

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. ÁLVARO URIBE VÉLEZ
President of the Republic of Colombia

64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
General Debate

New York, 23 September 2009

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I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and by reiterating to the United Nations the recognition for its beneficial presence and collaboration with the people of Colombia.

The Government that I preside has the objective of increasing the confidence of the national and international community in our Country.

We support that search for confidence on three pillars: security with democratic values, promotion of investment and entrepreneurship with social responsibility, and social cohesion with freedoms.

We continue to make progress in security but also with pending challenges. I would like to highlight intangible achievements that validate the democratic credentials of our security project:

- We have recovered two monopolies that we never should have lost: the monopoly of institutional forces to combat criminals and the monopoly of justice that terrorists once wanted to displace. Paramilitarism, a term that emerged to describe private criminal gangs whose objective was to combat drug trafficking guerrillas, has been dismantled. Today, the State is the only one that combats all criminals. These, in all their forms, drug-trafficking guerrillas, criminal gangs, are brought together in a mafia-style relationship that unites them or pits them against each other to share or fight over the profits of the criminal drug enterprise. Justice, with the Supreme Court assassinated in 1985 in an assault by drug traffickers and guerrillas, tormented by the threat and assassination of judges and displaced in many regions by terrorists leaders of guerrillas and paramilitaries that attempted to replace it, has recovered in the entirety of the Country its full effectiveness.

- Victims did not stand up out of fear of retaliation or belief that it would be useless. Now, thanks to the recovery of security, 239,758 victims have been registered, and we are carrying out a determined reparation effort with them, that is never complete, but that will lead to reconciliation as it advances, by cancelling spirits of vengeance and hatred.
- We have recovered the independence of decentralization and of political exercise. Terrorism had displaced 30% of mayors, stolen and corrupted large amounts of municipal and departmental budgets and coerced political sectors. Mayors have recovered the security for the free exercise of their mandates and the transparent management of resources. Politics are freely exercised in the expression of all forms of thought.
- This terrorist threat has been confronted without martial legislation, with full civil and political guarantees and absolute respect for the liberties that we promote through security.
- We work towards both the effectiveness of the Public Forces and the respect for human rights. We do not hesitate to punish those who violate them nor do we back away from defending our soldiers and policemen, sometimes victims of a dirty legal war. Colombia has voluntarily presented itself to the United Nations human rights review. Furthermore, in spite of suffering caused by the anti-personnel landmines planted by terrorist groups, the State destroyed those in possession of the Public Forces for training purposes. Our country is one of the leaders of the Ottawa Convention for the destruction of such landmines and will host its next meeting in Cartagena.
- We combat terrorism with wholehearted determination and we practice democracy with full devotion. That is why Colombia's doors have been open without restrictions to international vigilance. We deliberate and disagree, but impartial observers and biased critics alike have had guaranteed spaces in Colombia.
- Our interest is not the fanatical confrontation between left and right, which is dangerous as it is obsolete, we are betting on a modern democracy, safe, free, builder of social cohesion, with independent institutions, with confidence derived from the transparency that is based on a high degree of citizen participation.

We have not been able to completely overcome displacement but we have multiplied by 12 the budgetary resources allocated to provide assistance to displaced persons. We promote confidence links between state forces and communities so that operations against drug-trafficking are not frustrated by the displacement provoked by drug-traffickers.

51,783 members of terrorist groups have demobilized and the size of these groups has been reduced from nearly 60,000 to less than 8,000. We have shown complete generosity with the demobilized and full severity with the 7% who have relapsed into criminal behavior. The Justice and Peace Law that covers them has allowed for the revelation of 29,555 criminal acts, the confession of 12,104, the discovery of 2,492 corpses in 2,043 graves, the identification of 708 bodies and the return of 581 to their families. The participation of the victims and new procedures for the restitution and redress of their rights are a determining component of this demobilization process.

Terrorism cannot be ignored in the name of good international relations. On the contrary, multilateralism and diplomacy must lead to collaborative actions among States to overcome this drama and its accomplices like trafficking in arms, illicit drugs, money and asset laundering, terrorist havens, among others.

We reiterate our commitment to multilateralism, in all its legitimate expressions, from the organizations of neighboring countries to the most global, but believe that multilateralism has to demonstrate effectiveness in defeating international crime.

Colombia has recognized the internal problem of narco-terrorism, has led a heroic battle that will ultimately prevail, cooperates with the international community and requests more effective cooperation. We cooperate with Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Afghanistan and other countries. We recognize the efforts of the United States to work jointly with us in dismantling narco-terrorism. We ask for more cooperation from more countries and from the international community.

Our objective is recovering domestic security, never participating in the arms race for the bloody game of international war. Our tradition is one of respect for the global community.

We are concerned that instead of advancing towards greater cooperation for the security, peace and tranquility of the citizens of each country, an arms race is accelerated under the argument by some on the need to modernize military equipment while others confess their disposition for war.

Multilateral agencies, lead by the United Nations, must reinforce their actions so that governments fulfill the duty to protect their citizens and the obligation to avoid aggression against the international community.

In Colombia the only reason behind terrorism is the illicit-drug enterprise. Before, violent criminals denied drug-trafficking and made efforts to maintain ideological appearances; today, having lost all decency, they can no longer hide their criminal business nor fake ideological postures, denied by the cruelty towards their victims and those that have been kidnapped, and never acceptable by the democratic transparency of our Country that they have tried to destroy.

We have a different concept of co-responsibility and of the proposal to legalization with regard to drugs. The old division between producer and consumer countries has disappeared. Colombia began as a space for trafficking, broke into production and today suffers as a consumer. Those who started as consumers increase production. All peoples are exposed to the risks of production, trafficking and consumption. Therefore, co-responsibility must be practiced in accordance with its real significance: a task that belongs to all of us without any reservation.

We believe that instead of advocating for the legalization of drugs, we must reflect on the need to make consumption illegal. There is no coherence between the severity facing production and trafficking and the permissiveness of consumption. This has led to murderous micro-trafficking in cities, to encouraging consumption by adolescents and youth and to involving children in the criminal enterprise. We are advancing in the constitutional process to make consumption illegal, making sure not to confuse the sick addict with the criminal distributor.

Our Government encourages investment and entrepreneurship as means to overcome poverty and build equity. Colombia advances in competitiveness and confidence. Investment must fulfill a function of social responsibility in order to obtain popular legitimacy in democratic societies. Social responsibility is inseparable from the meaning of capital as a factor in the creation of social wealth and not of speculation. The economic crisis is a crisis of speculation,

not of the free entrepreneurship creativity. We are confident in the approval of the necessary conventions to avoid the risks bred by the speculative movements of money and titles representative of financial values. We fear a new protectionist phase and the selective closure of developed economies that would frustrate the sustainable recovery of the economy.

Social responsibility is inseparable from the fight against climate change. Colombia is a net producer of oxygen and a small contributor of CO₂. Nevertheless, our vulnerability is high as has been evidenced through winter tragedies in recent years that have caused human and productive losses and high attention costs. We support more strict international conventions to protect the environment that have effective binding instruments so they will not constitute a new dead letter.

Our greatest contribution in the fight against climate change is the preservation of our 578,000 square kilometers of rainforest, more than 51% of the national territory, which is made up by the Amazon in its greatest extension. We present as a real policy the Forest Ranger Families program, which includes over 90,000 rural families in collective work to protect the rainforest, maintain it free of illicit drug crops and oversee its recovery where it has been destroyed. The State pays a bonus to these families. The program, supervised by the United Nations has received the highest qualification by this Organization.

In Colombia, forest ranger families protect the rainforest against predatory drugs; around the world, a similar model could preserve the forests to diminish climate change.

Clean energy, mass transportation systems and the protection of water sources, constitute fundamental actions in our contribution against global warming.

With over one million liters per day, Colombia is the second largest producer of sugar cane-base ethanol in Latin America, and with one million eight hundred thousand liters per day is the first in biodiesel from African palm. The conditions in our Country allow for the increase in the production of both, without destroying the rainforest or limiting food security.

We have introduced incentives for other clean energies such as solar and wind, the development of which is still small in spite of the great potential:

We are working on the construction of nine mass transportation systems in major cities and we are in the process of incorporating another ten in projects of proportional reach in the hope of substituting individual with collective transportation.

11% of our territory has been designated as a protected zone. In natural sanctuaries such as the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the highest in the world in the proximity of the ocean, consensus is reached with indigenous communities, who through security, the recovery of territories and the construction of seven of the nine compromised townships, have taken on once again the noble task of preserving the forest and water sources.

We gain nothing with security, investment, health, education, all the policies for social cohesion, if we do not attach equal importance to the environment. That is how we understand it in a “megadiverse” Nation that holds 14% of the planet’s diversity and that is ranked (behind Brazil) as the second Country in plant and animal species and the first in amphibians and birds.

Our rush is to increase the Index of Opportunities to eliminate poverty, build equity and guarantee every alternative to new generations. We propose to include in the measuring of this Index the progress and setbacks to environmental policies. Opportunities are not effective without protection to the environment. Let us make effective the fight against climate change so that new inhabitants do not inherit the sentence that condemns the Planet to a holocaust.