

National Day of Colombia July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
65 years of Diplomatic Relations Colombia-Israel  
Speech of Ambassador, Mrs. Margarita E. Manjarrez Herrera

Good evening, Mr. Nitzan Horowitz, Minister of Health of Israel, thank you for joining us tonight, dear ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, dear Ambassador Gil Gaskel Chief of Protocol, Ambassador Jonathan Peled, Deputy Director General for Latin America and Caribbean Division and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Honorary Consul of Colombia Mr. Jaime Aron and Mrs. Aron, members of government and industry, distinguished guest, dear friends, welcome.

In 212 years of Colombia as an independent country, and 65 th years of diplomatic relations with Israel, there are many things to mention, but I will refer to three aspects that I consider fundamental and that had influenced our foreign policy and the bilateral relation with Israel.

**First. Climate change and energy transition**

As the second most biodiverse country in the world, Colombia has ratified its commitment to the protection of the country's flora and fauna and reiterated that the greatest challenge for humanity is to urgently confront climate change with adaptation and mitigation measures.

Important commitments, actions and advances had been taken by the current government and will be also a priority for the new president of Colombia, who will take office on August 7<sup>th</sup>.

We aim to reduce greenhouse gases by 51% by 2030 and be carbon neutral by 2050, in addition to our zero deforestation goals and the protection of the Amazon. Colombia consolidates itself as one of the countries with the greatest headway in the Energy Transition. We rank amongst the top 5 countries in green hydrogen production and export potential, There are 17 solar farms, two wind farms, 10 large-scale self-generation projects, more than 2,500 small-scale self-generation photovoltaic solar projects in the country, to prevent the emission of more than nine hundred seven thousand tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Not easy goals to fulfill but working together with countries like Israel is key to implement new technologies and to develop projects together. We are advancing largely in both.

## **Second: Tourism**

After the Pandemic we continue steps towards tourism reactivation. Inbound foreigners to Colombia increased by 38% in 2021, higher than the average in South America. This year, we were able to be present for the first time at the International Mediterranean Tourism Fair in Tel Aviv, in which we showed the Six Tourist Regions of Colombia, exchanged good practices, and created spaces for cooperation with key players in the tourism sector of the two countries. We are already working with the main agencies, operators, and airlines in specific plans. Why the interest? If we take Asia region and Middle East, Israel is the first source

market for tourists to Colombia and a leading country in innovation and development of new technologies for tourism.

### **Third: Diplomacy, Culture and Peace**

Since 1949 when we recognized Israel as a legitimate State, the bilateral relation had been always positive. The embassies were opened in May 1957 and along these years, the dialogue had been permanent, and the development of our common interests is increasing.

Colombia's first State visit to Israel took place in 2013 and the latest in November last year. You can observe key moments of our bilateral relation in the exhibition that we are presenting today.

In addition to the practical aspects of the relationship, like, cooperation in health, agriculture, education, defense, trade, investment, innovation, I always thought that is culture that nourishes mutual knowledge and dialogue between peoples. For this reason, from the embassy we decided to contribute to the commemorations, with the launch of an Eighty-page brochure, printed and digital version, in Spanish, English and Hebrew. The publication *COLOMBIA IN ISRAEL: A LOOK THROUGH ART*, highlights Colombian art in Israel, as an essential element of our diplomacy and, at the same time, as a window through which the Israeli public can approach Colombian culture and identity.

The presentation highlights that Nations are largely unknown, even by their own

citizens but there are ways of understanding more about them: Arts are the ways to unveil the mystery and reveal characteristics, good and bad, that don't hide the hardest truths and artists show paradoxical, sincere, and vital portraits, maybe in some cases, with exaggerated features.

Nevertheless, the foreign policy of a country should emphasize its powers, its virtues, including those which nearly nobody knows. Colombian Foreign Policy and Arts are reflection of a homeland where the possibilities offered by life have always risen from the ashes. Colombia is a country that transited 5 decades of internal conflict, now is implementing the peace agreements and is optimistic about its future, with historic moments like the presentation of the final report of the Colombia's Truth Commission on June 28<sup>th</sup>. If I may have a moment of optimism, I would say that if we continue implementing the agreements we will succeed and become an example for the world, a good society should be based in peace and coexistence.

As said, art plays a fundamental role for our daily life and for our foreign affairs. Today you will have a glimpse of Colombian nature through music and dance, because we are a neat and profuse country in the arts field. Colombian foreign policy has always understood that art helps to communicate and to understand what we are. I am sure you will enjoy it.

Let me finish presenting the brochure to Minister Horowitz. Thank you very much.