

# COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## Statement

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Presidential Counsellor for Womens' Equity

### **Commission on the Status of Women** 52<sup>nd</sup> Session

**Item 3:** Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

New York, 27 February 2007

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to express that the commitment and political will of the Colombian government to work for the advancement of women, social equity and gender equality has been included and explicitly contained in the National Development Plan, approved by law, for the periods: 2002-2006 and 2006-2010.

The Government of President Alvaro Uribe Velez has committed, for his second term, to fulfill an ambitious agenda of social goals to reduce poverty, promote full employment and expand social programs in order to reach the majority of people, especially those in most need. Working on the basis of the results achieved in the period 2002-2006, the Government is allocating in its second term, for this purpose, 57% of investment public resources plus 10% dedicated to implement strategies that will strengthen special dimensions of development including gender equity.

Mr. Chairman,

Our social goals are linked with the Millennium Development Goals. Among other commitments, the Government works to achieve and ensure full coverage in basic education and full coverage in the subsidized health system.

All these efforts have been accompanied during the last 5 years, by the affirmative policy "Women, builders of peace and development" that is being implemented by the national Machinery for the advancement of women, in partnerships with other public entities and the private sector, focusing actions in 4 key areas:

- Women's employment and entrepreneurial development.
- Women's political participation
- Education and Culture
- Prevention of Violence Against Women

Among the actions included in this policy, I would like to highlight the "National Program for the comprehensive development of women entrepreneurs" which includes micro-credit, training on financial services, consulting, business forums, and the National Fair for women entrepreneurs that this year will have its fifth session. This last Program promotes economic independence for thousands of women, as a fundamental step to prevent gender-based violence and to increase their participation in society.

We would also like to emphasize that the regulatory framework related to the advancement of women in Colombia continues to expand, with the approval of laws such as the Law 1010 of 2006 to prevent, correct and punish labour harassment and other forms of harassment in the context of labour relations, and the Law 984 of 2005 which approved the ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Likewise, the Judiciary has strengthened its efforts in areas related to: training of judicial branch's officials on gender issues; new jurisprudential developments; and effective access of women to justice. In January 2005, the country started the establishment of an accusatory criminal justice system, to be implemented gradually throughout the country over the course of three years.

This system ensures, for example, in the event of violence against women, that women can access to comprehensive reparation systems and have a proper defence.

Mr. Chairman,

In all these achievements that I have summarized today, the outcome of the Democratic Security Policy have had positive effect. Particularly, results related to the decrease in attacks to small towns (by 84.8% less), in extortive kidnappings (reduction of 80%), in terrorist attacks (63% less), and in forced displacement (reduction of 29% annual average since 2003); as well as the demobilization in 4 years, of 34,196 people from the illegal self-defense groups and of more than 10,000 former members of guerrillas, figures ever recorded in Colombia.

As expressed by the President of the Republic: "Colombia today lives two realities: there is a stronger democracy and a declining terrorism", because all the political options are in place, with the convergence of all the contradictions inherent in a democracy, and because we have begun to overcome the violence that until a few years ago seemed not overthrowable.

The support to our institutions and the reject to the terrorist group FARC is imprinted in the memory of the world that testified, on 4 February 2008, how all Colombia, millions of men and women from all cities and municipalities, and in more than 140 countries, took to the streets calling for no more kidnappings, and no more FARC.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like the United Nations to take into account that even though our national Machinery for the advancement of women is called Presidential Counsellor's Office and not Ministry of Women, it is part of the Presidency of the Republic, it participates in the Council of Ministers which decides economic and social policies, implements programs and has direct dialogue with Ministers and the highest authorities of the country.

The Presidential Counsellor's Office has a manual for training civil servants on gender mainstreaming, and has in place an Observatory of Gender Affairs, a mechanism that has allowed during the last 5 years the follow-up of the implementation of Social Policy, laws, international treaties relating to women and more than 5,000 decisions of the High Courts. This Observatory is the most important tool for the knowledge of the country's progress in relation to gender themes, and, together with a communications strategy, it has permitted a significant progress towards mass awareness on gender issues.

Our country has achieved a high international recognition for the implementation of public policies that ensure the rights of women. Colombia, through the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equality, is Vicepresident of the Inter-American Commission of Women in the framework of the OAS, for the period 2006 to 2008, and is one of the Vicepresidents of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the term 2007-2009. This international leadership is also an expression of the importance the Government attaches to this issue.

I Thank you, Mr. Chairman.