

FINAL DECLARATION
adopted by the 5th Conference of Danube Parliamentarians
(Budapest, 4-5 October, 2018)

Recognising that climate change is one of the most difficult challenges of our age and at the same time of our countries and our region, the Hungarian National Assembly hosting the 5th Conference of Danube Parliamentarians put the mitigation of the effects of climate change on agriculture and the issue of up-to-date water management and water use systems on the meeting's agenda.

The Conference directed attention to the significant challenges in agriculture, caused by extreme weather patterns becoming increasingly frequent with climate change. These challenges - coupled with the growth of the world's population and the shrinking of its natural resources – are forcing agricultural research to also focus on issues related to health-care, to the protection of the environment and to economics. A Climate Smart Agriculture must respond to three challenges at the same time: ensure food-security, adapt to climate change, and mitigate its unfavourable effects. The scarcity of water and the consequent scarcity of food supplies threaten the daily subsistence of almost two billion people in one hundred and ten countries of the world. This increases the vulnerability of these countries, may lead to conflicts and forced mass migration and jeopardises peace and security. In light of the above, sustainable agricultural production and water management ensuring the preservation of our natural resources for the next generation are more important than ever.

Combating climate change requires mitigating the emission of greenhouse gases (mitigation) as well as preparations for the unavoidable consequences of climate change (adaptation). Agricultural activities are associated with both of these climate policy directions: agriculture is not a negligible issuer of greenhouse gases on the one hand, but on the other, it is also one of the most vulnerable victims of the effects of changing climate conditions (droughts become more frequent, pests unknown before in a region now appear there, the optimal cultivation zones of certain crop cultures are shifting geographically, etc.).

To ensure the security of future food supplies it is necessary to develop our agricultural technologies, and especially to make the agricultural economy sustainable. Beyond the fundamental requirement of preserving the productivity of the soil, another important factor from the perspective of climate change is the ratio of agricultural land to the total land surface of a country, and how land is split among the different categories of land use.

A frequent cause of water scarcity in agriculture is the lack of sufficiently large areas – e.g. meadows, moors, marshlands – which would ensure appropriate water supplies and reduce the frequency of droughts. The excessive overrepresentation of plough land compared to other land uses also reduces water retention and consequently makes it more difficult to adapt to climate change. Beyond making land use more sustainable, efficient and water saving irrigation systems might also help adaptation to climate change.

Sustainable water management is an important linkage between food security and adaptation to the effects of climate change. In this regard, the cooperation of the countries situated in the shared watershed of rivers and the protection of the quantity and quality of water resources is of especial significance.

As climate change significantly modifies the availability of water resources in time and space, and as it will presumably lead to a decrease in the region's water resources as well as to increasingly harsh extraordinary events (droughts, floods, etc.), our continent must find adequate responses to the problem to be able to provide the population, agriculture, industry and tourism with the necessary amounts of water and at the same time to protect the status of our natural water resources.

The water management sector is infrastructure-intensive and requires substantial financing. This financing, however, should not only be used to build new infrastructure, but also to more efficiently operate the infrastructure already in place, to develop the institutions dedicated to water management and to enhance our data- and knowledge base on water.

Realising that the mitigation of climate change, the tackling of water management challenges and the development of a sustainable agribusiness require interstate cooperation at the regional and international levels, and recognising the concerted efforts the countries along the River Danube had taken so far to facilitate the sustainable management of water resources,

the Participants of the Conference wish to direct attention to the following:

- Members of Parliament should assume a more active role in implementing the objectives of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and in raising public awareness on this issue.
- Welcome the progress of their countries with adapting the sustainable development goals to their local conditions. They find the increased participation of parliaments in the development and implementation of the action plans for the national development goals to be especially encouraging, and urge them to continue their efforts to harmonise their national strategies with the goals adopted at the international level.

- Encourage their parliaments to discuss on a regular basis status reports from their governments on the implementation of the national plan and to ascertain that the national plan has been harmonised with other national and regional strategies and processes.
- Parliaments should promote the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, monitor the progress achieved on implementing their own national sustainability strategies, and make sure that the international and national sustainable development goals are taken into account in the parliamentary decision-making process.
- In order to gain a comprehensive overview of the complex interdependencies in sustainable development and to support the Sustainability Transition, regular consultations between parliaments and the representatives of trade and business organisations as well as NGOs - in compliance with the internal rules of procedures of the national parliaments – are very helpful. National parliaments should follow the relevant scientific results with attention, and Members of Parliament should regularly consult their voters on these issues.
- Parliaments will need to play an important role in combating climate change and in putting in place the conditions required by a sustainable agribusiness and a sustainable water management to underpin it. Parliamentary mandates like legislation, setting the budget, and the adoption of policy strategies are fundamental instruments through which the principle of sustainable development can be enforced.
- Support the implementation of the measures stipulated in the Comprehensive Agenda for Action laid down in the Outcome Document by the High-level Panel on Water convened by the UN and the World Bank Group, with especial regard to the implementation of integrated water management at the local, national and regional levels, and to the improvement of the standard of water governance.
- Parliaments should promote the adoption of comprehensive and integrated legislation to reduce water consumption and wastefulness, to stimulate innovation and to facilitate sustainable water consumption in their own countries as well as with regard to cross-border water resources.
- Parliaments should ascertain that sufficient budgetary resources are appropriated and that water management is multi-level, harmonised and effective at the national and regional levels alike. They endeavour to work out a legal and regulatory framework to facilitate dialogue and partnership for strengthening cooperation in order to allow present and future generations to achieve global water security.

- Call for a more intensive cooperation among the educational and research institutions and students in the countries along the Danube for the sake of an exchange of information and experiences and encourage the use of open-access databases.

Future of the Danube Parliamentarians Conference

The Final Declaration signed by the participants of the 1st Danube Parliamentarian Conference held in Ulm in July 2013 stated that “a Danube Parliamentarian Conference should meet at regular intervals so that national and regional parliaments in countries along the Danube can remain closely involved in the EUSDR and in the Danube Region regarding on-going development and implementation of the EUSDR. Regular exchange among the Danube Region parliaments would also offer the possibility of promoting transparent and democratic decision-making structures and processes in the Danube Region. Attention should be given to a cost-efficient, streamlined work structure when establishing a permanent Danube Parliamentarian Conference.”

Recalling the Final Declaration adopted by the 2nd Conference of Danube Parliamentarians in Budapest, October 3rd 2014, participants acknowledged “the added value of holding a Conference of Danube Parliamentarians - open to the Republic of Austria (State of Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Wien, Burgenland), Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany (State of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Hungary, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia (Autonomous Province of Vojvodina), the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Slovenia as well as Ukraine – on a regular basis, and the need for a clear structure not creating an additional institution” and agreed that the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians should be organised on a yearly basis.

In order to secure the continuity and stability of the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians in the future, participants agree that subsequent Conferences of Danube Parliamentarians shall be organised by the Parliament of the country holding the yearly Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

With reference to this rotational mechanism the Parliament of Romania is hereby declaring its willingness to host the next Conference of Danube Parliamentarians in 2019.

Budapest, October 5, 2018