

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear representatives of the nature and environmental organisations Honig Connection and Friends of the Earth,
Dear representatives of Interfaith Dialogue
and dear members of the project Bees for Peace!

I am very pleased about the award to Bees for Peace from the UN Decade on Biodiversity. As a representative of the Abrahamic Forum, which was again this year a jury member for the main theme "protecting insects -- together for the diversity of nature", I am here today and am very honored to hand over this certificate.

The jury awards this recognition, because Bees for Peace "uses the positive aspects of religions in an exemplary way for the preservation of Creation and biodiversity to create interfaith connections and cooperation."

The justification for the award also states that "the project has an innovative character, because faith institutions become communication partners in using and protecting biodiversity." In this case, the focus is on pollinating insects (especially the bees). "The main objective is to create a network of feeding places for bees at participating religious communities."

As the association behind the project impressively shows on its website, there are numerous possibilities for the well-being of pollinators: small construction projects, such as insect hotels or raised beds, but especially the exchange between and joint action of faith communities.

Wherever we look, the bee has left its mark in scriptures and religious traditions. In the Qur'an, a whole chapter (Surah) is named after the bee (An-nahl). Surah 16:61-69 states that God created the bee, which feeds on all kinds of fruit and produces honey. It has many colors and healing properties.

The Bible speaks above all of honey. In the Book of Moses, Canaan, the place of refuge, is described as a land in which milk and honey flow. This has become a saying that indicates that, wherever there is honey, there it must be good, there is God.

As a living being, the bee with its products in turn protects other living beings. And with this we come to the expanded meaning of the project: Through protecting bees, Bees for Peace wants to protect all living beings that are dependent on the pollinating of bees and other insects.

Dear Carrie Dohe, in September 2018, you opened the Interfaith Week of Nature Conservation in Cologne, the main venue at the time. There were many events devoted to wild and honey bees during the weeklong program.

Time has passed since then, the bee has now conquered our hearts and is becoming part of urban free-time activities. Bee-friendly plants on the balcony such as borage (cucumber herb) or the longshrub basil can be found on many private balconies. At present there are about 900,000 bee colonies in Germany.

So a lot is already happening and that is very important. But Bees for Peace has much more far-reaching goals: the board members of the association come from three different countries and want to implement the project internationally in order to build up a large network.

This brings us to the important international and interfaith aspect of dialogue. Our religions carry the message of charity, of moderation and the injunction not to exploit nature and the world, but to protect it.

Human history shows how difficult it is to achieve such goals, and how quickly we fail again and again, such as in the face of enticing economic gains.

As the message on the website for Bees for Peace shows, the bee is way ahead of us in this regard. Like us, bees are sojourners: in their short lifespan of about 4-6 weeks, they travel about 8,000 km, without burning any oil. In doing so, they also cross boundaries set by humans, such as national borders, pollinate plants and thus contribute to the conservation of humans and animals and to the preservation of biodiversity. The bee thus becomes an ambassador for peace, which calls us to overcome our (religious) boundaries and to take care of the well-being of all people.

Stephanie Krauch, The Abrahamic Forum in Germany e.V., Cologne 17.08.2020

Translated from German by Carrie Dohe