

Inaugural World Bee Day Ceremony

24 May 2018, UNHQ

Remarks by Carla Mucavi, Director of FAO Liaison Office in New York

Your Excellency , Ambassador Lajčák,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Kuret,

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Happy World Bee Day to all of you, and thank you for joining us for this special ceremony.

This observance and celebration of World Bee Day that we are today witnessing is a result of a long process led by the Government of Slovenia that presented the initiative for the first time at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe held in Turkey in May 2016. The proposal was then endorsed by the FAO Committee on Agriculture and, finally, by the last FAO Conference in 2017, that charged the FAO Director-General to request the General Assembly to consider proclaiming World Bee Day, which was enshrined at the General Assembly last December.

I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Kuret and the Government of Slovenia for the longstanding leadership in promoting apiculture as an important contributor to food security.

As Ambassador Lajčák and Ambassador Kuret rightly mentioned said, the vital role of bees in our world cannot be overstated. In fact, I would like to point out that bees are crucial not only for achieving SDG2 on zero hunger but also other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For example, they help maintain biodiversity and a vibrant ecosystem, contributing to SDG 15. They also contribute to build resilient livelihoods, especially for poor smallholder farmers, thereby accelerating the progress of SDG 1 on ending poverty.

Meanwhile, the decline in the number of pollinators is correlated with higher levels of malnutrition and diseases, hampering the progress towards SDG 3 on ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all. The pollinator decline is also linked to extreme

weather events due to climate change, threatening our capacity to respond to climate change, to attain SDG 13.

For these reasons, celebrating World Bee Day is not just about giving bees overdue recognition and ensuring their survival. It also speaks directly to our future and to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

FAO has been carrying out various activities to encourage pollinator-friendly practices in agricultural management and hold the decline of pollinator populations. This includes the Global Action on Pollination Services for Sustainable Agriculture and the International Pollinators Initiative.

Let me conclude by stressing that all of us can do little things in our daily lives to protect bees. If you have a garden, for example, reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals, grow native plants that flower in different times of the year, and make sure you have a bee water fountain.

And if you don't have a garden, you can still be part of this celebration simply by helping spread the word of how much good bees do for us. Just join our social media campaign by using the hashtags WorldBeeDay and SaveTheBees.

Thank you.