

**STATEMENT BY COLOMBIA AT THE MEETING
HELD ON 24 AND 25 JUNE 2003**

1. In response to the interest expressed by Argentina in the Committee being informed of progress made in the bilateral negotiations between the Argentine and Colombian health authorities concerning the measures applied by Colombia to imports of bovine meat because of foot-and-mouth disease, I should like to begin by referring to what Colombia has said about the issue at previous meetings and to supplement the visit status report.

2. With regard to Colombia's statements, I would like to recall that, at the Committee meetings held in November 2002 and April 2003 (document G/SPS/GEN/391 of 8 May 2003), detailed information was provided about:

- The foot-and-mouth disease situation in Colombia;
- the establishment of the adequate level of protection for imports of goods at risk;
- the measure adopted in respect of the import of livestock goods at risk following the occurrences of foot-and-mouth disease in Argentina, which was notified to the WTO;
- the Colombian measures for importing livestock products from establishments that must be authorized or approved by the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA); and
- the information required from the Argentine authorities and the schedule of visits to approve cold stores for exports, for the purpose of assessing the health situation in Argentina.

3. We also informed the Committee about the links being made by the Argentine authorities between the described measure and the suspension by those authorities of phytosanitary authorization for imports of flowers from Colombia until the corresponding risk was reviewed.

4. With respect to the agreements reached between the Argentine and the Colombian health authorities, however, I would like to inform the Committee that the question of imports of meat from Argentina to Colombia and the issue of exports of flowers from Colombia to Argentina have been very actively addressed in the last two months.

5. As regards trade in meat, Colombia proposed that experts in risk prevention and veterinary epidemiology from the ICA should conduct visits to Argentina in order to inspect cold stores and verify the guarantees offered by the SENASA. These visits have been under way since 23 June.

6. As a counterpart to the acceptance of this proposal, the SENASA will visit a number of flower growing establishments that wish to export to Argentina; this will lead to automatic approval for the other firms interested in exporting. Should newly created establishments intend to begin exporting to Argentina, the ICA will continue to be responsible for granting authorization, which will be communicated to the SENASA without delay.

7. Our hope is that, once the requested information has been received from Argentina and the visits and corresponding assessments have been made, trade in these two products will return to normal.
