

# COLOMBIA



Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations

GABRIEL JAIME GÓMEZ ARBELÁEZ  
Colombia Joven (Young Colombia) Programme Director

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Forty-fifth Session

New York, April 23rd to 27th 2012

---

Mr. President,

Colombia thanks the United Nations for organizing this meeting, which promotes dialogue on matters of such high magnitude, as those of demography and development for adolescents and young people.

In my country, the current National Development Plan “Prosperidad para Todos” (“Prosperity for All”) sets transversal areas of work among different governmental sectors for the implementation of the objectives and strategies identified in the Cairo Programme of Action. The government of Colombia has defined as a priority the reduction of teen pregnancy, the progress in maternal care, the promotion of safe adolescent sexual behavior, the provision of care and counseling in sexual and reproductive health, and access to such services. These have been prioritized in vulnerable populations, aiming to break the

vicious circle of poverty. Likewise, Colombia is also strengthening its national policy in the prevention and treatment of domestic violence, abuse and sexual abuse and setting a course of action to achieve the goals set in Cairo.

Colombia is a pioneer in the construction and implementation of a model of Extreme Maternal Morbidity Surveillance (Vigilancia de la Morbilidad Materna Extrema), that anticipates mortality cases in order to ensure that better services are delivered to women. At the same time, this model considers adolescents and youth in a special way.

On the other hand, we recognize the importance of preventing STIs / HIV / AIDS among young people. The country has prevention guidelines, framed in a differential approach that focuses actions on men who have sex with men, female sex workers, transgender population, women and youth in contexts of vulnerability and those deprived of liberty.

In order to strengthen the institutional response to sexual and reproductive health, Colombia established by decree the National Intersectoral Commission for the Promotion and Guarantee of Sexual and Reproductive Rights (Comisión Nacional Intersectorial para la Promoción y Garantía de Derechos Sexuales), an organization that embraces and promotes the formulation of a national policy document for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy through the sponsoring of life projects for children, adolescents and young people between 6 and 19 years old. In this way, Colombia seeks to intervene in a cross-sectoral way in the social, structural and short-term determinants of teen pregnancy and to promote the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6.

This policy has strong involvement of groups, organizations and networks of young people, so that they are part of the follow-up and monitoring of sexual and reproductive health services, known as adolescent and youth friendly services. These have a nationwide coverage of more than two-thirds, and are related to the programs of sexual education and citizenship that are implemented at schools.

For Colombia, the participation of adolescents and young people is a very important way to build a human capital that is autonomous, responsible and committed to the development of their communities and their country. To achieve this, different forms of youth organization are promoted, such as Youth Councils (Concejos de Juventud) and Networks of Participation Experience (Redes de Experiencia de Participación), as well as exercises of social control to public investment.

Indeed, participation as a guiding principle and as a Right is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1991 Constitution of Colombia, the Code for Children and Adolescents, and the Youth Law.

Mr. President,

Regarding economic opportunities for the youth, Colombia shows two parallel phenomena: First, it has a growing trend in the participation of youth in the labor force, primarily women, whose participation has doubled the one of men. Nevertheless, Colombia has a high rate of unemployment among young people: one in five is unemployed. To combat this situation, the Government

of President Juan Manuel Santos enacted the Formalization and Job Creation Law (Ley de Formalización y Generación de Empleo), which provides incentives for small businesses and new small informal businesses to formalize and provide better working conditions. As a result of the implementation of this Act, more than 400,000 people under 28 years old have been benefited.

In the rural areas, the country has a project called "Young Earth" (Tierra Joven), which is framed in the strategy for the reparation of victims and land restitution. It exemplifies the work of the Colombian national government to build a rural area with economic and social prosperity, focusing on young people as an engine of rural development, taking into account the demographic bonus of the country: nearly 24% of the total Colombian population is in the age range of youth and among those, about 3 million live in rural areas.

Mr. President,

Finally, Colombia considers that the Member States, civil society organizations, international cooperation and the United Nations System have made significant efforts in the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. In this sense, my country invites you all to continue making progress towards its advancement, facing the challenges it poses and reaching an effective participation, and thus development, of adolescents and young people.

Thank you, Mr. President.