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World Bee Day

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolutions [53/199](#) of 15 December 1998 and [61/185](#) of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years, and Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries, particularly paragraphs 1 to 10 of the annex thereto on the agreed criteria for the proclamation of international years, as well as paragraphs 13 and 14, in which it is stated that an international day or year should not be proclaimed before the basic arrangements for its organization and financing have been made,

Recognizing the importance of promoting sustainable development in its three dimensions in an innovative, coordinated, environmentally sound, open and shared



manner, and the urgent need to protect bees and other pollinators in a sustainable manner,

Taking into account the thematic assessment report on pollinators, pollination and food production, released in February 2016 by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,

Recalling the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on pollination services for sustainable agriculture, and the leading role played by the Food and Agriculture Organization in facilitating and coordinating the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators, established in 2002 under the Convention on Biological Diversity,¹

Recalling also the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which took place in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016, and its decision XIII/15 on the implications of the assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on pollinators, pollination and food production for the work of the Convention,

Noting the urgent need to address the issue of the worldwide decline of pollinator diversity and the risks that this implies for agriculture sustainability, human livelihoods and food supplies,

Recognizing the fundamental role and contribution of bees and other pollinators with respect to sustainable food production and nutrition, which thereby promote food security for the world's growing population and contribute to poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and human health,

Recognizing also the contribution of the ecosystem services provided by bees and other pollinators to ecosystem health by safeguarding the state of biodiversity, species and genetic diversity,

Expressing concern that bees and other pollinators are endangered by a range of factors, in particular the effects of human activities such as changes in land use, intensive agricultural practices and the use of pesticides, as well as pollution, pests, diseases and climate change, which threaten their habitat, health and development,

Acknowledging the urgent need to raise awareness at all levels and to promote and facilitate actions for the protection of bees and other pollinators in order to contribute to their health and development, bearing in mind that enhancing pollinator services is important for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recognizing that the observance of a World Bee Day by the international community would contribute significantly to raising awareness of the importance of bees and other pollinators at all levels and would promote global efforts and collective action for their protection,

Recalling resolution 8/2017 adopted on 7 July 2017 by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its fortieth session,

1. *Decides* to designate 20 May as World Bee Day;
2. *Invites* all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders, to observe World Bee Day in an appropriate manner and in accordance with national priorities, through education and activities aimed at raising awareness of the

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

importance of bees and other pollinators, the threats that they face and their contribution to sustainable development;

3. *Invites* the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to facilitate the observance of World Bee Day, in collaboration with other relevant organizations, mindful of the provisions contained in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67;

4. *Stresses* that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the present resolution should be met from voluntary contributions;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society organizations for appropriate observance.



20 December 2017

PRESS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS DECLARES 20 MAY WORLD BEE DAY

New York, 20 December – Today, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution declaring 20 May as World Bee Day. Every year on this day, the attention of the global public will be drawn to the importance of preserving bees and other pollinators. People will be reminded of the importance of bees for the entire humanity and invited to take concrete action to preserve and protect them. The resolution was co-sponsored by 115 UN Member States, including the USA, Canada, China, the Russian Federation, India, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and all the European Union Member States.

Dejan Židan – head of the World Bee Day project and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, the country that proposed the proclamation of World Bee Day to the UN in response to an initiative of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association – expressed his satisfaction at the outcome: *"After three years of efforts both in terms of the official procedures at the UN and with regard to the intensive process of informing countries around the world, we have succeeded with this initiative. Bees and other pollinators finally have the place they deserve in view of their importance for the world and for humanity. The proclamation of World Bee Day proves that the will to take action does exist. I am happy that realization of the importance of bees for sustainable development and the future of humanity in general has reflected in the consensual support to the resolution."*

Mr Židan also took the opportunity to thank all countries for their support, but ended with a warning: *"This is just the beginning of the difficult process of the protection of bees and other pollinators. In order to be successful, we must bring on board the governments of all countries, the business community and civil society. Awareness of the vital importance of saving the bees must reach every individual. And we must do more than just talk – we must undertake concrete activities to increase care for bees and promote the development of beekeeping – everywhere, including in developing countries."*

Carla Mucavi, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Liaison Office in New York, commented: *"Bees play a crucial role in increasing crop yields and promoting food security and nutrition. Without them, we could lose a variety of food such as potatoes, pepper, coffee, pumpkins, carrots, apples, almonds, tomatoes, just to name a few. In short, without bees, FAO cannot achieve a world without hunger. World Bee Day*

recognizes the importance of these tiny helpers and will increase awareness of the need to protect them."

"I believe we all agree that every human being on this planet deserves food every day. We have to produce more food every day, and every day more food is dependent on pollinators – with honey bees in the lead. To talk about reducing global hunger without ensuring conditions for the survival of bees and other pollinators, is simply throwing sand in people's eyes! It is time for everyone to listen to bees, in particular leaders and those who make decisions," said Boštjan Noč, promoter of the World Bee Day initiative and president of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, adding: *"From today on, 20 May will be a worldwide celebration of bees and beekeepers. I believe that with the proclamation of World Bee Day, the world will begin to think more broadly about bees, in particular in the context of ensuring conditions for their survival, and thus for the survival of the human race."*

More detailed information about 20th May and the importance of bees

Slovenia proposed the celebration of World Bee Day in the month of May, when bees in the northern hemisphere are most active and begin to reproduce. This is also the period in which the need for pollination is greatest. In the southern hemisphere it is autumn, a time for harvesting bee products and days and weeks of honey. The chosen day, 20 May, is also the birthday of Anton Janša (1734–1773), a pioneer of modern beekeeping and one of the greatest experts in this field in his day. He was the first teacher of modern beekeeping anywhere in the world, appointed by the Empress Maria Theresa as a permanent teacher at the new beekeeping school in Vienna.

Studies of United Nations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature show that bee populations and the populations of other pollinators have significantly decreased, making them more and more endangered. This is affected by numerous factors which are the consequence of human activity: intensive agriculture, widespread use of pesticides and pollution caused by waste. Bees are exposed to new diseases and pests. The living environment of bees is shrinking due to the ever-increasing number of the global population. Their survival and development are also threatened by climate change.

The extinction of bees will not only deprive the world of a species, but it may have drastic consequences for entire ecosystems and human race. The data of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations show that bees and other pollinators are priceless when it comes to ensuring the global safety of the food supply chain. A third of all food produced in the world, i.e. every third spoon of food, depends on pollination. The international study of Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in 2016 estimated that between US\$ 235 billion and US\$ 577 billion worth of annual global food production relies on direct contributions by pollinators.

In addition, agricultural plants which require pollination are an important source of jobs and income for farmers, particularly for small and family farms in developing countries. Last but not least, bees have an important role in the preservation of the ecological balance and biodiversity in nature. Bees as good bioindicators of environmental conditions inform us that something is happening to the environment and that we must take action.

Prompt protection of bees and other pollinators will significantly contribute to solving problems with global food supply and eliminating hunger. It will also contribute to efforts to halt further loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems, as well as to the objectives of

sustainable development defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Slovenian initiative to declare World Bee Day

In 2015 these considerations led the Republic of Slovenia, at the initiative of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, to begin procedures at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the declaration of World Bee Day and to propose a resolution underlining the importance of bees and other pollinators. The initiative has been endorsed by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its 40th Session in Rome on 7 July 2017; and the procedure was successfully concluded today with the consensual adoption of the World Bee Day Resolution by the UN General Assembly.

Slovenia is one of the top countries in the world in terms of the number of beekeepers per capita, with every 200th inhabitant a beekeeper. For tens of thousands of Slovenian citizens, beekeeping is a way of life with a long tradition. The bee, in particular the indigenous Carniolan honey bee, is part of Slovenian national identity. Slovenia is the only country in the European Union to have introduced legal protection for its bees. In 2011 it became one of the first countries in the EU to prohibit the use of certain pesticides harmful to bees.

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Additional information and contacts

- More detailed information: www.worldbeeday.org
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