

COLOMBIA



STATEMENT BY

H.E. MR. JUAN MANUEL SANTOS CALDERÓN
President of the Republic of Colombia

65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
General Debate

New York, 24 September 2010

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Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,

Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Excellencies Heads of State, Heads of Government and Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With reverence and an immense sense of responsibility, I attend for the first time this historic forum, to reiterate my country's commitment, the commitment of more than 45 million Colombians, with the fulfillment and success of the United Nations founding principles.

We support that this Organization, in its reform process, adopts criteria for efficiency and transparency, in order to realize those principles, and to achieve a more effective international cooperation system.

We believe that the United Nations should focus on achieving concrete results that transform realities, instead of deepening conditions of dependency or assistential programmes that do more harm than good in developing countries.

With this belief, with faith in the future of the Organization, I make explicit today, before this Assembly, my country's aspiration to become a member of the Security Council for the period 2011-2012.

We do it on the basis of respect for the principles of the UN Charter, and with the commitment to provide our full cooperation to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Colombia –which this year, along with other Latin American nations, commemorates 200 years of independence– has a long and successful democratic and institutional tradition.

Our Republic has suffered the attacks of terrorism, and the ravages of international crime, but we have always faced them with the Constitution and the law in our hands, following the most rigorous democratic procedures.

We are confident that our experience, long and painful, can be very useful to all members of the Organization in matters in which we have developed a strong technical and operational capacity.

Matters, such as security; countering terrorism and drug trafficking; the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons; the progressive eradication of anti-personnel mines; humanitarian assistance; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of illegal armed groups; and –something particularly important– how to do it all while always protecting human rights.

As advocates of peaceful coexistence, we are proud to participate in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, such as the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai, and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

This is part of our commitment to peace anywhere in the world; a commitment that we reaffirm today.

For these reasons, we want to be the voice of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Security Council, in this very special moment for our region.

Latin America and the Caribbean, a region that brings together nearly 600 million inhabitants, is our area of natural interaction.

The region includes countries with multiple political views or diverse positions on many specific topics.

But we are united by the interest of overcoming poverty, improving the living standards of our people, successfully inserting ourselves into the global market and protecting our environment.

Latin American nations are beginning to take on a global leadership role in economic, environmental, security-related and development issues.

In my inaugural speech, on August 7 –based on the significant advancements achieved by my country– I said that the time for Colombia has come.

Today, in this global forum, I go further and express, with absolute conviction, that the time has come for Latin America.

We Latin Americans assumed the management of our economies with responsibility, and as a result we were one of the least affected regions by the global economic crisis.

Today our countries are growing on the basis of economic, social and technological pillars that are stronger than ever, and are on the radar of global investors .

We are a sub-continent where the majority of population is young, with immense talents and ability to work, with cities and natural wonders that attract tourists and investors from all around the world, and with a unique environmental wealth.

In these times, when the world demands food, water, biofuels, and natural lungs for the Earth such as the tropical forests, Latin America has millions of hectares ready for cultivation, without affecting ecological balance, and all the willingness, all the willingness, to become a supplier of all the goods that humanity needs for its own survival.

More than 925 million people living in hunger and malnutrition in the world are an urgent challenge.

Latin America can and wants to be part of the solution!

Ours, is the richest region in biodiversity of the planet, with the most megadiverse country in the world, that is Brazil, and the country that has the highest biodiversity per square kilometer, which is our country, Colombia.

Just in the Amazon region, we can find 20 percent of the global supply of freshwater and 50 percent of the planet's biodiversity.

Colombia is not a country with high polluting emissions, but we want to assume our responsibility with the planet and its future.

With this certainty, we support the international initiative for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, which seeks to generate and allocate resources as necessary, to reduce tropical forest loss and associated emissions.

We want to be a model country for the world, in monitoring its forests, carbon emissions and the state of its biodiversity!

Latin America as a whole must be a decisive region in saving the planet.

We demand a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012, to ensure the commitment of all, starting with the big industrial powers, with emissions reduction.

With the appropriate economic compensations, we have an enormous capacity to reduce deforestation and for growing new forests, changing not only the history of the region but of the world as a whole.

When the XXI century began, Latin America and the Caribbean were just starting their path towards integration into the global economy.

Today, ten years later, with political and economic stability; with agricultural, energy and environmental potentials, I want to send a message to the other nations of our region.

The world's eyes are on us.

Now, is time for us to open our own eyes, to overcome any persisting difference, and to think big.

If we do so, and based on what has been said before, we can declare with one voice, just as I am doing today, at the dawn of the second decade of the third millennium:

This is Latin America's decade!

A decade in which we can grow and advance, but first and foremost serve our peoples and the wellbeing of mankind.

Two days ago I had the opportunity to present Colombia's results in its progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

I am not going to repeat before this Assembly our achievements —which have been many—, nor the remaining challenges —which are many more—.

I just want to underline that, more than any other problem, poverty, and all its related consequences, is the greatest calamity in our world.

I want to call attention, in particular, to the double tragedy faced by a Caribbean country, which along with its endemic poverty is coping with the effects of a devastating natural disaster.

I was in Haiti a couple of months ago and I must say, before this Assembly of the nations of the world, and with a saddened heart, that their unbearable reality surpasses the worst nightmare.

The pledged international aid is yet to arrive in its totality, or at least it is not visible, and Haitians are still fighting and surviving, with dignity and courage, but without the necessary attention we must give to their situation, which cannot wait.

I call upon the Security Council to consider transforming the Peacekeeping Operation established in Haiti today, into a true Development Operation that responds to its needs and achieves concrete results.

In these difficult economic times for industrialized nations, with high unemployment and stagnation, global solidarity tends to disappear from the priorities.

This is a mistake. Turning one's back to international cooperation and trade does not help anyone, and we are convinced that selfishness harms everyone, but even more, the industrialized world.

Where else are consumers going to come from if not from the millions of poor that have until now been on the outskirts of progress?

Who, other than societies filled with enthusiastic young people, can contribute to the dynamism that mature nations need?

What economic space, other than the developing world, is available to satisfy the needs of humanity in coming decades?

Collective prosperity has advanced the most, precisely, when millions have entered into development, and the darkest moments in our planet's economy have been those of exclusion and barriers.

I cannot close without referring to two global scourges such as terrorism and drug trafficking, which mutually feed each other, because it is often the money from illicit drugs that finances terrorists acts and groups.

Colombia has been victim, perhaps more than any other country, of these phenomena, but it has also been a model in the fight against them and champion of the need to act together with the international community, under the principle of shared responsibility.

Our Democratic Security Policy, that is, security for all with respect for the Law, is also a human rights policy because we were able to dramatically reduce the crimes and behaviors that threaten the life and the fundamental rights of our people the most, such as homicide, kidnapping and displacement.

We were the first country to comprehensively apply, the principles of truth, justice and reparation in the demobilization of illegal armed groups.

The Colombian State and society are committed to the defense and promotion of human rights.

We do it out of conviction, out of a deep conviction, and not by imposition.

We have achieved great results in the fight against drug trafficking: There has been a substantial reduction in hectares where coca is grown and we are committed to continuing in this task until those crops are completely eradicated.

We have hit hard the mafias that control this business, including guerrilla groups that have become true drug cartels.

We will continue to combat them relentlessly and without pause. We will spare no effort. Just yesterday, precisely from this city, I announced to the world the news of the death of the main military head of FARC, in an operation impeccably conducted by our Armed Forces. This is the most important and decisive blow that has been struck against this terrorist group in its history, and we hope it will bring us closer to peace.

We want to achieve peace, either by reason or by force. And we will achieve it, so that we can dedicate and focus all our energies and efforts to achieving development and prosperity for our people.

In the fight against drug trafficking we have lost many of our best soldiers and policemen, many of our best leaders, our best judges and our best journalists.

But this blood has not been shed in vain. From a failed State in which violent actors, financed by drug trafficking, had bent our democracy, today we look at the world from a thriving democracy that takes off towards democratic prosperity, prosperity for all.

We defeated the big drug cartels, but this business has not come to an end yet. That is why we will keep on combating it, because to us it is a matter of national security.

We are concerned and distressed that our relative success has meant that other countries of the region are suffering the presence and increasing actions of drug trafficking in their territories.

It is necessary for the world to open its eyes, because to be in denial with respect to this problem could be fatal. And it happened to us at a very high cost.

We are more than willing to cooperate with States that require it, and we are already doing it with several countries in Central America and the Caribbean, with Mexico and even in Afghanistan.

But indeed, it is very important that we are coherent on this issue.

I state it as representative of the country with the highest moral authority to speak about this scourge, because no other nation has suffered like ours the disastrous consequences of drug trafficking.

We note with concern the contradictions of some countries that, on the one hand, demand a frontal fight against drug trafficking and, on the other, legalize consumption or study the possibility of legalizing the production and trade of certain drugs.

How can someone tell to a person living in rural areas of my country that he or she will be prosecuted and punished for growing crops for drug production, while in other places of the world this activity becomes legal?

These contradictions make it a necessity —and on this matter we join the call by President Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic— to come to an agreement and to review the global strategy against illicit drugs, in order to agree upon a unique global policy, more effective and within which all countries will contribute equally to this effort.

Mr. President, dear colleagues and delegates,

Thanks to the significant security, economic and social achievements, accomplished in recent years with the efforts of many Colombians and the leadership of my predecessor, President Álvaro Uribe, today Colombia finds itself at the doorstep of a new dawn.

I came to Office with the commitment to fight poverty and unemployment, as well as to take my country through the path towards prosperity, not only in the economic field but also in social terms. The kind of prosperity that reaches everyone, and most of all the poorest people.

I have proposed a Government of National Unity, in which all Colombians will join efforts to create jobs and higher welfare. I foresee with optimism, with a great deal of optimism, our future as a Nation.

Today I present myself before this global forum, with respect and humility, with a historical perspective, with awareness of our own limitations, to tell you that alone we cannot do anything, neither in my country, nor in the world.

ONLY UNITED, ONLY WITH RESPECT, ONLY WITH SOLIDARITY, ONLY WITH TOLERANCE, HUMANITY WILL BE ABLE TO KNOW A BETTER TOMORROW.