

JOINT DECLARATION

International Ministerial Conference »The importance of bees and other pollinators for sustainable agriculture and food security«

We, the Ministers responsible for agriculture, or our representatives, of the Republic of Austria, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Federative Republic of Brazil, Burkina Faso, the People's Republic of China, the Czech Republic, the Republic of France, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Poland, the State of Qatar, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Slovenia, and the Republic of Turkey, met on the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, on 19 May 2018 at the International Ministerial Conference on the importance of bees and other pollinators for sustainable agriculture and food security, on the occasion of the 1st Observance of World Bee Day, to discuss the situation, activities and measures in this field.

In this regard we:

- (1) EMPHASIZE the key role of bees and other pollinators for sustainable agricultural production and food security and nutrition. Pollination is the ecosystem service that increases the quantity and quality of agricultural products; one-third of the world's food production is dependent on pollination, in turn generating growth, investment, income and employment.
- (2) STRESS that bees and other pollinators are also important for the preservation of the environment, as their activities support biodiversity and greater variety of species and genetic diversity. They are an indicator of the state of the environment. Observing their development and state of health helps detect changes in the environment and take the necessary mitigating actions. Their presence, absence and density signal what is happening with the environment and when steps need to be taken.
- (3) NOTE that pollination represents an important ecosystem service that ensures agricultural production as well as bee products such as honey and stable income and livelihoods for small holders and other vulnerable groups of farmers such as women and youth. Thus pollination, together with beekeeping, consequently contributes to the development of rural areas, including employment, where the majority of the world poor and hungry populations live.
- (4) STRESS, in light of the above, that by promoting sustainable agricultural production, rural development and environmental conservation, bees and other pollinators notably contribute to all three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of the Sustainable development Agenda 2030, especially to SDG 2: »End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture«, SDG 12: »Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns«, and SDG 15: »Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss«.

Additionally we:

(5) EXPRESS CONCERN about the present situation and decline in pollinators' diversity and density, which indicates that the bees and other pollinators are endangered by a range of factors.

(6) NOTE that human landscape management influences pollinator populations and habitats to a large extent. Habitat loss and fragmentation and the unsustainable expansion of intensive mono-cultural agricultural production is threatening their habitats, as well as causing poor bee nutrition and starvation. The excessive and incorrect use of pesticides, especially insecticides, significantly contributes to bee and pollinator mortality, possibly threatens their development and might increase the risk of their disappearance.

(7) ARE AWARE that climate change may contribute to uncertainties and threats for the bees and other pollinators. The impact of climate change on pollen producing flowering plants, the loss of bee-pastures and the lengthening of the flowering period on bee pastures causes changes in the vital rhythm and behaviour of bees, possibly contributing to their slow extinction.

(8) NOTE that our countries have been implementing in the framework of the national strategies and initiatives many measures to protect and support the development of pollinators. Notwithstanding the national efforts we AFFIRM that better cooperation among countries and within regions, and with other international actors at national, regional and global level can improve the effectiveness and success of our activities.

With the aim to protect and support the development of bees and other pollinators we:

(9) SUPPORT the efforts to preserve their habitats with emphasis on their food resources and nesting areas. Through increasing plant diversity – with special attention to the needs of bees' habitats and to the prevention of the introduction of invasive alien species, we improve the food supplies for bees and other pollinators, preserve their genetic diversity and lower the risk of pests and diseases.

(10) EMPHASIZE the need to raise public awareness on the role of bees and other pollinators, focusing on the promotion of education activities for the youth and knowledge transfer to beekeepers, including exchange of good practices among beekeepers, as well as raising political will and education of crop farmers.

(11) EMPHASIZE ALSO the transfer of knowledge and experiences between countries in order to strengthen our common care and the implementation of joint activities to achieve better results in the protection of bees and other pollinators and sustainable development of beekeeping and agriculture, as well as in the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, food security and nutrition, and eradication of poverty and hunger in the world.

(12) NOTE that beekeeping can support new (green) jobs and opportunities for youth and women, e.g. through developing apitourism, bee products with added value and apitherapy.

(13) STRESS the role of research and the assurance of appropriate diagnostics of bee diseases in order to determine the causes of impaired development and death of bee colonies, as well as regular education of beekeepers on measures to prevent and suppress diseases and pests, and improve bee health.

(14) STRESS ALSO the need to implement measures to mitigate climate change and support adaptation of beekeeping to climate change, particularly through supporting sustainable agriculture and beekeeping, ensuring professional education for both beekeepers and farmers, adjusting the beekeeping approaches and technologies, as well as through supporting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity.

(15) SUPPORT the information activities and awareness-raising among the general public on the role of and threats to bees and other pollinators and to this end WELCOME the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 72/211, of 20 December 2017, on the proclamation of 20 May as World Bee Day, as an important contribution to these endeavours, as well as all the efforts, measures and activities which are being implemented by countries and other international organizations. i.a. the FAO, CBD, IPBES, EU, AU and others.

(16) WELCOME the assessment report on Pollinators, Pollination, and Food Production of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services as well as the Decision XIII/15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and SUPPORT development of a revised version of the International Initiative on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators.

(17) WELCOME the promotion of the knowledge transfer and international cooperation in the field of sustainable beekeeping and sustainable agriculture with the aim to support and protect bees and other pollinators as well as SUPPORT the awareness-raising and discussions on the above-mentioned issues in the framework of the sustainable development and international cooperation.

Adopted in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, on 19 May 2018