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# COUNCIL

## Hundred and Sixtieth Session

Rome, 3–7 December 2018

### International Tea Day

#### Executive Summary

Following the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea, held in Hangzhou on 17-20 May 2018, the Government of the People's Republic of China proposed the establishment of an International Tea Day, to be observed on 21 May of each year.

The Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), at its 72<sup>nd</sup> Session in September 2018, endorsed the proposal and requested the Secretariat to work with the CCP Bureau to take it forward for consideration at the 160<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council, with a view to presenting it to the next Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2019.

Currently grown in more than 35 countries, tea provides a vital source of employment and income, often in some of the world's poorest regions. It is estimated that more than 13 million people, including tea farmers and their households, depend on the tea sector for their livelihoods. Furthermore, tea contributes to food security by helping exporting countries generate foreign exchange and finance their food import bills.

The tea beverage carries an ancient heritage, dating back some 5 000 years, and is underpinned by a rich culture, history and a valuable contribution to contemporary socioeconomic development.

The objective of observing an International Tea Day each year is to raise awareness of the many benefits of tea for producers and consumers alike and to foster the further development of the tea sector and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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### **Suggested action by the Council**

The Council is invited to:

- 1) endorse the proposal to observe an International Tea Day each year on 21 May and provide guidance on the proposal, as deemed appropriate;
- 2) make a recommendation on the Draft Resolution, as contained in *Appendix A*, to the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Conference (June 2019).

*Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:*

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## I. Background

1. Following the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea, held in Hangzhou on 17-20 May 2018, the Government of the People's Republic of China proposed the establishment of an International Tea Day, to be observed on 21 May of each year.
2. The proposal was considered by the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the CCP, who endorsed it, requesting the Secretariat to work with the CCP Bureau to take it forward for consideration at the 160<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council, with a view to presenting it to the next Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2019.
3. This document is prepared in response to the recommendation of the CCP.

## II. Overview

4. The tea sector contributes to reducing extreme poverty (SDG 1) and ending hunger (SDG 2), by creating jobs, generating incomes and improving livelihoods of the communities engaged in production activities. Tea production and trade can also contribute to the empowerment of women (SDG 5), who are largely involved in the picking, processing and marketing of tea.
5. Tea cultivation is of high importance to millions of smallholders, providing employment and income throughout the year, while requiring relatively little investment and labour that is often available on a casual basis. Tea grows well at high altitudes and on mildly acidic soils and, therefore, can be cultivated in areas not suitable for other crops.
6. Tea is reportedly the most consumed manufactured drink in the world. It is one of the oldest beverages and is available in six main varieties, differentiated by the applied oxidization and fermentation technique.
7. Over the past decades, the global tea industry has seen rapid growth, with a rising number of consumers globally. Global tea production reached 5.7 million tonnes in 2016, up from 3 million tonnes in 2000, with the five top producing countries accounting for over 80 percent of global production<sup>1</sup>. Global tea consumption stood at 5.5 million tonnes in 2016, registering an annual growth of 4.1 percent between 2000 and 2016.
8. While three quarters of the production are consumed domestically, tea is a widely traded commodity. In 2016, the volume of tea exports stood at 1.8 million tonnes, with a total value of USD 5.5 billion.
9. Despite the noticeable expansion of tea consumption in major producing countries, low per capita consumptions levels suggest that there is still a considerable growth potential in these countries. The industry is also facing declining per capita consumption levels in the traditional European markets. Furthermore, it is being exposed to the negative effects of shrinking rural populations and rapid urbanization in many producing countries.
10. Smallholder tea growers are playing an increasingly important role in the tea industry, supplementing or even replacing production of larger tea estates in many countries. However, smallholder production is faced with its own challenges, including lack of access to credit, risk management tools and innovative technology. These constraints not only weigh on smallholders' productivity, but they also make it difficult for them to share-in a more sizeable part of the profits generated along the tea value chain.

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<sup>1</sup> China (43%), India (22 %), Kenya (8 %), Sri-Lanka (5 %) and Turkey (5 %) were top five producers in 2016.

### III. Objectives of the International Tea Day

11. The aim of an International Tea Day (ITD), proposed to take place on 21 May of each year, is to contribute to the promotion and further development of the tea sector and to direct global efforts towards celebrating tea as not only a commodity, but also a heritage and a basis for smallholder livelihoods. The Day will also provide an excellent opportunity to governments and other stakeholders at national, regional and global levels to raise awareness about the importance of tea and to share knowledge and experiences.
12. The ITD would ensure continuing the long-standing tea culture and promoting all aspects of sustainability. The Day would link tea producers and consumers worldwide and support the on-going “tea, people, natural resources” dialogue towards a more sustainable tea sector.
13. While enhancing the traceability and transparency requested by consumers, the ITD would reinforce interest in ethical aspects of tea production and highlight possible social and environmental shortcomings in tea production and processing. Generic promotion of tea through the ITD would be based on the new opportunities and the rich history of how tea is produced and consumed, encapsulated in the motto: *“harnessing benefits for all from field to cup”*.
14. The ITD would raise awareness of the importance of tea for economic, social, cultural and environmental values and the contributions of tea to communities highly vulnerable to extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.
15. Finally, celebrating an International Tea Day every year should promote global efforts and collective actions toward a more productive, sustainable and resilient tea sector in the benefit of producers and consumers alike.

## Appendix A

**Draft Conference Resolution****International Tea Day****The Conference,**

**Noting** that tea constitutes the main means of subsistence for millions of poor families who live in a number of least developed countries;

**Noting** that tea production and processing contributes to the fight against hunger (SDG 2), the reduction of extreme poverty (SDG 1), the empowerment of women (SDG 5) and the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15);

**Recognizing** that tea is a main source of income and export revenues for some of the poorest countries and, as a labour-intensive sector, provides jobs especially in remote and economically disadvantaged areas;

**Affirming** that tea can play a significant role in rural development, poverty reduction and food security in developing countries, being one of the most important cash crops;

**Recalling** the urgent need to raise public awareness of the importance of tea for rural development and sustainable livelihoods and to improve the tea value chain to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

**Reemphasizing** the call from the Intergovernmental Group on Tea to direct greater efforts towards expanding demand, particularly in producing countries where per capita consumption is relatively low, and **supporting** efforts to address the declining per capita consumption in traditional importing countries;

**Trusting** that such a celebration would promote and foster collective actions to implement activities in favour of the sustainable production and consumption of tea and raise awareness of its importance in fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty;

**Stressing** that the costs of activities associated with the implementation of the International Tea Day would be met through voluntary contributions, including from the private sector;

**Requests** the Director-General to transmit this Resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, with a view to having the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) consider it at its next session, declaring 21 May of each year as the International Tea Day.