**COLOMBIA**

Excellencies, Representatives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols, delegates of other governments, agencies, institutions and distinguished participants of this important event.

Biological diversity is the basis of human life. The more this diversity is reduced, the more the Earth's capacity to sustain human life diminishes. It is therefore incumbent upon all humankind to safeguard it from all threats and to halt or reduce its loss.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is one of the key instruments contributing to this effort, reducing the potential adverse effects that living modified organisms (LMOs) may have on biological diversity and is an essential part of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

For Colombia, is crucial and meaningful the celebration of 20 years of the Protocol entry into force. So today, we can say that:

- The Protocol has grown steadily and emerged as a vigorous and influential international agreement aimed at ensuring the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs

- The Biosafety Clearing – House operates and facilitates the exchange of information on living modified organisms and the experiences gained with them.

- Several countries have implemented projects and other activities to build and consolidate human and institutional capacity in the safe use of biotechnology.

- We, together have raised awareness of the importance of improving scientific knowledge on LMOs to manage and control risks to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In these crisis days, the challenge is greater, recognizing the complementarity between the Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which urges us, as governments to update our national action plans to achieve the desired achievements and progress between now and 2030 with the 2050 Vision.

The usefulness of the implementation plans of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety lies in facilitating the development and strengthening of countries' capacities to manage and control the nature and magnitude of the known and potential risks derived from living modified organisms in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. However, the implementation of the protocol requires increasing commitment and visibility in the international agenda, linking it to countries' development plans and strengthening technical and financial cooperation to achieve national and international objectives. Now, we have an "ambitious" implementation plan that requires to join efforts.

We are sure that over the last 20 years, the parties have made progress in the establishment of functional national biosafety frameworks. In the case of Colombia, the capacity building generated through national and international funds, allowed the country to have accredited laboratories for the detection and identification of LMOs and generated baseline information for the environmental aspects related to wild relatives of species of importance for food security in Colombia (such as rice and cassava), approximations for transgene detection in wild species (*Gossypium* sp.) gene flow research, among others. Additionally, the country was able to train professionals in risk assessment and risk management at a postgraduate level. Important efforts for public awareness and education have been done at different levels of society (students, scientists, government officials and civil society).

The implementation of the protocol has generated a greater positive impact in the access to recombinant DNA technologies for crops such as corn, soybean, cotton, and ornamentals such as rose, carnation and gypsophila with characteristics such as tolerance to herbicides, resistance to insects, changes in the coloration of the flowers (blue), among others. Among the main aspects to be highlighted are the acquired and improved technical capacity to adequately carry out risk assessments, as well as the biosafety and monitoring plan that have allowed the approval of technologies that mitigate the effects that it may have on biodiversity and human health.

In the human health and food sector, since its regulation in 2005, a total of 254 authorization requests have been processed for 167 different GMIn the agricultural sectorO events, which correspond to the following products: corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, beets, wheat and rice. In addition, the Ministry of Health and INVIMA participate in debates and analysis of other relevant biotechnological issues, including the authorization and use of GMOs in confined environments, regulatory processes for "off-patent" events, low-level presence policies (LLP) related to GMOs, genome editing, genetics. units, to name a few.

Overall, the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol, at the global level and also in Colombia, has been an evolving process over the past 20 years, with advances in biotechnology regulation, management of risks associated with LMOs, sharing information through the BCH and the incorporation of The Cartagena Protocol and biotechnology issues in the environmental politics and regulations whit and cross sectoral scope.

It is very important for Colombia, and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Develpoment, to be here celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Protocol's entry into force, with deep gratitude for bearing the name of the city of Cartagena as a tribute to the leadership of the Colombian delegation, led by the Ministry of Environment, during the negotiation process. We hope that the new challenges in the context of the triple crisis can guide us to renew our commitments with the 2050 vision to live in harmony with nature implementing with urgency the goals and targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework in synergies with other relevant instruments. That effort still continues today.

Thank you very much for participating in this event.