H.E. DR. ATEF EBEID
BioVisionAlexandria 2004
Opening Session
3 April 2004

Thank You Dr. Ismail,

Excellencies, distinguished scientists, honorable guests, allow me on behalf of the Egyptian Government to welcome you, wishing all of you a very pleasant stay and a successful conference. Our deep appreciation and thanks to the organizers, to Dr. Ismail Serageldin as well as the distinguished participants for selecting the right topic at the right place and the right time. As you all know, global cooperation is needed more than ever to help meet the key challenges facing humanity: Poverty and the availability of inexpensive medical care. The hope is and will continue to be in the contributions made by scientists, the positive response of entrepreneurs and the strong commitment of our governments. A quick review to the papers presented to the conference as well as the assessment of the Egyptian experience shows clearly that the outcome during the last 50 years has been remarkable. The papers really inspired me, to share with you the lessons we learned, seek you an advice on how to meet future challenges, for the lessons we had five.

First, we learned that technology driven for enhancement should be given special attention putting these at the top of our priorities. Egypt, through the scientists working at the agro-sector, was able to foster and achieve fast, equitable, and sustainable growth. The yield of the 5 basic crops per acre became the highest in the world in less than 15 years.

A second lesson is that the strategy for poverty reduction should seek the improvement of the productivity of the Poor's own assets. In the farms we have to direct special attention to those who farm limited area & own few. For those who need medical care, safe, effective available vaccination should reach every child and at home.

The 3rd lesson is that limited national financial resources should not be discouraging a developing country from embarking on a national program for technological transfers. Egypt started its program at a time that per capita income was less than a $ 1000 per year and it was fairly rewarded.

The 4th lesson is that with limited research resources available, one should resist the temptation and the pressures to run many programs at a time. A few effective ones are much more rewarding than many that we can't afford to operate.

The 5th lesson that alliances with international counterparts from the developed world are strongly recommended, it saves on time and money. It also allows for income to retrain. The search for partners from the developing world should be earned. Also hosting foreign research centers has been and will continue to be welcomed in this country.

Distinguished guests, honorable participants, a few words on future challenges: the 1st challenge as mentioned thoroughly in the papers is the bio safety.

We should care about assurance as well as about its enforcement. Everyone is known, they are above humanitarian and political, however our experience is limited. It needs to be enriched and mainly on regulation, capacity building and coordination among supervisory agencies; here in Egypt technical assistance as well as opportunities for training will be very much needed.

Linkages with other responsible agencies and other countries will sure help in sharing gained experience.

The 2nd challenge is establishment of partnership between universities on one side, research centers and farmers and industry on the other side. The funds are available, however each party is waiting for the other to make the first step. Very recently some people recognized that well formed ventures could and should be more. Some options are now under discussion and we should follow through. The experience in other countries has been very successful and rewarding. And we are sure committed to submit that. Another future challenge will be the success in managing national

programs for the transfer of biotechnology. Success here will depend on 4 As: availability, ability, accountability and acceptability. On availability, the problems involved are related to the existence of satisfactory intellectual property rights supported by effective enforcement mechanism, another problem faced here is the limited experience in sourcing, selecting, negotiating and contracting.

On abilities, a few problems need to be solved: building local capacities for receiving, experimenting, assessing and training public awareness also cannot be neglected to ensure transparency on public support. For accountability, the decision maker in a developed country knows very well that resources are scarce, hence a priority has to be based on reliable studies on costs and benefits as well as the expected time for the recovery of the dear investment.

Acceptability simply means that the society at large as well as the potential users should be convinced and willing to use the new technologies. This needs effectual presentation for the experience of the other countries as well as local successful experimentations. Finally, the most important challenge is the country's success in widening and deepening international cooperation. All options have to be offered: buying, leasing, joint-venturing, co-funding, licensing for operating, audited experimentations and direct marketing.

What counts at the end of the day is the contribution to the welfare of the society. The challenges for the developing world are many. At the top comes the supply of enough food and medicine. Only science and its applications can meet these challenges. On our side we will work more and harder, we will search more for providing technology, we will protect intellectual property rights more. We sure care about you scientists, we will share with you the hopes for a better future.

May the mighty God bless you all, and I do thank you.