

# COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## STATEMENT BY

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President of the Republic of Colombia

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General Debate

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*Check against delivery*

I wish to congratulate you, Madame President, and wish you the greatest success in this new General Assembly

Four years ago, I attended this global forum for the first time to announce that Colombia was beginning an era of democratic security. I explained why security in our time is a democratic value that freedoms cannot prosper without, and also a source of resources, in whose absence, investment does not flow and the possibility of eliminating poverty and building equality is dodgy.

Four years ago, I explained to you why our concept of security is democratic, and thus, deserves the support and confidence of all peoples and that of the United Nations.

I am aware that I could not address you today to propose a theory on democratic security; the opportunity to be President of my Country for four years compels me to present the results of this policy. Colombia has held four general elections and countless local elections. The Referendum, the election of mayors and governors in 2003, were events that tested our democratic meaning of security. This year, the Presidential and congressional elections, highly threatened by terrorists and held on two separate dates, were nonetheless among the most peaceful in many decades. All political alternatives enjoyed effective guarantees regardless of their level of support for or opposition to the Government.

Under democratic security, Colombia has elected mayors, governors and members of Congress of all tendencies. Security has contained terrorism and allowed the free expression of democracy.

There is still more to be done in security and a definitive peace is not yet within reach, but progress is undeniable. The effective protection of Colombians translates into the reduction in the number of homicides, kidnappings, terrorist acts, crimes and threats against journalists and trade unions leaders. The totality of governors and mayors exercise their functions in their own jurisdictions, overcoming the nightmare of exile they were subjected to as a result of terrorist actions not countered by the State.

To guarantee the sustainability of security across time, our citizens must surround it with credibility. Our job is aimed at building credibility based on effectiveness and transparency. Consequently, human rights are an imperative of security. In recent years, our public security forces has grown by 30%, military operations have tripled, and, simultaneously, complaints against public security forces have been reduced by 38%. These facts gain greater importance, as we are a Country with a full internal democracy, totally open to supervision and international criticism, as has been the case through the presence of an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In spite of the way still ahead of us, the most important achievement is the positive valuation that citizens give to security and the collective determination to consolidate it.

For us, organized violence under fictitious political pretexts is terrorism; and security is a path to peace. When a pluralist, vigorous and guarantee-granting democracy is present, armed actions against it are pure terrorism. To deny this would erase the difference between armed combat against dictatorships, which merited the recognition in other countries of insurgent groups, and the violent aggression suffered by our democracy, which is terrorism.

The demobilization of more than 40,000 members of violent groups, as a result of democratic security, and the efforts put forth by the Country to reintegrate them into Constitutional life, fully prove that for us security is a path to peace and reconciliation.

Talking about 40,000 demobilized is easy, adding them together is very difficult; demobilizing them is even more difficult and reintegrating them is a monumental task. Amidst understandable controversy, we have made progress in dismantling irregular powers. Illegal self-defense groups, which until two years ago, together with the guerrillas, seemed like powers greater than the State, are demobilized today in their vast majority, and a large percentage of their leaders are being held by our justice system. These results are more eloquent than rhetoric.

I must add that among the guerrillas, the number of demobilized is higher than the number killed by institutional forces.

I have come to the United Nations today to ask for resolute support for our security policy and our reintegration program. Violence in Colombia has received much international media coverage, constant criticism of the Government, and little

support to overcome it. It is time for the international community to urgently call on violent groups to make peace without any more delays. The Government is as firm in implementing security, as it is rigorous in respecting democratic rules, and open and generous in looking for peace. A sincere willingness for peace will not face governmental obstacles to reach a definitive reconciliation.

The international community must, in a more decisive way, support our security policy. In this manner the results of overcoming violence and looking for peace will be accelerated.

Illicit drugs as a source of financing for violent groups, are one of the fundamental aspects which differentiate them from old guerrillas in other Latin American countries. This criminal, bottomless and autonomous financing is the main obstacle to peace.

In the fight against illicit drugs, I express with anguish that progress has been small when compared to the sacrifice made by the people of Colombia and the willingness of the Government to eradicate them.

The efforts made in the number of extradited citizens, the confiscation of illicit wealth, and sprayed areas are enormous; but the results are not proportional. For the second straight year, we have a program for massive manual eradication, which will reach 70,000 hectares of coca destroyed.

Production and consumption require a global commitment that transcends formal declarations, so as to increasingly apply programs that reflect actions of shared responsibility.

There are successful alternative development projects. A few weeks ago, the United Nations positively assessed the Forestkeeper Families Program, which covers 43,000 rural families that have replaced drugs with the protection of the forest and the growing of alternative crops. Some, as those in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, offer ecotourism services. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, drugs have been eliminated by 80% in the area of the forestkeeper families, covering 2,000,000 hectares. We have recovered more than 136,000 hectares of tropical forest. Thanks to the payments made by the Government, these families have already acquired more than 30,000 hectares. Nevertheless, to protect a high percentage of the Colombian jungle, we need to reach 120,000 families, which constitutes a great budgetary challenge and requires a more general and decisive international support.

The program stops cutting down tropical forest and the Amazon jungle, which have suffered the destruction of nearly 2,000,000 hectares on account of drugs.

I ask the world: why is there not a greater, less rhetoric and more effective commitment, so that Colombia, who has an absolute willingness to achieve it, may finally and definitively overcome the scourge of coca?

As Colombians, we do not want to be left with efforts and sacrifices; we require results. We are willing to revise our strategy, to improve it, but we need the entire world to get involved with us. I ask the United Nations for additional efforts to help us find paths of effectiveness.

We reiterate to the United Nations our enthusiastic commitment to meet the Millenium social goals. Social cohesion, overcoming poverty and building equity are essential aspirations of our democracy. In 2002, poverty reached almost 60% of the population; in 2005 it was down to 49%. We will do everything possible for it not to exceed 35% on 2010 and reach the goal of 15% by 2019, the Second Centenary of our Country's Independence. Fortunately, the Gini coefficient is beginning to show a tendency of correction in income distribution.

Our goals for the upcoming four-year period in order to achieve full coverage in health and basic education, as well as significant progress in basic sanitation and microcredit for 5,000,000 families are ambitious.

We want a modern democracy with security, freedom, social cohesion, transparency and independent institutions.

We want a Nation without exclusions and without class hatred, with harmony, rectitude and prosperity. A Nation in permanent democratic dialogue, with fraternity, without insurmountable antagonisms. A Nation integrated into multilateralism, grateful for the efforts of the United Nations, receptive to the international community's suggestions and willing to share its experiences and improve its results.