

Agreement between Conahcyt and all-Russian Institute of Plant Genetic Resources of N.I. Vavilov

Dra. María Elena Álvarez-Buylla Roces
General Director of the National Council of Humanities, Sciences and
Technologies (Conahcyt)

México City, November 24th, 2023.

Good morning to all in Mexico.

Good evening to all in Russia.

I wish I could speak Russian, I cannot, so we will speak in English for today.

It is a great honor for me, on behalf of the Government of Mexico, through the National Council of Humanities, Sciences and Technologies (Conahcyt), to consolidate this international collaboration with the All-Russian Institute of Plant Genetic Resources of Nikolai I. Vavilov, world-renowned institution in biodiversity research, which it is also a life reservoir that protects this richness

and is part of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia.

It is a great pleasure to greet those who chair this event and those who are joining us, to be able to increase our capacities, both in Russia and Mexico to preserve Biodiversity for the well-being of all humanity:

- **Ms. Elena Khlestkina**, director of the Institute of Plant Genetic Resources of N.I. Vavilov.
- **His Excellency. Mr. Eduardo Villegas Megías**, Ambassador of Mexico in the Russian Federation. Who is key for this event today and who has already summarized the previous events that made this signing possible.
- **Mr. Serguei Parjomenko**, Counselor of the Russian Embassy in Mexico.

- **Mr. Aleksei Averjanov**, Head of the International cooperation department of the city of St. Petersburg.
- All the colleagues from the Vavilov Institute: please receive my welcoming regards today.
- And my team of course in Mexico in this new Conahcyt, Dr. Alejandro Espinosa Calderón, who is the Executive Secretary of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (CIBIOGEM); and Dra. Delia Aideé Orozco Hernández, Deputy General Director of Technological Development, and Innovation from Conahcyt.

I am very very happy to be here today.

With this partnership between Conahcyt and the Vavilov Institute, with the signing of this agreement, I am sure

that our countries will pay tribute to the dreams of the botanist and geneticist Nikolai Vavilov, and also to preceding scientists in Mexico, who have stated how important it is for the future of humanity to preserve the biodiversity of Mexico.

The Vavilov Institute in the 20th century undertook actions for the research and conservation of the genetic legacy of the world's plants; and the farming communities, who have defended the fields to feed the people and humanity.

This cooperation agreement that calls us together today, is aligned to the perspective of Mexican President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and the new Conahcyt, with an “H” for humanities, now guiding our work here in Conahcyt.

The new Conahcyt was refounded in this government with the implementation of the first General Law on Humanities, Sciences, Technologies and Innovation, which is based on the human right to science and other fundamental rights in order to assure the well-being of the people and the environment. In other words, or in a few words, we do not want scientific and technological development for the war, we want it for peace and for the well-being of all humanity

Our nation, Mexico is a megadiverse country, place of origin, diversity and domestication of multiple crops and plants that constitute the biological basis of our national food safety, and also the worldwide food safety, but it is also at the basis of our food sovereignty.

The Russian botanist Vavilov found in Mexico an agro-diverse nation, with corn, bean, cotton, peppers, pumpkin, and many others, cocoa also; during his first extensive collection of seeds in our country he identified more than 50 edible species and 20 ornamental species. Between 15% and 20% of the plants that are used as food in the whole world today, were originated and or diversified in Mexico.

From 1920, when Vavilov began this collection, to the present, scientific, technological and humanistic research has passed and faced different challenges, for example, I list some of the important ones here:

- The development of a voracious and neoliberal science, which under economic and private interests, and without ethical limits promoted for example the genetically modified technologies,

which are not guided by the well-being of the humanity, of human health and ecosystems and on the other hand focuses only on very few species, to promote business in the fields where the food of the world is being produced.

- A catastrophic socio-environmental crisis that jeopardizes all ecosystems and all life, are also a threat against biodiversity.
- Mexicans have historically suffered from the dispossession of their territories, and minimized their work as guardians of their environmental and biocultural richness. This has also impoverished the biodiversity in the Mexican environment.

Now, Mexico is under a very deep political and social transformation, which is committed in favor of the

general well-being, justice for all people and protecting the environment. In this context, we are so happy to achieve this collaboration, which I am sure will promote and strengthen the relationship between México and Russia in the technical and scientific aspects; that are key for this very important goal, preserving and valuing, as it should, the great biodiversity of our country in favor of our people.

Recent studies claim that small-scale production represents 95% of genetic diversity resources in the world, and Mexico is one of the richest countries in terms of agrobiodiversity that is generated and preserved in the hands of these small hold peasants' communities, in our country.

Eckart Boege, one of our scientists has very clearly stated that indigenous populations and local communities are those who have domesticated, diversified and continue to diversify and disperse the very high level of agrobiodiversity, that is at the basis of our food sovereignty in Mexico.

For all these reasons, we believe that the academic exchange of researchers, training and short-stays for young researchers in these areas of biodiversity, preservation and valuing calls for joint projects, the organization of seminars, workshops or other scientific dissemination events, as well as the recognition of traditional knowledge, collections, protection, selection and preserving this important richness of the world, not

as private resources, but as common resources for the whole humanity.

I am sure that this joint collaboration between Mexico and Russia, particularly the Vavilov Institute will greatly help us protect our national sovereignty and particularly our sovereignty in food production and food consumption in general.

From Conahcyt, guided by Mexican humanism, we promote scientific research and sovereign innovation for the well-being and prosperity of our nation and fraternal nations like Russia, with whom we began a historic collaboration, in favor of science and common benefit.

Thank you very much.