporate digital campaign was also launched on the main social media platforms with the support of the FAO corporate communication unit. It helped in disseminating a series of [postcards and videos](#) to a wide range of users, thereby promoting World Soil Day at global and national levels.

World Soil Day 2017 confirmed the increasing trend in public outreach, with more than 200 events ([Flickr photogallery](#)), such as scientific roundtables, fun soil experiments for children, inaugurations of soil laboratories, and live performances. Organizers registered their planned activities on the [WSD interactive map](#) in over 80 countries across the globe.

The extent of engagement of all the actors is illustrated through three key products: a [WSD17 video](#), a [photobook](#) and a summary [poster](#) which provides key statistics. WSD2017 was thus a sterling opportunity for the soil community, both organizations and professionals, to engage the public in debates about the vital role that soils play in daily lives.

### Plans for 2018

For WSD 2018, it is intended to organize and support an even richer range of activities, in addition to the usual celebrations at FAO headquarters in Rome and FAO regional and country offices, while seeking to involve an increasing number of countries across the planet. The production of innovative promotional materials, new web services and partnerships, coupled with the involvement of VIPs calling for action and more story telling from the field will undoubtedly intensify the impact that the GSP may have on the ground.

A dedicated website and extensive media coverage of the events, including on social media, together with the award of the third Glinka World Soil Prize on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, will continue to be the main WSD awareness building platforms. However, in order to effectively deliver pertinent soil-related knowledge and promote learning hubs across multiple platforms with different targets, while continuing to nurture the interest and attention of the general public that was built in the past years, one cannot rely on a single occurrence such as WSD. Constant interaction with the public and stakeholders is required to increase investment and soil-related technical cooperation, as well as policy development, and solid education and extension services. Only through a permanently engaged team can one maintain this level of public attention, developing appealing educational tools that can be used worldwide.

The theme chosen for WSD 2018 “*Be the Solution to Soil Pollution*” will no doubt facilitate the mobilization of the public, relying on key messages, short animations, and awareness raising materials focused on this major issue. Beyond the global and regional events, the GSP Secretariat will as usual provide support for national celebrations via the printing and shipment of several key publications and informational material. A more detailed presentation of plans for WSD2018 will be provided by the Secretariat during the PA.

### Proposed theme for 2019

The following theme “*Soils: where nutrition starts*” is proposed for the WSD occurrence in 2019.

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

- The Plenary Assembly may wish to:
- take note of the successful WSD celebration on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and the programme foreseen for WSD 2018;
  - endorse the theme proposed for WSD 2019;
  - encourage member countries, other partners and new stakeholders to organize WSD celebrations using the 2018 and 2019 themes;
  - invite resource partners to contribute to the implementation of the sustained communication plan envisaged by the Secretariat.
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