



Statement by
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Commission on the Status of Women

General Debate

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**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND
PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

Mr. Chairman,

I begin by recalling that in August 2002, at the beginning of the Government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Colombia was living an exacerbated situation of violence, by more than 40 years, caused by illegal armed groups recognized as terrorists by many of the States represented here. This violence had put at risk the security of women and men, the governance and the rule of law.

After 7 years of this government, progress in the demobilization of members of the guerrillas and paramilitaries, and the dismantling of these criminal organizations through the Democratic Security Policy, has been reflected in the decrease in all forms of crime, including in homicides by 45.1% and kidnappings by 84%. These achievements are generating confidence in the country, economic development, higher investment and the strengthening of our institutions.

The Colombian state will continue to make every effort to confront the terrible scourge of kidnapping, so that future generations do not have to read the memoirs of victims of this heinous crime.

I take this opportunity to appeal to this Commission, its solidarity with Colombia, in demanding from the guerrillas the immediate and unconditional release women who are still kidnapped, unable to exercise the right to freedom.

Mr. Chairman,

In this context of improvements in security, and in the economic and social areas, the measures related to the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been implemented, by all branches of government, the private sector and other sectors of society, who are contributing to strengthen gender equality as a state policy.

Among the progress in the implementation, I would highlight:

- The signing of three important agreements: the National Agreement on Equality between Women and Men (October 2003); the Pact for Effective Inclusion of Women in Politics (October 2005); and the Agenda for Labour Equality (March 2009).

Education

Equitable access to education is confirmed by the following statistics concerning the percentage of women and girls enrolled in the education system:

- 49.9% in primary and secondary education, in the last 5 consecutive years.
- 53% in comprehensive professional education in 2009, a trend that has continued in recent years.
- 53% in the Rural Youth program.
- 53% in training processes through virtual learning environments.

Health

- The total fertility rate for urban areas is 2.1 and for the rural area 3.4.
- Life expectancy of women exceeds 75 years.
- The maternal mortality rate fell from 93.9 in 1998 to 75.6 in 2007 per 100,000 live births.
- Coverage in health insurance increased between 2003 and 2008 by 33%, with more than three million new enrollees. The increase of women insured was 29%.

Participation

Participation of women in public administration, in high-level decision-making positions, has increased and today is as follows:

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| ▪ Executive Branch | 39% |
| ▪ Legislative Branch | 30% |
| ▪ Judicial Branch | 26% |
| ▪ Autonomous institutions | 33% |
| ▪ Monitoring Bodies | 42% |
| ▪ National Register Office | 37% |

This contrasts with the low participation in elected office because there is no quota law for these positions:

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| ▪ Senate | 12% |
| ▪ House of Representatives | 10% |

Other social programmes

Monitoring the Social Policy from a gender perspective has confirmed that its different programs have favored women, a necessary step that is contributing to social inclusion in Colombia.

Women also have been important beneficiaries in:

- The Protection Program for the Elderly, with cash subsidies.
- 48% in the RESA Food Security Program between 2003 and 2008.♣

Labour

The occupation rate of women increased in 2009 to 41.9%.

Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality

As I mentioned on Monday, Colombia currently has 6 institutional mechanisms for gender equality at national level:

- In the National Government: Presidential Counsellor for Gender Equality, which in turn leads the Center for Gender and Inter-Agency Committee to End Violence Against Women.
- In the Legislative Branch: Committee of Women.
- In the Judicial Branch: National Commission on Gender.
- In the Control and Monitoring Institutions: Inspector's Office for the rights of children, youth and family, Ombudsman Delegation for the Rights of Children, Youth and Women.
- In the Private Sector: Joint Board on Gender of Business Associations.

Eradication of Violence against Women

Colombia has an important set of public policies supported by the legal framework. Among them, we would highlight:

- The Democratic Security Policy to combat homicides, kidnappings, attacks on population and to protect the right to life and personal integrity.
- The National Strategy to combat trafficking in persons, including with a gender perspective.
- The Policy for Comprehensive Assistance to Displaced People, with 13 specific programs for women.
- Policy on Prevention and Punishment of Child Abuse.
- Policy for the Demobilization and Reintegration of members of illegal armed groups.
- A set of actions for the prevention and eradication of domestic violence, partner violence, sexual violence, among which I would highlight the comprehensive program against gender-based violence, developed jointly by the national government and the United Nations agencies, as well as the process of literacy among women about their rights.

The main challenge is the articulation of all these policies, the incorporation of gender variables (ethnicity, age), the revision of indicators based on international standards and the adoption of special measures against sexual violence.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude this report I want to focus on the economic empowerment of women and the actions undertaken in two important areas: first, Women and Poverty, noting that to tackle poverty and social exclusion, the national government has implemented, in accordance with the last two National Development Plans, a social policy that has reduced poverty by 7.7 percentage points between 2002-2008 from 53.7 to 46%.

Families in Action is a social programme that has achieved significant progress against poverty, and in 2010 is benefiting 2.3 million women, representing 90% of the beneficiaries of this program.

In the area of women and the economy I want to share with you that Colombia has implemented for 7 continuous years, from a multidimensional approach, a strategy that allows women to access training, markets, microcredit and other financial services from the formal banking system; it also has made possible the establishment of networks of women entrepreneurs, partnerships between public and private sector and the commitment of business sector leaders to the development of an Agenda for Equality at Work, in order to remove barriers in access to employment faced by women and the wage gap between women and men doing equal work.

Colombia is a country marked by the entrepreneurial vocation of their women, which made possible to address effects of the economic crisis with such strategies.

In 2010, we will host *Expoempresaria 2010* – Women Entrepreneur Summit, with leaders and entrepreneurs from across the country and other nations. In this way we will share this successful story that has brought benefits to women and that may constitute a starting point for a regional strategy to promote the economic empowerment of women, a key step for the prevention of violence that affects them.

Colombia reiterates its invitation to all Member States to positively consider the adoption of the resolution on the economic empowerment of women that my delegation has proposed in this session, in order to accelerate the achievement of this objective.

Thank you very much.

