

Statement of the **International Society for Subterranean Biology**

Why is the declaration important and worth supporting?

Good and pertinent reasons are already present in the declaration itself (points 1 to 9).

To me, the most valuable service is that groundwater is the largest freshwater reservoir on the planet. More than half of the world's population depends on groundwater for their drinking water supply, while groundwater in karst (terrains located on limestone rocks) is the drinking water source for approximately 75% of the population in Europe. The importance of groundwater is largely recognized, but, paradoxically, groundwater is still the sink and the deposit of wastes with various origins (household, agriculture, industry etc.). Another threat to groundwater is excessive pumping for various uses (irrigation in agriculture, industry etc.); the threat is represented by the depletion of aquifers, especially in conditions of drought.

I would add to the declaration that groundwater is also a reservoir of biodiversity. Groundwater (and the subsurface in general) represents one of the least explored ecosystems. New animal species are discovered and described constantly. Some of these species disappear before they are discovered due to loss of aquifers. Therefore, protecting groundwater is of the utmost importance.

The International Society for Subterranean Biology entirely supports the declaration.

Traian Brad
President