

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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SECRET

PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

59TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. President,

I come again to the General Assembly, at a time when Colombia, the people and the institutions advance in achieving democratic security. This would allow all citizens to live in peace, express their political ideas, without any risk to their lives, to support or oppose the Government in full respect of diverse opinions.

The democratic security policy has shown significant progress in reducing homicides kidnappings, and other terrorist acts, population displacement and illicit crops. There is still a lot to be done, but if we are persistent we will prevail.

Democratic security is one of the elements of Colombia's highest priorities: to recover credibility and confidence by our citizens in our institutions. When that trust is destroyed, the ties between the citizen and the nation are broken. Such trust needs transparent public and private actions, as well as economic reactivation and social cohesion.

Social cohesion builds trust among citizens and between them and the State. Social cohesion is the defeat of poverty and the promotion of equal opportunities. Colombia created a legal framework to assure that the benefits from economic growth would lead towards poverty eradication. Yet Colombia's growth, which during the 1960's and 1970's was an average of 4.5%, fell to an average of 2% after 1980. This decline encouraged an Informal economy, marked by misery and poverty. The contrast between the formal private sector and the informal sector was evident. The first one being fair with its workers, in compliance with its tax payments, but growing at a slow pace, while the latter, with its overwhelming force extended poverty among the population.

Mr. President,

Narcotrafficking, financier of terror, reverted the trend towards land distribution created by agrarian reforms.

Between 1994 and 2000 unemployment among heads of household grew from 4% to 10%, and overall unemployment grew from 7.5% to 19%. In relatively few years the GDP deficit increased from 1.5% to 4.2%, and public debt from 24% to 54% of GDP. And 40% of the public budget was allocated to debt servicing. Very low levels of private investment only made this situation worse.

Defeating poverty requires strong and sustained economic growth. This in turn requires physical and legal security, transparent rules and macroeconomic stability. Last year, we foresaw a growth of 2.5%, but instead it was 4%. This year we are making great efforts, and should achieve almost 5% growth. This is happening because we are recovering Investors confidence. With such growth, unemployment has fallen three points, although It is still very high. A positive sign is shown when jobs are being created in the sectors that will provide for social security and a fair wage for the workers. All this has happened despite fiscal restrictions to public investment and in the midst of an intense struggle to eliminate illicit drugs which have become so important that they now affect the level of growth in our agricultural sector as a whole.

Mr. President.

At a time, my generation explained violence as the result of social inequities. My country's experience in many decades, allowed me to affirm that terrorist violence has increased misery and has destroyed the possibility to eliminate social inequity. Violence has worsen poverty and has made use of it to perdure.

Our goal is to reduce poverty in an equal or higher percentage of economic growth. To a great extent, our social Investment program depends on a sound and sustained economic growth. Therefore, our social investment program goes hand in hand with democratic security policy. If we neglect democratic security, terrorism will grow, we will lose momentum in defeating it, investment will be affected, the strength of our economic recovery will weaken and we would be left without resources for social investment.

Today's equality is that of economic and social opportunities. This is why we have placed so much emphasis on education. We have increased elementary enrollment by 750,000, and the country still needs 1,250,000 new places. In 25 months we have multiplied by 2.5 technical training, with the promotion of basic employment skills to enable young people to accede to the work force while continuing their education and training. In the cities and In the countryside, we have been carrying out a silent revolution in technical training and capacity building that will reach four million young people a year by 2006.

A subsidy is being paid to 340,000 poor families to improve their children's nutrition and ensure the school attendace. There are now 503,000 children in the new program of

essential for mankind keeping In mid the rich Colombian biodiversity and its 220,000 square miles of jungle. threatened by Illicit drugs.

To guarantee their food security, we are now subsidising 700,000 farmers, and this number will soon rise to one million.

We are also subsidising the crops of peasant associations until they get productive and competitive.

Poverty indicators should take account of such subsidies, which are usually not included when measuring the income of those families.

Colombia has suffered a tragedy in internal human displacement. We have reduced its incidence by 40%, but it is still high. We have facilitated voluntary returns of more 70.000

much importance to terrorism in other parts of the world, and so little to the terrorism that besets Colombia.

I make this appeal to you from the soul of our profound democratic conviction. It is difficult to find a country facing the challenge of terrorism, while simultaneously strengthening its democracy.

Due to our democratic security policy, today Colombia offer effective guarantees for the exercise of political pluralism.

Our institutions combat terrorism with the unflinching political will of the Government. They do so with courage, unselfishness and transparency. A dirty war has no place in our policies.

A democratic State has the right to ask the world that, instead of clamouring for a lopsided agreement with terrorism, it should demand that the terrorists return their kidnap victims.

We ask the world for more decisive and more effective support if it is extended, the violent groups will have no option but to abandon terrorism and to accept peace.

With the people of Colombia, its democratic institutions and the international community united, we can make Colombia an example of the capacity to defeat terrorism and to observe human rights; and we can make Colombia an example of the capacity to defeat terrorism and of the will to build social justice.

We will expel terror with the help of our legitimate institutions and of a community based on solidarity and justice, with opportunities for its poorest members.