

## Third World Banana Forum Conference Statement

A record 300 delegates from over 40 countries across all continents registered in the Third Global Conference of the World Banana Forum (WBF) on November 8 and 9, 2017 at the International Conference Centre, Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was preceded by a well-attended meeting on “Gender Equity in the Banana Industry” on November 7 and followed on November 10 by a workshop on “Engaging stakeholders in combating the Fusarium wilt disease (TR4)”, which poses a major threat to global production.

The Conference had balanced representation of all players involved in banana production and trade – producers, workers’ unions, retailers, importers, exporters, civil society and consumer organisations, research institutions as well as governments and inter-governmental organisations. The meeting was hosted by the Swiss Confederation and facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in which the Secretariat of the WBF is based. The International Labour Organization (ILO) provided key technical support to the Conference.

**Attendance at the Conference demonstrated the growing reach and influence of the WBF. The Conference celebrated the main achievements of the Forum including:**

- A Manual on Occupational Health and Safety, launched at the Conference by the Ecuadorean Minister of Labour, to train workers, company staff and growers.
- A set of best practices for sustainable production.
- A web portal from which these practices and other useful materials are easily accessible to all stakeholders.
- A practical guide for measuring and reducing the carbon and water footprints of growers
- A global multi-stakeholder Task Force to combat Fusarium wilt Tropical Race 4, influence key industry players and collaborate with global programmes against banana diseases.
- A search for a commonly agreed method for calculating decent standards of living for workers at exporting-country level.
- The facilitation of successful labour relations dialogue in Peru and West Africa

These achievements resulted from collaboration between all sectors of the industry. The Conference endorsed this approach and committed itself to seek even wider representation in the Forum, including from Africa and Asia, as well as more retailers.

The major areas of discussion focused on gender issues; labour rights; health and safety; sustainability, the environment and the impact of climate change; fair distribution of value; and combating the TR4 disease. A number of wide-ranging recommendations were made by the Conference for implementation by the Steering Committee of the Forum. The conference emphasized the need for integrated approaches for prevention and management of Fusarium wilt TR4. It supported the launch of the global programme led by FAO in partnership with the WBF, Bioversity International and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

**The World Banana Forum wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation to the Swiss Confederation, FAO and ILO, the many sponsors, and the participants who all contributed to the success of the meeting.**