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NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
COMMITMENTS FROM THE SUMMITS OF QUEBEC CITY, NUEVO LEON
AND MAR DEL PLATA

**NATIONAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION AND
FOLLOW-UP ON THE COMMITMENTS
CONTAINED IN THE DECLARATIONS AND PLANS
OF ACTION OF QUEBEC AND MAR DEL PLATA
AND THE DECLARATION OF NUEVO LEON
APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

INTRODUCTION

Colombia, noting the importance of follow-up and implementation of the mandates and commitments from the Summits of the Americas process, is pleased to present its National Report for the period April 2006 to March 2007, which describes progress made by the country in the framework of the mandates of the Special Summit of Monterey and the Summits of Quebec and Mar del Plata.

For Colombia, of particular significance are the gains registered, *inter alia*, in the areas of the fight against poverty, access to education, improvement of security, health, and strengthening democracy, which stem from policies implemented in the 2002-2006 National Development Plan “Toward a Community-Oriented State” [*Hacia un Esrtado Comunitario*] and in the 2007-2010 National Development Plan “Toward a Community-Oriented State: Development for All” [*Hacia un Esrtado Comunitario: Desarrollo para Todos*], in pursuit of a policy of democratic security. These gains also denote the commitment of the country to the Summits of the Americas process.

Of the public policies implemented by the country, it is essential to mention, among others, those instituted under the Third National Plan for Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers 2003-2006; the Food Security Network Program (RESA); the Presidential Program against Illicit Crops; Plan Agro 2006-2007; the National Education Plan 2007-2016; Child Health and Welfare Management Model; the Road Infrastructure and Regional Development Program – Plan 2500; the progress in protection and advancement of human rights and international humanitarian law; the Protection Program (for human rights defenders); the construction process of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights; the National Plan of Action for Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth, 2006 – 2011; the Houses of Justice program; the National Energy Plan; the 10-Year Plan for Children and Youth; and the construction process of the National Plan for Children and Youth, 2006 - 2015, “Colombia: A country for boys and girls”.

We reiterate the interest of Colombia in continuing to participate in the preparation of National Reports, and in the production effort to create a vital tool for measuring progress in the endeavors of our countries to comply with the commitments and mandates of the Summits of the Americas process.

Labor and employment

The unemployment rate in Colombia has continued to descend firmly, from 15.6% in 2001 to 12.0% in 2006.

This positive performance in the Colombian labor market has had to do with the creation of 1,265,862 new jobs between 2002 and 2006. The number of unemployed went down by 635,401 over the same period. Quality jobs increased by 1,132,556 in the 2002-2006 period.

In order to review the various core factors that have impacted on unemployment in the last four years, we used a methodology that makes it possible to relate the evolution of the *demographic effect*, which associates the natural rises and falls in the working-age population (WAP); the *participation effect*, which calculates changes in the global participation rate and that may be associated with movements in the supply of labor; the *combining effect* caused by the joint impact of

changes in the participation rate (labor supply) and of natural population growth; and the *employment demand effect*, which calculates changes in the unemployment rate that could be associated with variation in labor demand.

Improvement in working conditions

Job creation

The National Development Plan “Toward a Community-Oriented State” 2002-2006, defined four core objectives for the country: i) Provide Democratic Security; ii) Stimulate sustainable economic growth and job creation; iii) Build social equity; and, iv) Increase the transparency and efficiency of the State. Specifically with regard to stimulating sustainable economic growth and job creation, the plan proposed that the first step in reactivating the economy is to attain security for all, and thereby increase investment and job creation

This strategy rests on two fundamental pillars: recovery of security and austerity in government spending. In order to reactivate the economy and stimulate economic growth, in the short term efforts are focusing on housing, construction, exports and job creation.

In the medium and long term, the national government will center on measures designed to improve competitiveness factors in the country. To that end, it is promoting human capital formation and, through regulatory and institutional reforms in the mining, public utilities, transport and telecommunications sectors, aims to correct deficiencies in strategic infrastructure while at the same time attract greater foreign investment.

Due to government spending restrictions, the growth stimulation policy seeks to encourage private-sector participation in strategic areas, enhance the impact of public investment and eliminate bureaucratic obstacles and other impediments to private enterprise.

As regards job creation, the government proposed to reduce the unemployment rate through job creation and retention from 15.6% to 12.3%. Since 2002, the government has spearheaded legal reforms to reorganize different areas: the Social Welfare System as an array of government programs designed to reduce vulnerability and improve quality of life for Colombians; Unemployment subsidies, microcredit programs, vocational training, special regime on contributions for employment promotion, among other measures; Labor costs reduction, in order to stimulate the expansion of companies’ productive activities, generating employment and increasing the supply of goods or services in more competitive conditions; and encourage new enterprise creation through the Enterprise Fund [*Fondo Emprender*] (FE).

In terms of support for business, the national government has been implementing programs such as the following:

- **Development credit:** Designed to stimulate development in different productive sectors, funneling financial resources towards segments for which access to credit under normal market conditions is not feasible. The public-sector financial entities that make these funds available through rediscount loans are the Industrial Development Institute [*Instituto de Fomento Industrial*] (IFI), Banco de Comercio Exterior de Colombia (BANCOLDEX), and the Agricultural Finance Fund [*Fondo para el Financiamiento del Sector Agropecuario*] (FINAGRO). The entities that offer funding for studies and development projects under financing agreements are

the Development Project Finance Fund [*Fondo Financiero de Proyectos de Desarrollo*] (Fonade) and *Financiera de Desarrollo Territorial S.A.* (FINDETER).

- **Security:** The institutions that support access to credit by offering security for entrepreneurs are the National Loan Guarantee Fund [*Fondo Nacional de Garantías*] (FNG) and Finagro, through the Agricultural Loan Guarantee Fund [*Fondo Agropecuario de Garantías*] (FAG).
- **Cofinancing:** This activity consists of subsidizing projects to boost corporate productivity and competitiveness. The entities that offer these resources are:
 - The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, through the EXPOPYME program, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Program (PNPC) and the Colombian Fund for Modernization and Technological Advancement of Micro, Small and Medium Sized Colombian Enterprise (FOMIPYME).
 - The Ministry for Social Welfare with funds administered by the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), part of which are required by Law 344 of 1996 to be allocated to the implementation of programs designed to stimulate competitiveness and technological and productive development.
 - The Colombian Institute for Development of Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS) through a variety of mechanisms.

There are various entities and trade associations that offer advisory services, technical assistance, training, information services, and special projects in order to facilitate and mentor access for MSMEs to co-financing resources. Some of the entities that offer these services are:

- Enterprise Development Centers (CDE)
- Colombian Association of Small Industrialists (ACOPI) through the Sectoral Enterprise Development Program (Prodes)
- *Corporación Colombia Internacional* (CCI)
- Technological Development Centres (CDT)
- Technology-based business incubators
- Regional Productivity Centers (CRP)

Financing Resources: Under Law 789 of 2002, 25% of the resources of the Employment Promotion and Unemployment Protection Fund (FONEDE) have to be allocated to Family Compensation Agencies [*Cajas de Compensación Familiar*] to finance the Program.

The Program's Progress: between October 2003 and June 2006, family compensation agencies held 45,561 training courses at a cost of 55,677 million pesos, which benefited more than 142,684 unemployed persons.

Enterprise creation

The **Mini-Productive Chains Program** has generated new sources of employment in various parts of the country, enabling local-market development. In addition, by enhancing the

quality of their products or obtaining quality certificates, 34% of mini chains have succeeded in penetrating the regional market, 19% the national market, and 10% (18 cases) the international market.

The program has also contributed to improved competitiveness through scientific and technological innovation, in 74 cases of mini chains that have received support from research institutes, universities, or associations for improvement of production and processing. A total of 107 mini chains developed technologies and processes to improve the quality of their products.

The mini chains program has provided support for projects implemented by micro, small and medium-sized enterprise for a total of 1,336 million pesos, through the formulation of the Mini-Chain Plan of Action for obtaining funds from different competitions at the national and international level. It has also supported productive initiatives by granting loans for a total of 3,501 million pesos and micro-loans for 1,587 million pesos.

Productivity promotion under alternative models

Productivity and competitiveness aspects that require all entities, whether public or private, national or international, to be economically and socially dynamic in order to maintain market share. In spite of that, evaluating and monitoring their social impact has proved a challenge.

Following the creation of the Ministry for Social Welfare, the Labor Protection Bureau [*Dirección General de Protección Laboral*] was tasked with the challenge of Stimulating Productivity and to that end it has collated experience accumulated since the 1990's. The collation process initially centered on experience of involvement in existing endeavors, such as the Specialized Labor Network, which combines the efforts and activities of public and private sector institutions, such as the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, Ministry for Social Welfare, SENA, Chambers of Commerce, ANDI, and ACRIP, in the design of mechanisms to promote a culture of productivity and competitiveness in the country's economic and productive apparatus.

Also, in partnership with Colciencias and SENA, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism has been mentoring the organization process of the Network of Regional Productivity and Competitiveness Centers, which at present consists of nine regional centers and one hub: the National Productivity Center.

In this framework four "Productivity Weeks" were held: one each in the cities of Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Bogotá. These events consisted of tripartite forums to review productivity conditions and the opinions of trade unions, businessmen, and government.

The productivity promotion strategy is the cornerstone of their tripartite composition because it provides a strategic link between measures for protection of vulnerable workers (children, youth, women, agricultural sector, etc.), promotion or social dialogue and rights at work, designed to generate productive environments reflected by an improvement in living conditions and access to social security, as well as promotion of productive alternatives.

Under this comprehensive approach, the Bureau designed an investment project in the National Investment Programs and Projects Database titled "Design of systems for promotion of productivity and rights at work for vulnerable working populations, through nationwide prevention,

targeting, and monitoring.” With this step, Colombia has started to work on specific measures to provide support and technical assistance for proposed business initiatives for vulnerable populations. By the same token, through this project we intend to promote the proliferation of self-sustaining business initiatives in the framework of an economic solidarity approach.

Labor Protection

Labor Protection for Vulnerable Working Populations

Labor protection efforts have centered on working children, youth and women as well as the agricultural sector, owing to the nature of the work or activities they perform, the conditions in which they do so, the economic circumstances that surround them, and the restrictions as regards access to funds. The involvement of the Ministry of Social Welfare has been centering on the creation of programs and mechanisms through which to enable the elimination of different forms of labor discrimination; Elimination of Child Labor, with particular emphasis on the worst forms thereof; protection of youth workers; and recognition of the labor rights of agricultural workers.

Protection for Youth Workers

The aim with respect to over-16s is to seek to implement all necessary mechanisms to enable their labor protection and skills qualification in accordance with Law 789 of 2002, through the apprenticeship contracts and vocational training mechanisms under the supervision of SENA and the Ministry of National Education. At the same time, the Ministry for Social Welfare, in the framework of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, has been according special priority to reducing teenage pregnancy, due to the consequences of this problem on public health and the labor market.

Protection for Women Workers

The Ministry for Social Welfare is devoting particular attention to changing the stereotypical roles and values socially associated with women workers, particularly those in unskilled jobs, and especially those that work in domestic service, where the aim is to eliminate the recruitment of underage workers and ensure that those of majority age are guaranteed their labor rights. The Ministry has been drawing attention to the importance and need to include more female workers under the same conditions as men in the majority of jobs where this is possible, and to eliminate discriminatory labor and pay practices that still exist with respect to pregnancy, maternity leave, and breast-feeding.

At the same time, information and guidance tools are being designed for women workers, in order to make it easier for them to access different mechanisms for receiving skills development training, technical assistance, microcredit, and support for entrepreneurial, family-business, and productive microunit initiatives.

Protection for Agricultural Workers

In the framework of agricultural worker protection programs, efforts are underway on elimination of child labor and protection of youth workers in areas where the worst forms of labor put this vulnerable population at risk. Awareness raising activities are also in progress with respect to the need to ensure rights at work for these workers.

National Policy on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers

In pursuit of the national policy guidelines on children and labor protection for vulnerable working populations, as well as the international obligations that the country acquired with its ratification of ILO Convention 182 concerning “Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor,” the Ministry for Social Welfare designed the following operational plans, in the framework of the Third National Plan for Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers 2003 –2006:

- Project: Module for follow-up on child labor indicators in the Ongoing Household Survey. Agreement between the Ministry of Social Welfare, ICBF and National Statistics Department (DANE).
- Technical Cooperation (Ministry of Social Welfare – ILO – IPEC): Registration and Information Module on children identified and assisted due to the risk of child labor, for incorporation in the Ministry for Social Welfare information system.
- **Technical Cooperation (Ministry of Social Welfare – ILO – IPEC): Child Labor Review Guidelines:** These guidelines arose from the need to conduct child labor reviews in Colombia, as well as to promote them and certify various researchers involved in the issue to carry them out. Through a search and analysis of information from reviews carried out in Colombia and other countries it was possible to define the most frequently occurring variables that could yield the most information in order to understand child labor, with the recognition that the reality always exceeds the possibilities of data collection.

This activity was carried out in the framework of technical cooperation provided by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) for Colombia of the International Labor Organization (ILO) with support from the ILO.

- **Project: Study on Child Labor in Colombia:** This activity was carried out in the framework of technical assistance and cooperation provided to Colombia by the United States. Agreements between the Ministry for Social Welfare, *Colombia Productiva*, and FEDESARROLLO (as the implementing agency).

The study examines characteristics of child labor that appear to be constants in the Colombian labor market, where a significant portion of boys and girls under 18 participate in the majority of marginal and informal labor activities, with their resulting non-attendance at school. This study relies on the most recent national data, namely the Ongoing Household Survey, third quarter 2003 (including comparisons with 2001 and the 2003 living standards survey).

- **Adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Government of the Republic of Colombia and the International Labor Organization (ILO):**

This instrument for the International Labor Organization to provide technical cooperation in the area of elimination of child labor, with particular emphasis on the

worst forms thereof, is designed to improve intervention mechanisms and access to funding for programs and projects on the issue.

- **Adoption of resolution 004448 of 2005 on work forbidden to persons under 18:**

This legal instruments adopted by the Ministry of Social Welfare on December 2, 2005, updates and brings into line with the latest relevant developments, the list of activities and conditions in which no child or youth under the age of 18 may work pursuant to Article 245 (23) of Decree 2737 of 1989 (Children's Code), which is currently in force.

Interagency Technical Cooperation Measures in the framework of the Third National Plan for Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers 2003-2006:

- Technical assistance provided by the Ministry for Social Welfare to the Project on Elimination and Prevention of Child Labor in Traditional Small-Scale Mining in Colombia (Peptima) implemented by INGEOMINAS and the National Royalties Fund. The employment of children in mining occurs in the context of traditional small-scale mining where the economic, social, and cultural conditions in which the work is carried out tend to encourage employment of this type. As a result, children work in highly hazardous conditions. Accordingly, the purpose of the technical cooperation provided by the Ministry for Social Welfare is to help INGEOMINAS to develop forms of prevention and find alternative economic and productive activities for their families as the core deterrent strategy against work of this type.
- Technical support to the ICBF in the implementation of Law 697/01 and other domestic and international legal instruments on commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The National Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Colombia (ESCI) was developed in coordination with the entities of the National Family Welfare System, United Nations agencies (UNICEF and ILO) and national NGOs that work in this area, as an instrument to integrate efforts to curb this problem.

The Ministry for Social Welfare has also provided support for the extension of the project "Organization of Social Networks for Prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, through a Training Program" in six cities in the country. This project was carried out in the framework of technical cooperation provided by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) for Colombia, of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

- Technical assistance for the project on elimination of domestic child labor. This project has been executed in the framework of technical cooperation provided by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) for Colombia with support provided by the ILO. Under this project direct prevention activities have been carried out in six major cities in the country (Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cali, Pasto, Tunja and Ibagué), both in destination regions for this worst form of child labor and in regions that supply boys and girls for such activities. As part of this process, the

Ministry for Social Welfare adopted resolution 004448 of 2005 in which it prohibited this type of work.

- Coaching and technical assistance to the project on “Prevention of recruitment of children by illegal armed groups” as one of the worst forms of child labor. This project is carried out in the framework of technical cooperation provided by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) of the ILO for Colombia, with operations implemented directly by the ICBF, Program of assistance for children and youth separated from the armed conflict. Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare.
- World Vision Cooperation Project “Combating Child Labor through Education,” carried out by World Vision in the framework of cooperation provided by the United States Department of Labor to Colombia, and monitored by the Technical Secretariat of the National Interagency Committee.
- Measures for execution of investment projects by the Ministry for Social Welfare in pursuit of the National Policy on Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers and the Third National Plan on Elimination of Child Labor, 2003-2006

Nationwide Project on Prevention of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers

This project is being carried out through community- and family-based prevention activities against child labor in the context of the Third National Plan for Elimination of Child Labor and Protection of Youth Workers, 2003-2006, in all 32 departments of the country. Its aims are deterrence of and transformation of cultural patterns that legitimize child labor, with particular emphasis on the worst forms thereof. This project pursues three lines of action: Prevention, Restoration of Rights, and Protection and Training for Youth Workers.

The combination of communication, protection, and prevention is designed to form regional, departmental and local networks composed of government agencies responsible for children and youth, with a view to the implementation of direct intervention programs and projects aimed at prevention, deterrence and elimination of child labor within frameworks defined by the Social Policy Councils, Departmental and Local Elimination Committees and local government programs, as well as institutions that perform social or religious roles, associations and NGOs involved with this issue, etc.

The measures that target communities include an assistance component for displaced groups, particularly those that include children and youth at risk from exploitative labor.

Project on elimination of the worst forms of child labor and transformation of cultural patterns that legitimize it

This project provides assistance for measures outlined in departmental plans for prevention, deterrence and awareness raising for elimination of child labor aimed at moving forward with the process of transforming cultural patterns that legitimize child labor and regard it as an important personal and family survival strategy, in which children and youth in the most deprived social sectors are involved, often with the consent of their families, communities, and society.

A campaign has been pursued in the framework of this project on prevention, deterrence, and elimination of domestic child labor, as well as on protection of labor rights for women employed in domestic work. These measures involved the production of a pamphlet, "Frequently Asked Questions about Domestic Work," which included resolution 04448 and the rule prohibiting domestic labor for persons under 18, due to the fact that it is one of the worst forms of child labor.

It should be noted that the Colombian Government, the Office of the Vice President of the Republic, and the Ministry of Social Welfare presented a request for the ILO to implement a "time-bound program" to provide support and assistance for implementation of a public policy on "elimination of child labor with emphasis on the worst forms thereof." The program would start in 2007 and have a conditioned lifetime of eight years.

Progress in departmental plans for elimination of child labor and protection of youth workers

The main progress in the Departmental Plans for Prevention, Deterrence, and Progressive Elimination of Child Labor may be summarized as follows: 96.8% of departments have a competent departmental entity to implement and spearhead regional measures to address this issue; 71% of these entities were created less than five years ago; 78.1% of departments have addressed the issue of child labor; of these 72% expressly include this issue in their Departmental Development Plan; 76% design governmental programs and projects on prevention and elimination of child labor.

The foregoing corroborates the increasing awareness of the problem of child labor and the worst forms thereof as an urgent component of social policy on children.

As regards commercial sexual exploitation of children, 28% of departments included the issue in their departmental development plans, 31% of which proposed programs and/or projects; 13% of municipalities included the issue in their municipal development plans, and 11% which formulated programs and projects.

Social protection in health

The Professional Risk Bureau [*Dirección General de Riesgos Profesionales*] has implemented a nationwide plan of action on promotion and prevention designed to improve health and working conditions for persons at risk and to reduce work accidents and occupational disease. The plan was financed with resources provided by the Professional Risk Fund, in accordance with Law 776 of 2002. The Bureau has signed agreements with 22 departments in the country: two in 2005, 4 in 2006, and 16 in 2007, with an investment of approximately 3,000 million pesos.

The main ways in which the issue of health and working conditions for vulnerable populations has been tackled is through activities, interventions, and procedures aimed at comprehensive health promotion and prevention of physical, as well as psychological and social, disease.

The target group for our measures consists of workers in the informal sector of the economy with unmet basic needs and without social security, grouped under associations or in certain parts of the country. In particular, our activities have targeted workers in crop farming, stock breeding, forestry, fishing, and mining in rural areas; and, commerce, cottage industry, manufacturing, and services in urban areas. Within these activities priority is given to underage workers, women in rural

areas, the elderly, and workers with disabilities, bearing in mind the characteristics of these groups, the presence of occupational risks, and the lack of response capacity to overcome them.

In 2006, activities in rural areas centered on agricultural workers, particularly those exposed to pesticides, and, in urban areas, on commerce, with particular attention given to street vendors. The activities carried out included a review of health and working conditions, training on specific occupational risks, technical assistance for control of those risks, and strengthening of workers' organizations.

At the same time, subnational entities have given priority to beneficiaries of the subsidized social security system and vulnerable workers covered by signed agreements.

Growth and Development

The positive economic results had been reflected in real-term economic growth of 6.8% in 2006, compared with 5.1% in 2005. Inflation remains under control and was kept to 4.48% in 2006. As to unemployment, a review was carried out of the methodology used to measure unemployment, in order to ensure greater accuracy in the figures obtained. Under the new methodology, the unemployment rate recorded for 2006 was 12%.

With respect to the financial system, legislation was proposed to Congress for increasing the system's stability and at the same time strengthening public confidence in it. In this connection bills were presented on habeas data and corporate bankruptcy regulations.

As regards development financing, Colombia continues to make significant strides. Proof of the foregoing is the reduction of the public debt to 31.2% of GDP, which exceeded the target set in the Medium-Term Public Spending Framework of 32.8% of GDP.

In light of the important results obtained by the government's economic and development strategy, sustained economic growth looks set to continue in the medium term based on economic consolidation, disciplined public spending, and the favorable macroeconomic conditions and climate accomplished in recent years.

Development Financing

Given the ever-increasing tendency for international co-operation resources to be funneled through nongovernmental channels, the High Council for Social Action and International Cooperation created the **Department of New International Cooperation Sources** [*Subdirección de Nuevas Fuentes de Cooperación Internacional*], in order to have direct channels of dialogue with new cooperation actors, such as NGOs, private enterprise, religious organizations, professional associations, universities, decentralized cooperation actors, and civil society organizations. Coaching is provided for cooperation projects presented by different organizations, of which 23 have already been approved.

The Department of New International Cooperation Sources works in partnership with the principle business foundations in the country, NGOs, and a number of binational chambers of commerce in a bid to strengthen corporate social responsibility, so as to contribute to implementation of social programs in the country. Notable measures in the area of public-private partnership have

been carried out, such as, for instance, those with the binational chambers of commerce of Mexico, Canada, and Germany,

Furthermore, the Department of Official Development Assistance [*Subdirección de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo*] has promoted civil society participation through tripartite consultations in the framework of the London – Cartagena Process, the purpose of which was to determine basic guidelines for international cooperation received by Colombia. The efforts of the government of Colombia, the international community, and civil society culminated in the 2000-2006 International Cooperation Strategy and the 2007-2010 International Cooperation Strategy. The process also set in motion cooperation forums, such as G24, which make it easier for cooperation sources to establish dialogue and ties with the national government and civil society organizations.

Also, with the support of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, Colombia has identified *debt* instruments that would be suitable for swap operations and has initiated bilateral consultations with its creditors. At the same time, studies have moved forward on two specific initiatives under preparation with a view to their presentation for this type of financing:

- With the support of the National Planning Department (DNP) and the Fund for Environmental Action and Children, the design and formulation is underway of a project in support of the Forest Ranger Families [*Familias Guardabosques*] program, with a view to its submission to the United States.
- In a joint effort between the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, and DNP studies are underway to determine the viability and relevance of presenting an adult literacy program for Colombia to the Government of Spain.

The Interagency Group for Rural Development in Colombia, established as a national working network whose objectives are to supplement the activities of several cooperation agencies and act as a forum for coordination, dialogue, consensus-building, and information exchange on international cooperation for rural development, has worked on the identification of instruments, new approaches, and successful experiences in rural development, as well as on implementation of joint training, technical assistance, and investment projects at the national and subnational level.

The US\$413.6 million that Colombia received in official assistance between October 2004 and December 2006 was channeled toward six predetermined main thematic areas. It should be mentioned that of these funds, 46% is assigned to Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Assistance, with contributions provided in particular by Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Canada, Japan, UNHCR, OCHA and WFP.

We also draw attention to the assistance offered by the United States targeted at strengthening democracy to make it more effective and participatory; promotion of economic and social alternatives to illicit crop cultivation; and support for displaced people and other vulnerable groups, such as demobilized and reintegrated persons (an area in which supplementary assistance was received from the Kingdom of the Netherlands).

Progress is being made on the basic guidelines of the Paris Declaration on harmonization and alignment of cooperation, although Colombia has not signed them.

In this connection, an international seminar entitled “Colombia and the Paris Declaration” [*“Colombia Frente a la Declaración de Paris”*] is scheduled for May 2007, with the purpose of examining the different components and objectives of the Declaration, their context, and their scope preparatory to Colombia’s possible accession.

Fight against poverty, inequality, and exclusion

Colombia has consistently supported this aim, which is why the national government had the political will to include the issue of equity and equality of opportunities in its National Development Plan 2002-2006, a component strengthened in the proposed National Development Plan 2006-2010, in keeping with the document Vision for Colombia, Second Centenary 2019, which sets out the country’s projections for the year 2019. Among the principles contained in this document is to “Strengthen an exclusion-free socio-economic model based on equality of opportunities, in which the State is the guarantor of social equity.” The proposed National Development Plan 2006 - 2010, expands the strategy to include the attainment of social equity and equality of opportunities and includes gender equity as a crosscutting core theme in all policies and programs contained in the National Development Plan.

JUNTOS Network against Extreme Poverty

The Colombian State is pursuing a comprehensive intervention strategy coordinated by various state agencies and different levels of government, which is one of the proposals of the Mission to design a Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty and Inequality in Colombia (MERPD) formed toward the end of 2004, in order to improve living conditions for families in extreme poverty. This strategy is moving ahead through the **JUNTOS Network against Extreme Poverty**, created based on a Document 102 of 2006 of the National Council for Social and Economic Policy (CONPES), which created the agency to coordinate the process of consensus building among the network’s entities, with a view to the inclusion of a gender dimension in the Network’s activities.

The overarching objective of JUNTOS is to improve living conditions of families that live in extreme poverty and/or have been displaced, through capacity building to enable them to further their development. The specific objectives are strengthening the family’s human capital, access to income generation mechanisms for improvement of living conditions, and creation of capacities to manage their development.

The JUNTOS intervention strategy focuses on nine dimensions for overcoming extreme poverty: i) Identification; ii) Income and Work; iii) Education; iv) Health; v) Nutrition; vi) Habitability; vii) Family Dynamics; viii) Bank Intermediation and Savings; and, ix) Legal Assistance. These nine dimensions contained 53 basic goals, which, when attained by the family, through identification of a life plan, provide the family with tools for overcoming their extreme poverty.

The Network will get underway in 2007 with a pilot phase in 33 municipalities that targets 117,000 families; by the end of 2008 it will have extended its coverage to 1.5 million families, including 300,000 displaced families. The goal is for 80% of families to successfully ‘graduate’ from JUNTOS by attaining the basic goals after five years. To that end, the following undertakings have been adopted:

- Gender training for Juntos Network staff
- Gender training for social workers in the nine pilot municipal governments
- Participation by the Presidential Counselor in the Executive Board of the Juntos Network
- Participation through a delegated consultant in the Coordination Committee of the Juntos Network
- Measures to provide preferential access to CPEM programs for families enrolled in the Juntos Network:
 - Comprehensive assistance program for women household-head entrepreneurs: The CPEM will take part in the Juntos Fair in seven of the nine pilot municipalities targeted by the program, where it will provide information on the program and distribute application forms.
 - Rutas Program for nonviolence against women: In all nine pilot municipalities the CPEM will: a) hold “Family Democracy” training days for prevention of domestic and sexual violence; b) distribute radio spots on the issue of prevention of domestic violence to be broadcast by community and local radio stations; c) distribute legal-rights awareness leaflets for prevention of domestic violence.
 - Women Entrepreneurs’ Fair Program: In all nine pilot municipalities the CPEM will participate in the Juntos Fair, distributing information about the program and application forms.
 - Women’s Community Councils Program: In all nine pilot municipalities the CPEM will make available to the Network information on Women’s Community Councils created to support community participation in the Mayor’s Office and Municipal Council.

Social Development

In keeping with the commitments with respect to social inclusion and elimination of discrimination, which would directly and indirectly benefit both vulnerable groups and displaced persons, Colombia has the following to report:

- **Program on Comprehensive Assistance for Displaced Persons:** From 2002 to 2006 1.9 billion pesos was spent on assistance to displaced persons. A total of 4.1 billion pesos have been earmarked for the next four years, twice the amount invested over the previous decade. As of March 31, 2006, the homes of 70,072 families benefited from income generation programs or productive projects.

The program is also pursuing a Differential Assistance Policy in order to promote the inclusion of a differential gender perspective in all policies, programs, and projects, in a bid to improve the plight of this vulnerable group in the various phases of prevention and protection, emergency humanitarian assistance, and socioeconomic stabilization. The program has mainly centered on areas –mostly in the south of Colombia- with a large presence of indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, with the aim of protecting all of their rights.

- **Food Security Network Program (RESA):** The objective of this program is to bring about an attitude change in families that are vulnerable to and/or have been

victims of violence, by implementing subsistence food production projects designed to strengthen the main economic activity of the household.

During fiscal years 2005 and 2006, *Acción Social's* Food Security Network Program (RESA) carried out 97 subsistence food production projects in rural areas and 10 food security pilot projects in urban zones. With an investment of 32,119 million pesos of its own funds, *Acción Social* managed to leverage 37,248 million pesos in matching funds (for a total of 69,367 million pesos) to co-finance food security projects in 27 departments and more than 840 municipalities around the country. This effort benefited 228,159 families (1,149,723 people) and more than 60,000 individuals connected with schools in rural areas and other types of entities that provide assistance to vulnerable groups.

According to information yielded by a survey of the RESA target group, 12.2% of the population served by the Program belong to a minority group, distributed as follows: 0.5% persons with disabilities, 2.4% Afro-Colombian, 0.3% Romany or Gypsy, and 8.9% indigenous peoples. Furthermore, 4% of the target group were displaced and 96% joined the program in order to set down roots as a strategy against displacement.

The survey also revealed other relevant information with respect to age group and gender. Of the total target group covered by the RESA Program, 28.6% were children; 18.6% were youths aged 12 to 18; 48.3% were adults aged 19 to 65; and 4.5% were elderly persons over 65; women accounted for 48.2% of the target group. The program selected “successful” beneficiaries in rural areas to receive solidary assistance for improvement of their housing conditions, covering 7,250 homes in 163 municipalities in the country with an investment of 12,470 million pesos, of which *Acción Social* put up 40%.

- **Families in Action Program:** In the 2002–2006 period this program brought about improvements in child nutrition and health, achieving long-term positive effects in the nutrition of 692,360 children (114,156 of them displaced).
- **Peace and Development Program:** Of the 51,817 families that received assistance from this program in the 2004-2006 period, 11,937 were displaced. In 2007 and 2008 the program plans to reach 39,349 families, of which 25,940 are at risk and 13,409 are displaced.

This program pursues a strategy known as Peace Laboratories [*Laboratorios de Paz*] in an effort to eliminate inequality in vulnerable populations. The first Peace Laboratory is holding a competition to fund assistance projects for women, young persons, and vulnerable groups in 30 municipalities in Magdalena Medio, for which it has a budget of 6,500 million pesos.

- **Program of Assistance for Victims of Violence:** This program engages in humanitarian assistance activities that consist of providing essential support to victims of violence so that they can restore their violated rights. It allocates a significant quantity of funds to provide assistance to victims or their next of kin, thereby helping to meet their needs and enable them to live with dignity.

The budget allocated from 2002 to 2006 came to 262,760 million pesos, which was sufficient to provide 23,068 families with the equivalent to two monthly minimum wages as emergency

assistance to poor households and/or persons that were the victims of terrorist acts, and 40 minimum wages to 20,053 families for the death of one or more loved ones in terrorist attacks. In all, 43,121 families in 861 municipalities in the country received this direct assistance.

- **Infrastructure Program:** This program is an additional effort that targets vulnerable populations in the country. In the 2005-2006 period, 224 projects were contracted at a total cost of 53,547 million pesos. Under this program, the **Municipal Reconstruction** strategy provides assistance to populations affected by violence, through the rebuilding of homes and repair and/or construction of community social infrastructure. In the 2005-2006 period, 93 works were contracted for a total investment of 15,657 million pesos.

The **Works for Peace** strategy is designed to create the means to offer communities comprehensive development solutions for their communities that bring about an improvement in quality of life and employment generation. In the 2005-2006 period, 131 infrastructure projects (electrification, tertiary road networks, basic sanitation, and basic social infrastructure) were contracted for a total investment of 37,890 million pesos, covering communities in 19 departments and 53 municipalities in the country

Alternative Development

Presidential Program against Illicit Crops

The Presidential Program against Illicit Crops (PCI) of the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation is one of the priorities of the National Government in combating illicit crop cultivation. The principal objective of the Program is the voluntary manual elimination of illicit crops in strategic areas in order to protect the environment and ensure that the communities where these crops were grown return to lawful activities by making more-effective options available to them.

The PCI is divided into three programs that aim to combat the illicit crop cultivation and propitiate viable realistic alternatives for anyone who wishes to eradicate these crops from their lands. The Forest Ranger Families [*Familias Guardabosques*] program, the Productive Projects Program, and the Mobile Eradication Group are the three solutions used by the PCI to fight drugs. In order to make them more effective, the PCI has established a presence in eight regions that encompass more than 100 municipalities in 25 departments across the country.

- The **Productive Projects Program** (PPP) is a strategy of the PCI that consists of voluntary manual eradication of illicit crops in which the main objective is to set up self-sustaining and profitable productive projects. The aim is to offer steady and legal, alternative sources of employment and income, as well as to improve food security in rural communities through sustainable use of natural resources. As of March 2007 there were 104 productive projects in progress, which involved 12,893 families in illicit activities for an investment of 898,556 million pesos.

According to CONPES Document 3218 of 2003, the goals of the Program are to: engage at least 27,000 families in licit activities; keep at least 76,350 hectares free of

illicit crops; generate at least 17 million days' work, the equivalent of 65,800 direct jobs.

- **Mobile Eradication Groups (GME)** are a supplemental strategy in the fight against illicit drugs designed to control their spread to new areas of the rural economy or to national parks or nature reserves. Their operations consist of groups of persons, whose members include demobilized fighters from armed groups operating outside the law, which, under the protection of military forces, deploy to areas where illicit crops have been detected in order to proceed with their forcible eradication by manual and mechanical means, thereby preventing their further spread. In 2006, 43,051 hectares of illicit crops were eradicated.
- The **Forest Ranger Families Program (PFGB)** is an alternative development initiative that arose in 2003 as part of the national government's anti-drug strategy. It involves, peasant-farmer, indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities located in environmentally strategic ecosystems, including buffer zones, affected by illicit crop cultivation. These communities have made the decision voluntarily to eradicate such crops from their communities and replace them with legal productive alternatives and environmental projects that contribute to sustainable forest management.

The forest ranger families, with the necessary technical and social mentoring as well as economic incentives, have initiated a large number of productive and environmental projects in their villages and watersheds. The purpose of this support, which is time-bound, is for communities to launch activities that help to correct the harmful environmental effects of activities associated with illicit cocaine and opium poppy production and trafficking. By respecting the law and becoming forest wardens, agroforestry producers, or ecotourism services providers, more than 45,000 forest ranger families have transformed the economic reality of many municipalities. Of these families, 99% said that, having participated in the program, they would never return to illicit crop cultivation as an alternative means of income generation. As of March 2007, 58,550 collective contracts have been signed with forest ranger families, for an investment of 351,201 million pesos.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Implementation of the Ministerial Agreement of Guayaquil in 2005, Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas: Plan Agro 2006-2007 Project in Support of Rural Microenterprise Development (PADEMÉR): In order to support microenterprise strengthening and creation in rural areas as an alternative sustainable source of jobs and income for families in extreme poverty in rural parts of Colombia, assistance was provided to 3,394 micro-enterprises, which led to the creation of 6,560 jobs. Under a co-financing scheme, advisory services and technical assistance in comprehensive business development were provided in the areas of:

- Business Management. Basic training, advisory services, and technical assistance to help build up abilities and skills in business management.
- Productive Development. Technological modernization and product diversification, as well as development of new business opportunities.

- Organizational Development. Through productive chains, the aim is to develop economies of scale in the production and purchase of inputs and services, as well as strengthening bargaining positions in the market.
- Marketing. Identification of potential markets, bargaining strategies, brand and product design and positioning in the market, licensing, and business code.

This project was financed by the FIDA under an agreement that concluded in December 2006. In 2007 the government took out a fresh loan for US\$20 million to finance the Program “*Development of Opportunities for Investment in and Capitalization of Assets of Rural Microenterprises,*” which will get underway in mid-2007 in order mainly to provide the following services:

- a. Technical assistance to eliminate technological, commercial, management, and organizational barriers that currently prevent microentrepreneurs from participating efficiently in goods and services markets.
- b. Microfinance, to improve the quality of microcredit services and encourage saving.
- c. Application of new government administration policies and tools to benefit rural microentrepreneurs, designed based on the systematized experiences of beneficiaries and the government agencies that implement the Program.

Project “Support for Productive Partnerships”

In 2006, 46 partnerships were approved as a means to stimulate enterprise creation in rural areas through the creation of linkages between small producers, marketers, agroindustry, and inputs suppliers (all of which contribute to a productive project).

As an incentive, 13,411 million pesos (US\$5.7 million), equivalent to 29.3% of the total investment, were allocated to agricultural productive projects. These projects led to the creation of 4,920 jobs in 2006. Thus far in 2007, 16,000 million pesos (US\$7.2 million) have been allocated for the design and implementation of new productive partnerships.

Strengthening of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Systems

The government has been strengthening the country’s sanitary and phytosanitary systems by investing in infrastructure and equipment for animal health and food safety laboratories, construction of a biosafety laboratory for foot-and-mouth control, development of an integrated information system for the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and INVIMA, training in aspects of on-site inspection for foot-and-mouth eradication, epidemiological surveillance of fruit and vegetables, laboratory techniques in vegetable health and food safety, and development of an information system to encourage the use of sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the sector.

In 2007, 10,600 million pesos (US\$4.8 million) were allocated for sanitary strengthening in livestock and poultry production systems.

As regards cattle, the funds were allotted to the tracking system, which makes it possible to track and identify cattle and beef products at any point and at any moment in the production chain up to end-consumption.

In the poultry sector, the assistance has centered on improvements to the main poultry sanitation programs, including analysis of Newcastle disease risk factors, epidemiological disease surveillance, avian disease diagnosis, and strengthening of ports and airports of entry of poultry products and live birds.

In order to promote milk-quality assurance, ensure its safety, and protect consumer health, Colombia is implementing the Restructuring Plan for Preprocessed Milk and Chilled Preprocessed Milk Traders. Under the Plan, traders are required to submit restructuring solutions (equipment and infrastructure, training programs, and financing) in keeping with the appropriate requirements.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture grants an incentive to banana and flower producers in order to ensure that they maintain adequate phytosanitary management system and do not endanger access for these products to international markets.

The support is allocated to sanitary management and control of black sigatoka in bananas and for investments in the Comprehensive Pest Management Plan (MIP) in flowers.

Secure Agricultural Income (AIS) Program

This program was created by Law 1133 of 2007 and is intended to strengthen the incomes of producers, as necessary, against imbalances produced by external markets, as well as to raise the competitiveness of the domestic agricultural sector in the face of globalization of the Colombian economy. The program has two components:

- **Economic Assistance for Competitiveness (AE)**

The purpose of competitiveness assistance is to enhance productivity and strengthen restructuring programs undertaken by agricultural producers in the country, by means of the following mechanisms and instruments:

For irrigation and drainage projects, the Ministry of Agriculture will recognize up to 80% of the investment cost. The assistance is provided on a competition basis, with the winning projects selected according to three criteria: matching funds put up by the beneficiaries, number of hectares that would benefit from the irrigation waters, and number of beneficiary families.

In the area of technical assistance, small agricultural producers and small farmers' associations will receive up to 80% of the cost of the technical assistance needed for their projects. The assistant services may be offered by individuals or corporations that pass an accreditation process (ICONTEC).

Furthermore, assistance will be offered through special lines of credit with favorable conditions for beneficiaries, implemented as part of the Rural Capitalization Incentive (ICR) to promote investment (in irrigation, plant and equipment, etc.) as a means to increase the competitiveness of agricultural operations, agroindustrial processing, and restructuring projects to adapt to more profitable crops. Resources will also be allocated to support marketing processes in order to boost competitiveness in the farming sector.

- **Sectoral Economic Assistance (AES)**

This is direct assistance provided to agricultural producers in order to protect their incomes during a transition period (maximum of six years) in which the aim is to raise the competitiveness of the sector and move forward with restructuring processes. It is provided on a temporary basis to certain sectors that are affected by external market imbalances, through the following mechanisms

A special line of credit for cereal crops to finance projects for vertical integration of farming activities (concentrate plants, slaughter yards, mills, dryers, threshing mills, etc.) and for sophisticated yellow-corn-growing. Rice farmers also have access to a government budget with which to leverage loans to finance primary processing and marketing infrastructure.

The Rural Capitalization Incentive (ICR) will be granted at a rate of up to 40% for small cereal crop farmers and 30% for medium and large farmers

- **Biofuel Production Stimulus Measures**

Colombia has been taking advantage of the agricultural opportunities opened up by biofuels. The aim is to reduce the domestic sugar market by more than 500,000 tons and, as a result, give a strong boost to the incomes of the 300,000 persons who make their living from the production of brown sugar loaf, using part of the output to produce fuel alcohol, thereby reducing sugar exports sold at a low price.

This year, the country also began to produce bio diesel from palm oil processed at various plants in the country, which, altogether, will have the capacity to produce 265,000 tons of oil a year. Progress is also being made with the construction of a plant to produce ethanol from cassava on the north coast of the country.

Good Cattle and Buffalo Management Practices

In March 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture issued resolution 072 by which it adopted the Manual of Good Management Practices for beef and hide production from cattle and buffalo, which could be applied to primary production systems, tagging, and transport of livestock, their slaughter and processing, and tanning.

Efforts in Sustainable Alternative Agricultural Systems

The government adopted Law 1011 of 2006, in which it approved commercial exploitation of land snails of the *Helix* genus along with its various species, as well as issuing regulations covering snail breeding, environmental conservation, and protection of public health. Law 1011 provides that all *Helix* snail farms operating in the country are required to establish and maintain an *Environmental Management System* appropriate to the scale and environmental impact of the breeding process on natural resources. The law also provides for an *Environmental Management Plan* and a *Sanitary Management Plan*.

In order to raise awareness of the foregoing, a workshop seminar was held with land snail breeders and traders, with support provided by the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA).

Organic Agriculture

By resolution 187 of 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture adopted the regulations on primary production, processing, packing, labeling, storage, certification, importation, and marketing of Organic Agricultural Products, as well as establishing a control system for such products.

In Colombia there are nine organic food certification companies, two of which are accredited with the Superintendency of Industry and Trade, while the rest are internationally accredited.

Environmental Sustainability Awareness Raising

In 2006, a number of seminars were held to raise awareness about environmental issues, in particular on: a) Environmental Sustainability of Production Systems, targeting producers, representatives of associations, and sectoral agency staff; b) Options for the Agricultural Sector in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and success stories in Latin America, targeting animal breeders, poultry farmers, pork farmers, and the rice milling sector.

Modernization of the brown sugar loaf production and marketing process

In 2006, the national government began a process of modernization, adaptation, and mill construction in the country's main brown sugar-loaf producing areas, improving fuel efficiency by looking for substitutes for wood and tires. This measure brought a drop in gas emissions into the atmosphere and, therefore, reduced environmental contamination.

In addition, resolution 779 of 2006 adopted by the Social Welfare and Agriculture Ministries introduced technical regulations on sanitary requirements to be met in the production and marketing of brown sugar loaf for human consumption, bearing in mind that it is a staple of the Colombian food basket.

Agroclimatic Monitoring

The Ministry of Agriculture has been consolidating a daily report on climatic behavior, alerts, and effects on agriculture by regions in the country, which is published on the Ministry webpage as well as by the Agronet information system. The report is prepared based on the Daily Technical Report of the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM).

In 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture, with technical and financial support provided by the FAO, embarked on the design and launch of the Strategic Communication and Information Network for the Agricultural Sector, known as Agronet (www.agronet.gov.co). Agronet has been operating since 2007 under a technical cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and the IICA Country Office in Colombia

The network acts as a technological tool designed to meet demand for statistical and analytical information on the agricultural sector, linking a number of databases necessary to facilitate

decision-making for the various agencies in the sector. Agronet's statistical database contains national information and indicators for monitoring and evaluation of Plan Agro 2003-2015.

Sustainable development of agriculture for social development and food security

Land Adjudication Program

This program targets landless peasant farmers, families displaced by violence, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. In 2006, 3,171 families benefited from the adjudication of 42,560 hectares, 63% of which originated from forfeiture proceedings. From January to March 2007, 7,342 hectares have been adjudicated to 333 families.

In 2006, 5,435 colonists situated on 131,754 hectares and 2,752 families belonging to Afro-Colombian communities located on 89,586 hectares benefited from the uncultivated land titling process. At the same time, 1,374 families located on 13,978 hectares benefited from the creation and expansion of indigenous reserves.

Land Improvement Program

In 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture allocated 120,280 million pesos (US\$51 million) for the design, construction, and rehabilitation of irrigation small, medium, and large irrigation networks, these measures benefited 14,217 hectares and 1,601 families.

Mention should also be made of the investments initiated by two large irrigation systems (Ranchería and Triangulo del Tolima), which will cover 33,000 hectares and benefit 9,700 families. The total cost of these two projects comes to 694,000 million pesos (US\$294.3 million), of which 155,000 million pesos (which represents 22% of the overall investment) were allocated in 2005 and 2006.

Low-Cost Rural Housing Program

This program channels subsidies for the construction of new homes, improvement of existing homes, and basic sanitation for low-income families in rural areas, with priority accorded to displaced families. In 2006, 74,011 million pesos (US\$31.4 million) of subsidies were released, benefiting 12,882 families. In 2007, an estimated 76,100 million pesos (US\$34.2 million) will be distributed as subsidies to benefit 13,365 families.

Environment

Sustainable Development

Colombia's attendance has been supported and coordinated at international forums on the following issues: - Forest management for sustainable development of timber and non-timber forest resources; - International negotiations in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, its Subsidiary Bodies on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and strategic working groups, such as the group on access to genetic resources and distribution of benefits and traditional knowledge; - The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and supervision of

international, subregional, and bilateral negotiations to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Progress continues with the implementation of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Colombia expects to advance with the ratification of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants as well as implementation of the strategy for the international chemicals management, in an effort to contribute to Colombia's domestic capacity for rational and safe use of chemical products.

As regards regional seas, Colombia has attended meetings of the conference of parties and the scientific and technical committee of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region. Work also continues on the definition of Colombia's position with respect to the issues under discussion in the framework of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS).

Protected Areas for Adaptation to Climate Change

Water Resources: The measures adopted in this area are designed, *inter alia*, to increase the availability of potable water; promote conservation; ensure demand control; establish a monitoring system for drought and flood control; control and protection systems; and prevent water contamination. **Agriculture:** The measures in this regard would include, *inter alia*, agronomic change; soil improvement and conservation; improvement in irrigation methods and efficiency; and promotion of water and soil conservation techniques.

Stewardship of ecosystems and forests: measures with regard to forest ecosystems are intended mainly to protect biodiversity and reduce erosion through promotion of natural regeneration, increased reforestation, encouragement of sustainable agriculture, increased on- and off-site cultivation of natural plants, protection of conservation areas, and minimization of forest destruction.

Implementation of multilateral environmental treaties on hazardous substances: in keeping with this mandate from the Quebec Summit, Colombia has taken legal steps toward the formalization of its participation in the following multilateral environmental treaties on hazardous substances:

- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**

Following a process of consensus building with the relevant entities, it was decided that it would be advisable for the country to ratify this instrument. However, the Constitutional Court ruled that the bill sent to Congress in August 2004 was unenforceable owing to an irremediable procedural flaw and will be submitted again for legislative processing at the next legislature (July 20, 2007). At present, the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT), with cooperation funds provided by Canada and the GEF, is engaged in a review of the country's capacity to perform the obligations contained in the treaty.

- **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade:**

The relevant bill has been presented to Congress for consideration, has passed two readings in the Senate and is awaiting its first reading in the House of Representatives. Congress is expected to pass the bill by June 2007.

Preparatory to the finalization of the ratification procedure, the Social Welfare and Agriculture Ministries have been designated as the appropriate national authorities for reception and processing of requests for prior informed consent on the substances covered by this instrument.

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Basel, Switzerland, March 22, 1989.**

According to the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, Colombia lacks the necessary research and capacity to regulate environmental standards by which to identify which wastes are hazardous and which are not. Colombia also lacks the laboratory infrastructure and internal capacity to control and monitor facilities for recycling, destruction, and end-disposal of hazardous wastes. Lastly, available technical and financial resources are deemed insufficient for implementing cleaner production alternatives, particularly in the micro-, small, and medium-size enterprise sectors.

The Eighth Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention was held from November 27 to December 1, 2006, in Nairobi, Kenya. The issues discussed at the COP included the strategic implementation plan to 2010, cooperation and synergies, budget and resource mobilization, and sustainable financing, among others.

Activities currently underway include: Follow-up on the implementation of the convention; definition of the participation of Colombia in the Regional Strategy for the Environmentally Sound Management of Used Lead-Acid Batteries; review of the chapter in the FTA on national treatment and market access for goods, with respect to controls on the import of used or imperfect goods, remnants, remainings, wastes and residues. Currently pending ratification is Amendment III-1, which prohibits the shipment of hazardous waste from an OECD country to a developing country. Once the decision is made to ratify the amendment it will be necessary to initiate consultations with the productive sectors in Colombia that would be affected by its entry into force.

In the framework of the convention, in process of ratification is the Protocol on Liability and Compensation for Damage Resulting from Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which was approved by Law 945 of 2003 and declared enforceable by the Constitutional Court in Judgment 1151 of November 2005. This Protocol has yet to come into force.

Progress on the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol thereto

The 26th Session of the Subsidiary Bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was held from May 7 to 18, 2007, in Bonn, Germany. At present, preparations are underway for Colombia's participation in the Thirteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 13) and the Third Session of

the Conference of the Parties Acting as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 3), both of which will be held in Bali, Indonesia, from December 3 to 14, 2007.

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and Montréal Protocol on Ozone-Depleting Substances and the London, Copenhagen, Montréal, and Beijing Amendments thereto.

Efforts currently underway in the framework of the Convention and the Protocol are designed to meet the following short-term goals: Complete elimination of CFCs by 2010; Regulations on elimination of CFC consumption enforced and coordinated with the National Taxes and Customs Department (DIAN) to prevent their legal and illegal importation (5,000 technicians certified in good refrigeration practices); further regulate and restrict the use of methyl bromide in quarantine and pre-shipment applications; devise a strategy with the health sector to eliminate dependence on CFCs in metered-dose inhalers; continued advancement of the issue of destruction and scrapping of obsolete equipment and unwanted substances in a bid to come up with financing strategies.

Biodiversity

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar).

Lack of expertise in the country has delayed the processes initiated under the Convention. We also consider that there is a lack of financing to support Ramsar projects, given that the budget appropriations available at present are subject to tender processes held directly by the Ramsar Secretariat.

Colombia processed the updating of the technical data sheet for the Ramsar site of the Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta Marsh. The activities connected with the celebration of Wetlands Day will be forwarded to the Ramsar Education and Participation Office. A new Ramsar site was opened at Lake Otún. The reply to the questionnaire on implementation of the Convention is currently under preparation.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, Washington, D.C., March 3, 1973

The Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development has found that the law in this area is broken by private citizens. Furthermore, environmental authorities have difficulty enforcing the Convention due to a high turnover of staff trained in its correct application. It was also noted that there is a lack of funds available for attending forums to discuss CITES-related matters in addition to non participation on the part of administrative authorities in the technical committees set up under the Convention.

Preparations are in progress for Colombia to attend the Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 14) and the corresponding Ministerial Segment to be held in The Hague, Netherlands, from June 5 to 15, 2007.

Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro, June 5, 1992

The international cooperation resources that Colombia has been enjoying as a party to the CBD and a mega-diverse country could be drastically curtailed if the importance of keeping this issue a priority is not reiterated at the national level to the donors panel. By the same token, if adequate levels of financing are not maintained, most of the national projects on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity will be unable to continue generating significant eco-systemic impact.

Preparations are underway for Colombia to attend the Twelfth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 12) to be held at the Headquarters of UNESCO in Paris, France, from July 2 to 6, 2007, followed by the Third Meeting of the Working Group on the Review of the Implementation (WGRI) of the Convention. The Seventh Conference of Parties decided to initiate negotiations for an International Regime for Access to Genetic Resources.

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Montreal, January 29, 2000

It is necessary to move forward with sectoral regulation for Decree 4525 of 2005, creating within the MAVDT a National Technical Committee on Environmental Biosafety and defining the procedure to be followed as regards environmental approval for activities involving genetically modified crops or animals that could have an impact on the environment or biodiversity.

The matters pending in the framework of the Protocol on Biosafety are:

- Implementation of Article 18.2 of the Protocol regarding handling, transport, packing, and identification of GMO.
- The implications of this in terms of liability, obligations of exporters, and implementation costs of identification systems. The core issues: Content of the information to be included in the waybill; Formats for presentation of the aforesaid information; in which cases should it be mentioned that a shipment “contains” or “may contain” GMOs.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification

Colombia took part in the Eleventh Regional Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean States Parties to the UNCCD, held in Panama City, Panama, from July 17 to 21, 2006. Colombia drew attention at the meeting to the need to review the functions of the Bonn Facilitation Unit and the Regional Coordination Units, in order to avoid duplication of efforts by these bodies.

Implementation of sustainable forest stewardship

International Tropical Timber Agreement

The ratification process was initiated of the Successor Agreement (1996), which was signed on May 3, 2007. This instrument enables Colombia to access an important source of resources for matters related to the national forestry sector in activities connected with sustainable forest stewardship, trade, and industrialization. Furthermore, as a party to this Agreement, we will have

access to opportunities to build up our institutional capacities for registration of forestry statistics, promotion of legal development, marketing, and export of forest timber products. The 42nd Session of the Council was held from May 8 to 12, 2007 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

Trade

Trade is recognized as one of the lynchpins of growth and employment. In May 2006, in keeping with the commitment it adopted in the Declaration of Mar de Plata, Colombia, through its Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, initiated consultations with a broad group of companies in the Hemisphere regarding the plausibility of holding a meeting of trade ministers to discuss the outlook for the Free-Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations. The co-chairs were briefed on the results of those consultations. Most of the countries consulted expressed an interest in the resumption of the negotiation process. However, as yet it has not been possible to make any concrete progress in that regard. It should be mentioned that the tripartite committee continues to provide support to the Technical Secretariat on the issue.

In addition, Colombia has pursued a free-trade strategy through bilateral treaties, such as the one signed in November 2006 with the United States and Chile. The country is also engaged in negotiations for agreements with Central American countries and is working toward a Complementation Agreement between the European Union and the Andean Community.

Infrastructure

Transport of dangerous goods

With a view to the institution of a policy on the transport of dangerous goods, a draft administrative resolution was drawn up that reforms Decree 1609 of 2002 by adopting the general guidelines of the UN model regulations as well as introducing compulsory certification for drivers who haul dangerous goods. The relevant administrative procedures are in process with a view to the adoption of this draft resolution.

In addition, the driver qualification standards were formalized through the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) and training mechanisms were developed for certification of drivers qualified to haul dangerous goods by road.

Air Safety, Protection and Assistance

The Civil Aviation Authority (*Aeronáutica Civil*) is part of the Group of Experts on Air Safety, Protection and Assistance (GEASSA); the Authority has also co-chaired the Group alongside Canada and regards this mechanism as the best approach for ensuring that the aviation sector follows the guidelines of the Summit of the Americas.

The GEASSA has three strategic objectives:

- Build knowledge through information sharing. GEASSA has provided support for briefing sessions on topics such as SMS and the importance of safety training in aviation.

- Build realities – facilitating financing for projects on operational safety and aviation safety in the Western Hemisphere, such as the accident research center and the aeronautical charts project.
- Build sustainability through training. GEASSA is encouraging states to provide the secretariat with information on training programs in order to create a database on initiatives underway in the region. If the members of GEASSA were to permit other states to enroll in these training initiatives, that would increase the amount of available training resources at no added cost. GEASSA seeks regional solutions and training.

The following projects and activities for the Americas had been carried out in its framework:

- ATS Quality Assurance program being developed by Colombia with the assistance of *Transport Canada*
- Aeronautical Phraseology Deficiencies within the ATS Quality Assurance Program
- AVSEC Training to prepare personnel for the ICAO audits. The outcome was: 14 workshops, 2 seminars which provided 401 participants, from the CAR/SAM Regions, with a clearer understanding and awareness of ICAO Annex 17, USAP, and AVSEC familiarization.
- PAAST Runway Incursion Prevention Program Seminar.
- ATS QA Program Workshop
- Safety Management System Workshop.
- ICAO/PAIGH Project for the production of VFR Aeronautical Charts, scale 1:1000 000/1:500 000

The last meeting of the GEASSA was held in Cartagena in December 2006. At this meeting:

Information was provided on recent meetings that were held with the World Bank, the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Based on information garnered during these meetings, the IDB seems the most likely source of financing and had requested that GEASSA acts as an independent organization to validate their aviation safety and security programs, which the Secretariat agreed to do. States have to start motivating their Finance Ministers to encourage Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to include aviation in their country assistance strategies, which would make the financing of aviation safety and security projects more feasible. It was also noted that the GEASSA member countries had to be involved in the funding requests to the multilateral lending institutions.

The GEASSA accepted a project concerning the creation of a Center that would establish regional standards in the field of accident investigations and introduce accident reduction programs by applying appropriate risk mitigation techniques that could pool available resources and reduce costs. GEASSA is considering presenting this project to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) for funding and is asking states about their interest to join this initiative.

The ICAO/PAIGH cooperation project for the production of aeronautical charts was reactivated. This would involve sponsoring technical meetings of the Aeronautical Charts Committee of the Pan- American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH)/GREPECAS Task Force and to

find financial support for the PAIGH/ICAO Project for the production of Aeronautical Charts in those States that are not members of the PAIGH.

GEASSA urged States to examine the issue of the ICAO requirements with respect to the language proficiency requirements for air-traffic controllers.

The Aviation Security Awareness Training Program will include a second phase to be developed from 2007 to 2009, under a total of 44 training activities will be delivered.

Comprehensive Program on Rehabilitation and Maintenance of National Roads:

This program was initiated in 2004 with a projected lifetime of five years. It covers the six principal road corridors in the national road system, divided into 11 sections. In 2006 the program rehabilitated 269.64 kilometers and carried out preventive maintenance on 104.37 kilometers. In addition to the foregoing, periodic maintenance is carried out on 10,170 kilometers of roads, of which 9,708.6 kilometers correspond to the tertiary and secondary road networks and 463.8 kilometers to the primary network.

Contracts, financed with appropriations from the 2006 budget, were awarded to associated labor cooperatives and road maintenance administrators. Contracts have been signed with road administrators that cover 11,736 kilometers and with micro-enterprises that cover 11,722 kilometers with an initial outlay of 31,857 million pesos. Also, 1,985 kilometers have been covered by Comprehensive Maintenance Corridor Contracts, which entail an investment of 17,691 million pesos to carry out routine maintenance on a total of 13,707 kilometers of roads.

Road Infrastructure and Regional Development Program – Plan 2500

Plan 2500 was launched to aid regional integration and connectivity. Under the Plan, 37 contracts have been signed for a total value of 1,307,660.13 million pesos to cover 3,125.37 kilometers of roads. The length of paved road assigned to Fiscal Year 2006 is 719.11 kilometers with an investment of 478,135 million pesos.

Tunnel Construction

- **La Línea Tunnel:** La Línea Tunnel has advanced a total of 4392.7 m, equivalent to 51.3% of the total length of the pilot tunnel. Work is proceeding at both ends of the tunnel, which has progressed 1.5 kilometers from the Quindío entrance and 2.9 kilometers from the Tolima entrance.
- **Valle de Aburrá – Río Cauca Tunnel Link:** This tunnel is operational.

Concessions Program

- **Roads:** At present there are 16 road projects underway covering a total length of 2,628 kilometers (Origin to destination). In addition, two new road concession contracts were awarded: Rumichaca-Pasto-Chachagui, and Bucaramanga Metropolitan Zone. According to preliminary reports from the Organization and Adjudication Department of the INCO, the Institute proposes an ambitious

concessions plan that includes the following projects: Córdoba-Sucre (awarded at the beginning of 2007), Caribbean Route (Atlántico-Bolívar), Girardot-Ibagué-Cajamarca and Cúcuta Metropolitan Area. INCO is expected to have awarded these three new concessions by the end of the first half of 2007.

INCO is also expected to move forward with the restructuring of first-generation contracts so as to reduce minimum-income guarantees through the rescheduling of construction projects to be carried out, lengthening of the period before the roads revert to the state, and a move to third-generation schemes, under which most of the risk, including the commercial risk, is transferred to the concession holder.

- **Railroads:** At present there are two railroad concessions: Atlántico and Pacífico. With respect to the Atlantic Concession, there are two lines operational: Bogotá – Belencito (257 kilometers) since July 2003, for transporting cement; and La Loma – Puerto Drummond (192 kilometers) since 1995 for moving coal. A passenger transport operation continues on the Puerto Berrío-Barranca; Barranca-García Cadena; and Puerto Berrío-Cabañas lines using appropriate rolling stock to solve the problem of mass transport and restrict the use of ball-bearing cars which are unsafe.

The Sabana Tourist Train from Bogota to Zipaquirá continues to run. The main accomplishment in 2006 was the restructuring of the Atlántico concession agreement, which permitted the concession holder to sell shares, allowing the entry of new partners. This provided a solution to the ongoing disputes and enabled the State to recover its profits. The sections running south from Chiriguaná were separated from the concession and awarded to new concession holders through objective selection processes.

Sociedad Concesionaria de la Red Férrea del Pacífico S.A. (now *Tren de Occidente S.A.*), is committed to the rehabilitation, conservation, operation, and exploitation of the railroad infrastructure of the Pacifico network, which includes Buenaventura and La Felisa stations and the Zarzal – La Tebaida – Prominex branch line: a right-of-way leased on a section of the Cali line; as well as the construction, operation, and maintenance of a freight terminal at La Felisa.

A study is currently underway, the joint purpose of which is to look for viable mechanisms to operate the railroad as well as favorable conditions that might permit the provision of a service under the concession agreement. The study is being carried out from an operational and a financial perspective to identify factors that would affect the project.

- **Ports:** As regards port concessions, INCO is actively pursuing a review of the contract scheme in order to define guidelines to bear in mind in the event of the renegotiation of concessions awarded to Regional Port Companies. The country's port development over the next 30 years, bearing in mind the free-market expectations raised by the TLC and other trade agreements to be signed, depends to a large extent on the demands made by the government and the commitments offered by these companies in the wake of the review.

Access Channels to Public Ports

- **Dredging of the Access Channel to the Port of Buenaventura.** The appropriation for Phase I of the dredging was 81,576 million pesos. The project will be implemented over three fiscal years as follows: 20,663 million pesos in 2006; 32,315 million pesos in 2007; and 27,659 million pesos in 2008.
- **Dredging of the Access Channel to the Port of Barranquilla.** The third breakwater is under construction.
- **Dredging of the Access Channel to the Bay of Cartagena, Bocachica – Cartagena Sector, Bolívar. Second Stage.** The first stage concluded on October 12, 2004, and Agreement 2630/04 was signed with FONADE to complete the project according to design specifications. Investment Phase 1: 2,950.8 million pesos; Investment Phase 2: 2,246.6 million pesos; Project cost: 5,197.5 million persons.

Sea Ports

As specified by the CONPES documents, the Ministry of Transport is leading the Bahía Málaga Port project. The feasibility studies were contracted out in the second half of 2006 to a trust company called “Fiducomercio S.A.,” following a private call for bids to international consultants with recognized experience in the ports sector.

As an alternative form of port development, the national government encourages private investment in the development of new port projects in the country. These new projects are registered as applications for port concessions with the National Concessions Institute (INCO) and Río Grande de la Magdalena Autonomous Regional Corporation (CORMAGDALENA), which receive support from and are monitored by the Ministry of Transport. These include the following public utility port projects: Industrial Port of Aguadulce [(Buenaventura), Brisa - Dibuya Guajira].

Maritime Transport

As a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and in accordance with the 13 international maritime conventions adopted by the IMO to which Colombia has acceded through its National Maritime Authority, the Maritime Bureau (*Dirección General Marítima*), the country, by dint of continuous administrative, technical, and legal efforts and in coordination with other entities responsible for maritime issues, has evolved and performs functions in its capacity as a coastal state, port state, and flag state, and ensures compliance with the aforesaid international maritime conventions and with domestic regulations that it has developed in that regard.

The State also participates actively in different regional maritime fora that seek, through cooperation, to better implement international maritime conventions and define joint rules of action in the area of maritime transport. In this regard, it is worth bearing in mind the State’s consistent participation in meetings of the Operational Network for Regional Cooperation among Maritime Authorities in South America, Mexico, Panama, and Cuba (ROCRAM), the Viña del Mar Agreement on Port State Control of Vessels, and the Andean Committee of Water Transport Authorities (CAATA).

In reference to regional training on comprehensive security in maritime transport, Colombia benefits from training courses, seminars, and workshops held by ROCRAM by virtue of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Network and the IMO.

As to information exchange, the National Maritime Authority enjoys an active bilateral relationship, *inter alia*, with its counterparts in Chile, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Ecuador, and Panama, refining mechanisms for information exchange on international seagoing traffic.

Security Systems of Port Companies

The public-utility Regional Port Companies, are complying with the recommendations of the National Security Council for the ongoing improvement of comprehensive security, occupational health, and environmental protection, bearing in mind, with the consent of the national government, the International Safety Classification System developed by Det Norske Veritas (DNV), adapted to the situation in Colombia.

At present, the Regional Port Companies are participating in the Port Security Program with the Embassies of the United States/DEA and the United Kingdom in the area of drug control. They have also signed agreements in this regard with the embassies of France, Netherlands, and Spain.

Energy

Regional infrastructure projects for consolidation of an integrated energy market

Energy Integration

1. Colombia-Panama Electrical Interconnection Project:

This project consists of a high-voltage electrical transmission line that would connect the two countries, integrating the electricity market of the Andean community with the Central American regional electricity market. The project falls within the framework of the Plan Puebla Panamá Mesoamerican Energy Initiative and its feasibility and implementation take into account the environmental and social standards and requirements of each country.

The electrical studies carried out have confirmed the feasibility of implementing the transmission project using direct-current (HVDC) technology, with a voltage of between 250 and 400 kilovolts, and a carrying capacity of 300 megawatts; these are characteristics that would be finalized in the basic engineering and pre-design studies, at present being tendered. The interconnection line would have an overall length of 614 kilometers, of which 340 kilometers would be built by Colombia and 274 kilometers by Panama.

To implement the project, the companies ISA and ETESA examined the advisability of obtaining financing and approached the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) seeking technical cooperation schemes applicable to regional initiatives. The interconnection project is consistent with IDB policy for the sector inasmuch as it supports initiatives that are part of the “Matrix of Actions for the Mesoamerican Energy Integration Program (PIEM)”. With this rationale, and because the project is a priority for the countries, of a regional nature, and part of the PPP Mesoamerican Energy

Initiative, the IDB supported the efforts of the companies in preparing the project and securing its approval. The cooperation will be provided over a period of 24 months in 2007 and 2008.

The intention is to seek financing for the technical, environmental, economic-financial, and regulatory studies needed to proceed with the electrical interconnection project between Panama and Colombia. To date, progress has been made in the areas of basic engineering and pre-design, economic and financial evaluation, environmental impact study, and harmonization of regulations.

2. Project “Strengthening Colombia-Ecuador Electrical Interconnection”

Work started on the Betania- Altamira- Mocoa- Jamondino- Ecuadorian Border 230 kV double-circuit interconnection line project and associated works. This project is being carried out by Empresa de Energía de Bogotá, which began operations in June 2007. The project will expand the energy carrying capacity to Ecuador from 295 MW at present to 500 MW in the course of 2007.

3. Venezuela-Colombia-Panama Gas Interconnection Project

The project consists of extending the Colombian-Venezuelan gas line -currently under construction- to Panama. This idea has received fresh impetus following the signing of a Memorandum for the Creation of a Negotiating Committee by the Presidents of Colombia, Venezuela and Panama on July 8, 2006. On March 6 and 7 teams of experts from the three countries met in Caracas to finalize the terms of reference for contracting the necessary study. The first part of the gas line -the Ballenas-Maracaibo section- is scheduled for opening in July 2007.

4. Fuel marketing in the border area – Agreement

Colombia and Venezuela signed a “framework fuel supply contract between Petróleos de Venezuela S.A (PDVSA) and Ecopetrol, S. A. pursuant to the Punto Fijo Agreement”. Pending signing are the specific contracts for the zones of Norte de Santander, followed by Arauca and finally Guainía and Vichada. The Binational Committee of Legal and Logistical Experts met on February 23, 2007.

5. Oil pipeline / multi-purpose pipeline to the Colombian Pacific Coast

A binational group is studying different alternatives for the construction of an oil pipeline and/or a multi-purpose pipeline from Venezuela to the Colombian Pacific coast. The groups of experts will deliver a report to the project Steering Committee which, in turn, will present it to the appropriate ministers for approval, after which it will be submitted to the presidents of either country for consideration.

6. Central America - Gas Interconnection Project

The objective is to introduce natural gas in Central America. PriceWaterhouse Coopers, Freyre y Asociadas, Montamant y Asociados have been hired through the IDB to prepare a supply and demand study, a technical, economic, environmental, and legal evaluation, as well as a plan of action for the project’s implementation and financing. The study began on September 1, 2006. The countries undertook to provide the information needed for the study and to expedite the exchange of that information.

7. Regional Petroleum Products Market Project

The purpose of this project is to build a high-conversion refinery in Central America to produce petroleum products for the whole region. The project would have an estimated profitability of 14.5% with installed capacity of 360,000 barrels per day; the investment would be approximately US\$ 8,000 million.

More than 60 companies were invited to tender; 11 of them expressed their interest and the technical committee qualified four of them (Reliance Industries Limited, China National Petroleum Corporation, Valero Energy Corporation, ITOCHU Corporation). The tender is to be awarded in March 2008.

Electrical infrastructure financing funds

Policies implemented to improve quality of life for low-income populations

1. Fund for the Electrification of Non-Interconnected Zones (FAZNI)

The Support Fund for the Electrification of Non-interconnected Zones was created in 2001 by Law 633. Law 1099 of 2006 extended FAZNI until December 31, 2014, permitting increased investment in improvement of extant electrical infrastructure as well as construction of new infrastructure in non-interconnected zones.

As the table shows, in 2006 a total of 29,500 million pesos in funding was released to finance infrastructure projects in non-interconnected zones in eight departments. This benefited 12,675 low-income residents of the country's non-interconnected zones.

2. Fund for Electrification of Rural Interconnected Areas (FAER)

By Article 105 of Law 788 of 2002 and its Regulatory Decree 3652 of 2003, the national government, created the Fund for Electrification of Rural Interconnected Areas (FAER) in a bid to extend electrification coverage in certain rural areas of the country. The Fund will remain in force until 2009.

Thus far, the FAER Administration Committee has approved allocation of 104,462 million pesos to more than 200 projects, in particular for the Macizo Colombiano Electrification Plan which comprises 104 projects and has been allocated a total of 34,020 million pesos. The purpose of these projects is to solve the electricity supply problem of more than 24,046 homes in rural areas in 20 departments.

Electricity Networks Normalization Program (PRONE)

One of the projects funded by FAER is the Electricity Networks Normalization Program, whose purpose, pursuant to Article 63 of Law 812 of 2003, is to improve the service and reduce non-technical losses associated with 'subnormal' districts (shantytowns), for which the PRONE Administration Support Committee has approved more than 30,849 million pesos in funding, enabling the construction of infrastructure to improve the electricity supply to 30,250 homes located in 'subnormal' districts in the departments of Bolívar, Atlántico, Cesar, Magdalena, and Tolima.

Environmental management in the area of energy and access to economically efficient technologies

The National Energy Plan provides that rational and efficient energy use constitutes an effective measure for stimulating economic growth, social advancement and, therefore, national well-being, thereby contributing to sustainable development in Colombia. Law 697 of 2001 declared rational and efficient energy use to be a matter of public social interest and of benefit to the country.

The programs on rational and efficient energy use in the transport sector, such as the inclusion of biofuel mixtures, promotion of efficient mass transit systems in large cities, improvement of inter-municipal freight transport corridors (including tunnel construction), are designed to lower gasoline and ACPM fuel demand and reduce crude import needs to produce those byproducts. Rational and efficient energy use also helps to consolidate competitiveness initiatives in Colombia's energy markets and, at the same time, reduces or delays energy infrastructure expansion needs in the country.

The aims of the biofuels program in Colombia are to: i) reduce fossil-fuel imports; ii) contribute to growth; iii) boost competitiveness in productive and transport sectors; and, iv) reduce air pollution and adverse effects on health. Both the strategic plan of the transport sector and the national policy on cleaner production contain components of this effort.

Colombia is a member of the Inter-Sectoral Commission on Rational Use of Energy and Non-Conventional Energy Sources (CIURE) and participates in the Commission's programs that seek, *inter alia*, to promote projects on non-conventional energy sources and energy efficiency, including cleaner or renewable energy projects, with particular attention to non-interconnected zones, as well as substitution of traditional fuels with other potentially cleaner fuels, and, in particular, promotion and use of biofuels.

Colombia has also participated in the formulation and implementation of Global Environment Fund projects on climate change connected with renewable energy sources, such as biomass cogeneration in the sugar sector, from which the country has been gaining experience and identified obstacles and solutions for the introduction of energies of this type based on the potential in place in productive sectors. Colombia has been a pioneer in the formulation of marketable renewable energy projects under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The best-known case is the wind energy project of the Medellin State Companies in Alta Guajira, which has signed greenhouse gas Emissions Reduction Purchase Agreements (ERPAs).

Projects ongoing and under development

Ethanol: The country started to implement the fuel alcohol initiative in the southwest region, where the first sugarcane alcohol plant opened on October 28, 2005. At present there are five plants operating (INCAUCA, PROVIDENCIA, MANUELITA, MAYAGUÉZ, RISARALDA), which daily produce around 1,050,000 liters of fuel alcohol per day from sugarcane, which mainly supplies the domestic market.

National demand is estimated at approximately 1.5 million liters a day to cover 10%-ethanol mixture needs. There are several alcohol production projects underway in the country based on different raw materials, such as sugarcane, beet, and cassava, for example.

Biodiesel: at present there are five palm oil production projects under development: three in the north region (OLEOFLORES, ODIN ENERGY, BIOCMBUSTIBLES SOTENIBLES DEL CARIBE) and two in the west region (BIOCASTILLA, BIO D SA), which, overall, would produce 315,000 tons per hectare by the end of 2007.

There are also four other projects under development: one in the central zone (ECOPETROL), one in the east region (MANUELITA), one in the west region, and one in the north. These projects are expected to come on stream in 2008 and produce an estimated 400,000 tons per year. Estimated domestic biodiesel demand is 200,000 tons per year, to cover a 5% mixture. The surplus output would be for export.

Energy and the environment

Colombia agrees with the central argument under discussion, which has to do with energy supply security, and for that reason has instituted a reorganization and reorientation process at the institutional level in the energy sector in tandem with the development of an effective, efficient, and rational plan for exploitation of mineral and energy resources.

In the oil and gas sectors, the Colombian national oil company (Ecopetrol) has given considerable impetus to the Gas Program for rural areas, which is designed to substitute wood with liquefied petroleum gas as a fuel source. This has led to an increase in demand for gas and a 50% drop in consumption of wood for fuel compared with previous decades.

As regards liquid fuels, Law 693 of 2001 has led to studies and projects on use of biofuels, such as gasoline and alcohol mixtures. The law provides that from 2005 onward any city with more than 500,000 inhabitants is required to implement the practice of mixing gasoline and oxygen components in their fuels.

This, and other measures connected with fuel quality standards and characteristics, has led to the emergence in the country of a set of rules and proposed laws to promote the use of biofuels, steering energy regulations, from both an institutional and a business perspective, toward the promotion of generation and use of clean fuels in our country.

The adoption of new energy sources and technological advances in this field are an important and pivotal variable as far as the objective of energy security and sustainability is concerned. It is expected that the introduction of more-efficient and ecologically sound technologies will contribute to the creation of more-productive energy systems that use available resources more efficiently.

In keeping with the foregoing, Law 697 of 2001 and Decree 3683 of 2003 encourage efficient energy use and the development of non-conventional sources. Thus, the aim of energies for fuels and their byproducts is to reduce dependence on gasoline and diesel as exclusive energy sources through development of alternative sources, such as natural vehicle gas, biodiesel, and ethanol-based oxygenated gasoline. Accordingly, the environmental impact of the energy policy will be achieved through the development of mechanisms that reflect the ecological costs of fuel use and establishment of quality standards for the use of natural gas on a commercial and industrial scale in order to improve controls for ensuring compliance with safety standards on fuel handling.

Education

Access to education

Elementary and secondary education

Under the coverage extension policy, between 2002 and 2006, 1,419,427 new places were created in preschool, elementary, and secondary education: 717,462 through services contracts and 701,965 through reorganization, implementation of flexible education models, and investment in schools infrastructure. As a result of the foregoing, official enrolment went up by 27.4% from 7.8 million to 9.2 million and total gross coverage at the pre-school, elementary, and secondary levels rose from 82% to 90%. In Colombia, according to the Households Survey, the attendance rates in 2005 were 88.3% for girls and 87.4% for boys.

As regards coverage of vulnerable groups in the education sector, between 2003 and 2006, 559,500 new places were created for this population. Furthermore, in 2006 the number of displaced students covered by the education system was 234,018.

The goal for 2010 is to universalize education for the entire school-age population, providing opportunities for access to the education system for vulnerable groups, fostering school attachment, and fulfilling the constitutional mandate that makes education free and compulsory from preschool to ninth grade, without prejudice to the charging of a fee on an ability-to-pay basis.

The efforts to broaden coverage have led to a rise in the national average student-teacher ratio from the 26.7 in 2002 to 30 in 2006, meeting the government's goal for the four-year period. Under the adult literacy program, 392,560 young people and adults were taught to read and write between 2003 and 2006, which represents 98% of the 2002-2006 goal (400,000 young people and adults).

Over the same period school attachment strategies were implemented in cooperation with subnational education authorities (Education Secretariats), in particular targeting vulnerable groups. In order to organize and ensure continuity in the availability of education services, management of the matriculation process was strengthened as a planning tool to ensure continued attendance by overage students and to organize the intake of new students in schools, in addition to which the integration process was consolidated for official education institutions (5,938 institutions with 25,944 facilities that cover 88% of all officially enrolled students), so that they can offer a complete elementary cycle in order to make it easier for students to advance normally through different grades and levels. At the same time, implementation was promoted of school transport programs (in particular in areas with difficult access), school infrastructure projects to improve and extend education services, and school meal programs to help improve student performance and retention.

Higher education

The educational development plan set a four-year goal of creating 400,000 places, which would increase coverage to 25%, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goal in this regard.

One aspect to be highlighted with regard to higher education is the absorption rate in higher learning institutions (measured by the ratio between students that sit the State Examination and the

actual number of entrants accepted) which went up from 53.6% in 2002 to 65.5% in 2005. Mention should also be made of four aspects that emerge from a comparison of the 2002 intake with the preliminary 2006 figures:

- An increase in official places of 249,066 (includes 130,227 in the National Apprenticeship Service [SENA]);
- The participation of public higher-education facilities in total enrolment ascended from 41.7% to 48.8%;
- The participation of professional technical and technological education in total higher-education enrolment went up from 18.3% to 25.1%; and
- Enrolment in masters and doctorate programs rose by 82.8% from 7,126 to 13,028 students.

The policy to expand coverage is implemented via five strategies: i) The ICETEX educational credits program for lower-income students, with 76,337 legally approved credits; ii) Support for the management of higher-education facilities through the design of improvement plans at 18 facilities; also, an additional 43 higher-education facilities received assistance to implement an academic and administrative information management system; iii) Creation of 82 Higher-Education Community Centers (CERES), 53% of which are operational; and promotion of the use of new methodologies with the creation of the Higher-Education Virtual Resources Bank, which the Ministry publishes on its webpage, with 1,435 learning resources available to higher-education facilities; iv) Student retention: between 2003 and 2005 the retention rate increased by 3.6 percentage points from 83.5% to 87%, which means that 30,023 more students have remained in the system. The annual dropout rate for the first half of 2006 is 12.9%, which marked a decline when compared with the 2003 rate of 16.4%; and, v) Promotion of professional technical and technological education: in keeping with the standards in force, permits were issued to 42 technical programs, 252 technological programs, and 180 induction programs (professional technical and technological cycles).

The second half of 2005 saw the start of the project on Strengthening Technical and Technological Training which adopts four strategies: i) Support for investment projects on strengthening the supply of technical and technological education services; ii) Support for technical and technological training programs at Regional Higher Education Centers; iii) Institutional management support for higher-education governing bodies; and, iv) Management and administration. The project is supported by a US\$ 35 million investment program, US\$25 million funds provided by multilateral banks.

Quality of education

The purpose of the policy on education quality is for all students, regardless of their social, cultural, or economic background, to acquire knowledge and develop basic skills necessary to meet the challenges they encounter in their private, social, and working lives, and to continue to learn throughout life. The education quality improvement programs are as follows:

- **Social dissemination and acquisition of basic skill standards:**

Colombia is committed to improving the quality of education and has continued to work alongside teachers, scholars, academics, and professionals from the most varied possible range of disciplines on the design of basic standards that would enable

children not only to develop communication or, mathematical, and scientific skills but also, and perhaps most importantly, competencies to exercise their rights and perform their obligations as good citizens. Through the formulation and application of skill standards citizens extend solidarity ties, open up spaces for participation, and develop rules for healthy coexistence.

The standards for language and mathematics were disseminated in 2003, and those for natural and social sciences as well as civics, in 2004. The standards for English as a foreign language were published in 2006. Furthermore, training was given to 18,300 teachers and head teachers in their use. The civics program identifies basic standards which are imparted in three contexts: 1) coexistence and peace; 2) participation and democratic responsibility; and, 3) plurality, identity, and appreciation of differences in the framework of awareness and observance of human rights. The civics standards are proposed for all grades of elementary and secondary education.

- **Student evaluation:** A 46-point increase in the national average score in each area of the core curriculum for the State higher-education entrance exam. Overall, 13% of institutions scored in the 'HIGH' category in State tests. In order to measure skills development levels in students, every three years all fifth- to ninth-grade students in all state and private schools in the country take SABER tests. Furthermore, secondary school diploma exams, which are a higher-education entrance requirement, are held twice a year. The country also takes part in international evaluations in order to measure its performance in comparison with other nations.

Supplementary SABER tests were held for B schedule fifth- to ninth-grade students in the first half of 2006. On that occasion 234,170 students were evaluated through a total of 1,170,850 tests, the results of which are being processed.

As regards the State higher-education entrance exam, there is a rising trend in the percentage of education facilities that score in the 'Very Superior' category. Furthermore, the use has been encouraged of the results of the SABER tests and State higher-education entrance exams as points of reference for the improvement plans that education facilities are required to prepare and implement in order to enhance student learning. The results of student evaluations in the SABER tests, by institution, may be consulted at www.mineduacion.gov.co/saber. In 2006, technical assistance was offered to the 11 subnational entities that performed least well, and we shall be covering the remaining 78 subnational entities in 2007. In 2006, Colombia participated in three international evaluations (TIMSS, PISA and LLECE) the results of which will be published in 2008.

- **Promotion and assurance of education quality at preschool, elementary, and secondary levels:** School management mentoring at 514 underperforming education facilities in rural and urban areas; 2,146 education facilities in rural and urban areas have institutional improvement programs underway with technical assistance provided by Education Secretariats; 150 important basic-capacity-building initiatives are being mentored through learning communities and networks; 20 Education

Secretariats implement support plans that are consistent with education facility improvement plans.

- **Improvement plans:** Education Secretariats (departmental and municipal) are providing guidance in the design and implementation of improvement plans at education facilities to address the areas that, based on the results of the SABER tests and State Exams, require strengthening or further development, with a view to modifying Institutional Education Plans (PEI).

Education facilities design their improvement plans based on the results of the evaluations. To carry out this strategy, the Ministry of National Education, with the support of 18 strategic partners (mainly universities) and the Ministry of Education of Cuba, put into effect the school management capacity-building program in subnational entities. This program centered on design and implementation of the institutional improvement plan in which rectors and coordinators comprised the group targeted for strengthening. In 2006, to ensure broader coverage, Colombia put into practice a strengthening strategy at all 78 certified Education Secretariats, with a view to preparing support plans for the improvement process, so that they might coach the education facilities under their jurisdiction in the implementation of the institutional improvement plan.

- **Important initiatives:** The National Education Forum on Skills was held in 2006 with the participation of approximately 1200 persons from the education community. In 2007, the theme of the National Education Forum, to be held in October, will be education management and quality assurance
- **Use of media and resources in education:** This strategy includes infrastructure provision, connectivity, teacher training, and development of course content. With respect to the infrastructure provision component, 300 facilities received 4,528 computers under the “Computers to Educate” program in 2006. As regards connectivity, in 2006, Phase II field studies were conducted and pilot connectivity equipment installed to benefit 3,793 facilities across the country. In addition, maintenance was carried out on 14,132 PCs at 644 education centers.

In the teacher-training component, in 2006, instruction in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) was provided to 25,976 teachers, making a total of 102,696 for the four-year period from 2002 to 2006, which exceeded the target of 100,000 teachers trained in this area. Furthermore, in 2006, 1760 teachers receive training in the use of audiovisual media tools and teaching methodologies for basic-capacity-building for students, while 9,013 teachers were trained in the use of municipal public libraries equipped by the National Reading and Libraries Plan for development of communication skills.

As regards educational television programs, a series was designed that is broadcast by *Señal Colombia*, whose content, narrative approach and audiovisual esthetics are pertinent for enhancing the skill levels where most weaknesses have been identified in SABER tests.

As for development of course content based on the use of new technologies, the Education Portal (www.colombiaaprende.edu.co) continues to be developed as the education community's main access and interface mechanism for basic-skills development. *Colombia Aprende* ['Colombia Learns'] is part of a Latin American Network of Education Portals, through which the country shares and receives online course contents and educational products from portals in Chile, Argentina, Mexico, and Ecuador, among other countries. It also offers services that enable the creation of learning networks and implementation of collaborative projects. After a number of years of operation, at present *Colombia Aprende* has over 150,000 registered users and, on average, receives 11,000 hits a day.

Aims: connect 2,100 education facilities in rural and urban areas that have benefited from computers; equip 3,200 education facilities in rural and urban areas with wideband Internet connection; 3,150 education facilities in rural and urban areas implement plans to harness ICTs and media in education.

- **Strengthening of crosscutting programs:** Activities are underway to strengthen the education sector in the generation of crosscutting programs on sex education, human rights education, and environmental education to be taught at all education facilities in the country.
- **Human rights education:** The Ministry of Education and the Ombudsman are designing and pursuing joint measures in the framework of the National Human Rights Education Plan (PLANEDH), in coordination with the Office of the Vice President of the Republic and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Pilot Project on Education for Human Rights is currently in progress in five departments of the country (Bolívar, Boyacá, Córdoba, Guaviare, and Huila). Its core objective is to develop strategies and proposals to include human rights as a crosscutting theme in education facilities, based on an analysis of regional contacts, in order to help boys, girls and young people to become empowered as individuals with rights and responsibilities, and augment their capacity as persons with rights to change their environments and, in a more conscious manner, the circumstances that impair or prevent the exercise of their rights. There are also two international programs underway (Peace Games, with the USA, and Pedagogical Kit, with France) which encourage the exercise of human rights. These programs are being carried out in Norte de Santander (Peace Games) and Caquetá (Pedagogical Kit).
- **Sex education and construction of civic mindedness:** The purpose of the project is to strengthen the education system through the comprehensive adoption of a gender-aware human, sexual and reproductive rights-based approach in school and non-school environments. This approach led to the creation of a conceptual and operational educational project based on consensus-building processes that included representatives from public and private institutions and various sectors involved in the issue. The project is being implemented at seven subnational entities in the country which were chosen as demonstration areas in order to adjust and validate the project's outcomes.

- **Environmental education:** The national policy on environmental education and strategies was adopted in the country for inclusion of the environmental dimension in Formal Education (School-Based Environmental Projects –PRAEs) and Non-Formal Education (PROCEDAS).

The program is currently operating in 12 departments through a training strategy for teachers and outreach workers (approximately 20 PRAE in each department: Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cauca, Caldas, Córdoba, Guaviare, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Risaralda, Quindío), where the aim is to have environmental education that leads to acquisition of knowledge, respect, and ethical and responsible stewardship of the environment. Accordingly, PRAEs focus on local environmental issues connected with hygiene and sanitation as well as on issues such as adequate water, air, noise control, and solid-waste management, risk awareness, climate change, and biodiversity conservation, among others.

- **Job skills, vocational training, and relevance of secondary education:** The core aspect of this policy is linkage between technical secondary education and SENA, with a view to provision of training in specific job skills through the transfer of skills-based curricula, teacher-training, technical assistance for implementation of programs in the framework of the National Job Classification System, and certification of students who complete their training, including higher technical and technological training.

As result of the efforts of the Ministry of Education from 2003 to 2006, technical assistance was provided to 29 Education Secretariats and 186 education facilities. Furthermore, in 2006, Education Secretariats reported that 583 education facilities provided training in general job skills and 185 offered enterprise training programs.

In tandem with the Ministry of Education, SENA has established linkages with secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the majority of subnational entities in the country in 2006, 1,420 education facilities and 119,107 students were involved in linkage processes for specific job-skill training.

- **Promotion of bilingualism in preschool, elementary, and secondary education:** In all, 10% of 11th grade students scored a grade of B1 in the English test. The initiative of the Ministry of National Education to design a program to improve the quality of English teaching in Colombia undoubtedly arose from the concern of the education sector to have in place clear guidelines to facilitate the improvement and permanent monitoring of English teaching and learning in the country as well as the need to ensure that students became more competitive.

The two main teacher-training objectives of the 2004-2009 National Bilingualism Program are improvement in language skills and improvement in the methodologies of English teachers at State elementary and secondary schools.

- **Attention to Special Education Needs:** Since 2005 the government has pursued an inclusive education policy since 2005 designed to ensure that vulnerable groups traditionally excluded from formal education have their needs served at the education facilities attended by the rest of the community.

In 2005 the Inclusion Index was adapted to include an indicator that referred specifically to persons with disabilities: Indicator of Good Practices in Inclusive Education. However, in 2006 the Inclusion Index returned to its original format for Latin America and the Caribbean. A large-scale program on Inclusive Quality Education is currently underway in the country, in order to secure the commitment of several municipal governments to transforming their municipalities and education facilities into inclusive municipalities and schools. The purpose of the program is to improve opportunities of access, retention, and advancement for boys, girls, and young people in vulnerable and diverse population groups; seek to ensure that they acquire a significant level of knowledge, consistent with their condition and needs, and eliminate obstacles to their education and participation.

Higher-Education Quality Assurance System

The main stride was the organization of the Higher-Education Quality Assurance System, which brings together various agencies as well as information, evaluation, and promotion strategies. The National Interagency Committee on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CONACES) was created as part of the system. At present, the system has an information technology tool called SACES that expedites the necessary qualified registration process involving the interaction of all the actors involved in the system (higher education facilities, academic peers, CONACES, and the Ministry), as well as making it possible to hold virtual meetings and monitor transparency in the process. In addition, under development in the SACES is the module to support the evaluation process for program quality accreditation.

As regards qualified registration of academic programs, in 2004-2006, 3,858 programs were evaluated, equivalent to 94.1% of the goal for the four-year period. A total of 661 academic program registrations had been annulled for failure to apply for qualified registration in a timely manner. These annulments have purged the supply of academic programs, thereby ensuring that programs offered in the areas of law, engineering, medicine, administration, accountancy and economics meet the minimum quality requirements.

Accreditation of programs and institutions

The National Accreditation Council (CNA) gave particular attention to voluntary accreditation of quality programs and institutions. Between 2003 and 2006, the CAN issued quality accreditation to 294 programs. Also, during this period accreditations were granted to 12 higher-education facilities (three of them run by the State), which is the highest quality certification issued by the Ministry of Education, based on a review by the CNA.

Furthermore, between 2003 and 2006, the associations of faculties or professionals or of academic peers adopted 19 minimum-quality standards or requirements to be met by graduate programs in administration, law, architecture, health sciences, engineering, economics, exact and natural sciences, communication and information, agricultural science, veterinary and related

medicine, chartered accounting, psychology, design, sports or recreation, pharmacy; by graduate and specialized degree programs in education; by training programs up to professional level in pre-university courses in the areas of engineering, information technology and administration, as well as by postgraduate programs.

Education quality evaluation (ECAE tests)

From 2003 to August 2006, 258,800 students were evaluated in 52 higher education programs, 48 university programs, and two professional technical and technological programs. The last tests in June 2006 evaluated 28 graduate programs; 27 more programs were assessed in the second half of the year to reach a total of 55 programs evaluated out of 60 basic core curricula, including three professional technical and technological programs.

Labor Market Observatory

In order to improve the quality and relevance of higher-education programs, the Ministry of Education initiated the creation of the Labor Market Observatory for graduates, which went into operation in November 2005. This information system makes it possible to follow up on graduates in the country, initially from higher-education facilities, in order to examine working conditions and demand trends for professionals in the labor market. The first graduate occupation analyses were based on follow-up conducted on 463,373 graduates from higher-education institutions between the first half of 2001 and the first half of 2004. The findings may be consulted at www.graduadoscolombia.edu.co

Internationalization of Higher Education

The Ministry has participated in the international trade negotiations for the FTA with the United States and at present with Central America. It has also been involved in several integration processes in which quality is one of the main factors. The foregoing include support for the projects “Alpha Tuning Latin America” and “UEALC 6X4. A dialogue of knowledge,” which are moving forward with the harmonization of academic aspects of higher-education programs. These projects, in which higher-education institutions play the lead role, serve to shed light on the international climate and trends as well as to reach agreements at the domestic level on important higher-education issues. Support has also been provided to services export initiatives by higher-education institutions by means of mentoring of academic missions, such as the one that attended the Nafsa Fair, in Montréal, Canada.

In addition, Colombia has synchronized academic criteria with countries such as Spain, Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, among others, in order to accredit higher-education degrees obtained at institutions abroad. In 2005 and thus far in 2006, 1,850 higher-education degrees have been accredited.

Improvement of Efficiency in the Education Sector

As a decentralized sector, the Ministry of Education’s activities focus on its core functions as well as strengthening the performance and productivity of subnational entities (Education Secretariats) in order to ensure implementation and sustainability of long-term policies. To that end, it is essential to

streamline and enhance the efficiency of processes, modernize technological and communications infrastructure, and improve the quality and timeliness of information in the sector.

Modernization of Education Secretariats

Strategies are being pursued to provide advisory and technical assistance services tailored to the specific needs of subnational entities, in particular, by holding of training workshops, forums, field trips, and regional roundtables. National encounters with Secretaries and training and capacity-building workshops with their staff are held on a periodic basis in order to maintain a strategic overview of progress and the challenges facing the sector, in particular with respect to efficient use of physical, human, and financial resources; planning and evaluation of performance results; updating and application of standards; access to education and school attachment for children and youth, and strengthening of the quality cycle. At the same time, at both the national and the subnational level there have been efforts to promote accountability and societal control through public assemblies at which various sectors of society express their views on the results and the challenges facing the sector.

With respect to information systems, an enrolment management system (SIMAT) is in the process of introduction and currently in use at 20 Education Secretariats. A payroll system has been implemented at 21 Education Secretariats and the development has commenced of human resources, financial management and education quality systems.

Improvement of efficiency in higher education

In 2004, the Ministry of National Education began to strengthen the National Higher Education Information System (SNIES), in order to keep current information with which to provide comprehensive, up-to-date and reliable information to users of the higher education system on institutions, the academic courses they offer, and their characteristics. The restructured SNIES has a central system that stores aggregate information using 55 basic knowledge cores. It also has management systems that are being implemented at each of the 275 institutions in the country, into which information from the internal systems of the each higher-education facility will be fed.

To put this new concept for the SNIE into effect, the Ministry has provided support for the modernization of 38 internal institutional systems, through Academusoft, and has prepared the design and technology for the SNIES, which are being implemented initially in a pilot sample of 50 institutions, which represents 65% of the total enrolment. The Ministry has decided to bring forward the implementation of the new system at the remainder of the institutions in 2006, in order to ensure its sustainability.

Health

Child health and welfare

The Child Health and Welfare Management Model is a set of conceptual and methodological guidelines for designing child health plans based on consensus between the public and local authorities, facilitating extant tools, instruments, and methodologies in keeping with local realities, with the purpose of offering all children an equal start in life within a harmonious and equitable

environment in order to ensure sustainable human development, irrespective of differences of race, creed, or socioeconomic or cultural situation.

The strategy (AIEPI) being implemented by the Colombian government is designed to deliver care to children under five years old, the group with the highest incidence of death and illness caused by infectious diseases. Their impact is due in particular to the immaturity of the immune system which is not yet fully developed at that age, making them vulnerable to illness and death from these causes.

The strategy includes a local management component which seeks to strengthen integration of services, making it possible to create or strengthen healthcare networks across different levels, be it at a single institution or at various institutions in different sectors and the community.

In the service delivery complement the aim is to provide guidance for planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation processes with a view to implementing the strategy on Comprehensive Care for Prevalent Childhood Diseases in the context of the health services. To that end, health outreach enterprises, administrators of the subsidized system, and subnational entities are responsible for delivering comprehensive care in accordance with their statutory competencies and obligations.

TB Prevention and Control

Colombia adopted the “Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course” (DOTS) strategy in 2000, and in 2006 began to adopt the guidelines under the global “Stop TB” strategy proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) for 2006-2015 in a bid to accomplish the goal of eliminating TB as a public health problem by 2050 and ensure a TB-free world.

In order to strengthen departmental and district TB prevention and control programs and augment diagnosis and treatment of respiratory symptoms the government transferred 1,689 million pesos in 2006 and a further 3,021 million pesos in 2007. The government also appropriated investment and operational funds for the purchase and distribution of TB drugs.

Diagnosis and clinical management of dengue

As this is a critical component that impacts on the frequency of complications and deaths from dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) in the department, ongoing instruction is provided to all health professionals, in training and in practice, with a view to identification, adequate clinical observation, and timely and level-appropriate treatment measures.

Community-based communication and extension activities were implemented to help families to understand when to seek medical attention in order to improve treatment and care of patients. Preparatory measures are also taken to ensure the capacity of health facilities to receive high numbers of patients.

Dengue public health surveillance

Surveillance of dengue-related morbidity and mortality is a component of the SIVIGILA Transmissible Events and Preventable Death Surveillance System and any measures adopted are

required to be carried out in accordance with the jurisdictions established for that purpose of the various system actors.

The dengue surveillance system gives particular attention to the accuracy of morbidity information on classical and hemorrhagic dengue. For that reason, the Plan has to provide for dissemination and adoption of uniform case diagnosis and reporting criteria in keeping with the Ministry of Health's public health surveillance protocols.

Over the past year 22,205 cases of classical dengue and 3,383 of hemorrhagic dengue were reported to SIVIGILA. In the past three years there has been a downward trend in the number of cases.

Owing to the magnitude and seriousness of dengue, the Ministry for Social Welfare has made this disease one of its public health priorities, in keeping with the priorities of the international community and the Millennium Development Goals. One of the goals of the national government's development plan is a 50% reduction in dengue-related complications and deaths in at-risk populations in Colombia.

The strategies for combating dengue are as follows:

- Diagnosis and clinical management of dengue
- Dengue public health surveillance
- Selective and integrated vector control
- Design and implementation of contingency plans
- Operational research
- Validation of the COMBI strategy for conduct changed to combat dengue transmission and illness.
- Implementation of an integrated management approach for dengue prevention and control in regional areas of the country.

Goals of the development plan for malaria

Owing to the magnitude and seriousness of malaria, the Ministry for Social Welfare has made this disease one of its public health priorities, in keeping with the priorities of the international community and the Millennium Development Goals. One of the goals of the national government's development plan is a 50% reduction in malaria-related complications and deaths in at-risk populations in Colombia.

The strategies for combating malaria are as follows:

- Strengthening of the management capacity of VTD programs
- Timely diagnosis and treatment of malaria
- Malaria public health surveillance
- Selective and integrated vector control
- Design and implementation of contingency plans
- Operational research

Tobacco Control

The Ministry for Social Welfare is committed to taking steps to promote and develop strategies for prevention and control of the use, marketing and advertising of tobacco and tobacco products in the national territory.

Law 1109 of December 27, 2006, approved the Framework Agreement for Tobacco Control which is currently under review by the Constitutional Court

Similarly, bill 284 of 2006, which has been approved by the Senate, is currently before the Seventh Committee of the Chamber. The aim of the propose legislation is to protect minors and adult non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco.

To protect non-smokers, the Ministry for Social Welfare is at present spearheading strategies for “Smoke-free institutions and environments” and “Smoke-free schools” designed to provide opportunities for members of the education community and the public at large to implement early smoking prevention initiatives and creation of smoke-free institutional environments.

Quality of services

The Working Group on Quality of Services has made significant strides with the development of the National Pharmaceutical Policy, implementation of the Drug Pricing Policy, and development of the Drug Price Information System (SISMED), which is proceeding at present.

As regards the Plan of Action, there has been progress in the two following areas:

- Colombia “reaffirms its commitment to health sector reform in order to make it more supportive, with particular attention given to core public health functions, quality of care, equality of access to services, and service coverage, especially where disease prevention and health promotion are concerned, and to improve efficiency in use of resources and administration of services.” In this connection, there has been positive progress with the enactment and implementation of Decree 2200 of 2005, which introduces the single-dose medication system. Advances in technology evaluation and biomedical technology management have also contributed to improvements in the use of resources and administration of services in the health sector.
- “Design of procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative health practices and alternative medicinal products in order to protect public safety and share experiences and knowledge with other countries in the Americas. “ As regards alternative medicines, the relevant standards on homeopathic drugs have been developed; the government adopted Decrees 2266 of 2004, 3553 of 2004, and 1737 of 2005.

Migration

Entry of Migrant Workers

In Colombia, the differences among foreigners who enter the country under a temporary visa have to do with their visa category, which depends on their ties to the country: TEMPORARY: worker, spouse or permanent partner of a Colombian national; parent of a Colombian national; religious, special, technical visitor. Persons who have held a temporary visa in the worker, religious, or special categories for five years may apply for a qualified foreign resident visa, which is of indefinite duration. Holders of temporary visas as the spouse or parent of a Colombian national may apply for a qualified foreign resident visa after three years.

Persons entitled to work

Temporary workers' visas are granted in accordance with **Decree 4000 of 2004**, which contains provisions on the issuance of visas, control and regularization of foreigners, and other immigration rules.

Dissemination of the labor rights of migrant workers

As a member of the Andean Community (CAN), Colombia is committed to the integration process. In that context, a number of deadlines are already in place for countries to move forward with the preparation of the new regulatory framework for Andean migrants, under which any citizen of a CAN country would be treated as a national of other CAN countries, following a Community-wide policy harmonization process.

In the framework of the Andean Community there are the number of standards that govern certain aspects of movements of persons, such as the Andean Instruments on Labor Migration ([Decision 545](#)), which applies strictly to workers, and on Social Security ([Decision 583](#)).

With a view to the creation of the Common Market, the Andean countries propose another series of measures designed to introduce the necessary conditions for the free movement of tourists in the region, including simplification and reduction of police and customs formalities and adoption of mutual-confidence and security building measures, among others.

Furthermore, in order to enable technical professionals and “middle managers” to work in any of the countries of the subregion, the working agenda includes the adoption of a community-wide rule that would permit recognition of academic qualifications and national requirements, as well as professional diplomas.

To reinforce the foregoing, mechanisms would be created to facilitate foreign residence and make it possible to meet labor demand in the subregion, in addition to the adoption of common standards on labor matters, social security, health benefits and workplace safety. These efforts are also being pursued in the framework of the South American Conference on Migration, where the International Organization for Migration (IOM) serves as technical secretariat:

Colombia reaffirms the importance of unreserved respect and protection of the labor rights of migrant workers and urges all those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Ensure dignified, humane treatment with applicable legal protections, defense of human rights, and safe and healthy working conditions for migrants

The migratory status of a person cannot, in any circumstances, constitute a justification to deprive him of the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Accordingly, insofar as migrants are concerned, the legal framework of each country should be consistent with the universal principles and provisions recognized in the various international and regional instruments on protection and assurance of human rights.

While states are at liberty to establish, in exercise of their sovereignty, control mechanisms on migrants who enter and leave their territory, such mechanisms should always be adopted and applied in strict observance of due-process guarantees and respect for human dignity, regardless of the migratory status of persons.

States must protect and guarantee the human rights of migrants, in particular economic, social, and cultural rights, taking into consideration a gender perspective. Particular attention should be given to migrants, whose migratory status makes them vulnerable and prone to wrongful labor exploitation.

Hemispheric cooperation mechanisms against trafficking in human beings

Colombia considers that trafficking in persons, as defined in various international instruments and criminalized in domestic systems of laws, should continue to be a matter for criminal law, which entails the adoption of rules by the State that enable prevention, investigation, and punishment of the crime, as well as ensuring reparation for victims.

In order to bring in its national rules and regulations in line with international instruments, Colombia adopted the Law 985 of 2005, which consolidates a state policy against trafficking in persons and favors assistance and protection for victims. In the wake of this law, Colombia is working on a national strategy that includes measures on prevention, punishment, and reparation for victims.

Colombia is also concerned at the purely repressive approach implemented and favored by a number of destination countries during the negotiations on the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In particular, Colombia regards as ill-advised the clause contained in article 6 (4) of the said instrument in as much as it leaves the door open to criminal prosecution of migrants and contains provisions designed to legitimize the forcible repatriations of migrants with irregular status, regardless of the fact that they might have been the victim of illicit trafficking. The unfortunate association between international migration, security, and tourism, has fuelled the adoption of measures that treat irregular migrants as criminals, by making their migratory status comparable with a criminal offense.

Colombia supports agreements on regulation of migrant flows and adopts domestic measures to enable the institutional channeling of requests for labor from other countries, in order, thereby, to guarantee dignified and just conditions for Colombian workers who go abroad in search of work opportunities.

We believe that coordination with other countries in the region on prevention of harmful forms of migration is important, just as it is to work on the identification of best practices against a number of new labor-related problems that are emerging for which rules have not been adopted. These include, in particular, regulations in place in each country to govern the activities of headhunters that seek out our citizens in order to take them abroad with offers of employment and that are sometimes not met, liability mechanisms, etc.

Colombia has worked with the International Organization for Migration in several campaigns to prevent undocumented migration and trafficking in persons. Among the foregoing we could mention the recent mass media campaign with the slogan, *Que nadie dañe tus sueños* (Let no one ruin your dreams), as well as the installation of the new, free telephone helpline, *Infomigrante*.

Strengthening Governance

Democracy

Local-government autonomy and institution building

The public administration is being revitalized and local governments strengthened on three fronts: new management approach in public affairs, progress in decentralization and land development, and strengthening of citizen participation.

In turn, decentralization and land development are moving forward on the basis of: a) local democracy building and civil society participation; b) building civic mindedness from the local level up; c) accountability and societal control. In the area of land-use planning, a subject addressed in the National Development Plan 2006-2010, efforts centre on:

Land Use Law

The government has had the political will to submit and pursue the enactment into law of the land use bill. The bulk of the 14 proposals presented originated from the government, bearing in mind that land-use planning should be a state policy designed to help it fulfill its core purposes: To serve the community; promote general prosperity and ensure effective observance of the principles, rights, and duties enshrined in the Constitution; foster citizen participation in decisions that affect the community and in the nation's economic, political, administrative, and cultural affairs; defend national independence; maintain territorial integrity; and ensure peaceful coexistence, order and justice. It should also encourage the creation of real strategic partnerships to permit development of and consensus among various subnational entities on issues such as the domestic agenda of the FTA, competitiveness, trade, and local political development.

Colombia has in place administrative agencies that, while not subnational entities, help or could help to resolve problems in the area of land-use planning. These are: the metropolitan areas, associations of municipalities, and the multiple possibilities for various kinds of subnational entities

to enter into partnership agreements or strategic alliances. In actuality, departments, districts, and municipalities have been exploring and putting these measures into practice with varying results. Furthermore, based on the initiative of the central government as well as subnational entities, regional planning processes have evolved that constitute an administrative improvement, without infringing the system of statutory political-administrative divisions, (e.g. Mojana, Urabá, Bogotá-Cundinamarca, Atrato, etc.).

Strategic plans, regional development agencies, regional innovation systems, associations of municipalities and consortia clustered around areas of economic development, competitiveness pacts, technology parks, and business incubators, among others, constitute important tools for the design and implementation of subnational competitiveness strategies.

Capacity Building for Subnational Entities

A series of projects had been carried out to this end:

- Best Management Program for Departments with the sponsorship of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The initial phase of the program centered on the design and methodologies for overall and sectoral assessments, as well as trial assessments. For this final phase the Program receives support from the consolidation program of the decentralization process carried out by the National Planning Department (DNP).
- Implementation of Decree 1188 of 2003 to ensure that the functions of coordination and consensus-building are put into effect in two spheres of action: in the social sphere, to advance with strengthening social policy councils as social agencies and authorities that work to improve inter-sectoral coordination and coherence of different programs and measures, opening the way for societal participation; in the economic sphere, to promote linkages between the public sector and academic and productive sectors, with a view to developing regional competitiveness based on productive objectives identified in regional agendas for productivity and competitiveness.
- Departmental system bill: This bill was prepared in order to introduce rules by which to modernize the way in which departments are organized and operate (Departmental System). The bill is supported by the governors and the finalization of its text requires a concerted effort on core issues with government agencies, the National Federation of Departments, and the National Association of Deputies.
- Legal framework on land use: efforts are underway to prepare a series of bills and legal reforms (Ministry of the Interior and Justice) intended to strengthen the current departmental and municipal systems, which cover, inter alia, the deputies' pay and benefits system, a bill for which has already been presented to Congress; a bill to amend the regulations covering council members in municipalities with limited revenues, in order to create a number of appropriate alternative benefits necessary for council members to perform their duties, in order to ensure that the country's council members have at their disposal the basic means to keep democracy working at local government level.
- Consolidation of a territorial information system: coordination is underway with national entities for the design and adoption of a Single Form for Subnational Entities pursuant to Article 31 of the Bureaucracy Rationalization Law (Law 962) of

2005, which, once approved and adopted in the CHIP system of the Office of the Accountant General, will be for compulsory use by national entities, though it will not require the substitution or replacement of forms for specific information used internally by each entity concerned.

Associativity

The National Planning Department and the Colombian Municipalities Federation formed a review group to advance associativity as one of the core components of decentralization, to which end legal instruments are used to promote incentives for subnational entities to form voluntary associations under strategic parameters for regional development and planning.

The creation and strengthening is encouraged of different forms of association, such as local and regional development agencies, strategic partnerships, agreements, associations, and others. Furthermore, steps will be taken to facilitate the transfer of know-how among subnational entities, community-based organizations, and national and international agencies, which, in turn, facilitates linkage and harmonization of resources made available by the State and international cooperation agencies.

In keeping with the foregoing, 32 departmental forums were held for strengthening the capacity of subnational entities to shape local public policies on citizen security and coexistence, through the design and application of Comprehensive Plans for Citizen Security and Coexistence, management of Subnational Security Account Funds, Security Councils, and Public Order Committees with the following outcomes: Awareness raising, training, and links to specialized technical operation in the area of security and co-existence in 32 departments and 32 capital cities; Preparation of security and coexistence Plans for Zipaquirá, Venta Quemada and Soacha.

Local government institutional capacity building and full and equal citizen participation in government policies

Citizen Participation: *Specific strengthening measures for municipal councils*

- ***Concejos en conceptos magazine***: This measure increased the flow of institutional information to municipal councils, stimulating interest and strengthening the image of the State as a source of information. To date, eight editions of the magazine have been distributed, each one numbering 16,000 copies, for a total of 128,000 magazines.
- **Strengthening Community-Based Organizations**: the aim is to stimulate the interaction and involvement of entities in community issues. A formal agreement was reached with the *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional*, that includes an educational component for community training through implementation of the National 'Train the Trainer' Program, the aim of which is to generate new leaders through instruction and training for members of community-based organizations and entity officials who perform inspection, oversight, and monitoring functions.

- **Citizen training for societal oversight of public administration:** In the framework of the national Training Plan for **Societal Oversight of Public Administration**, and in coordination with entities at the national level, funds were successfully funneled from the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) for implementation of the project on "Promotion of Subnational Societal Oversight," which covered 10 departments (Antioquia, Boyacá, Cauca, Córdoba, Cesar, Guajira, Magdalena, Risaralda, Santander and Norte de Santander), and 45 municipalities, in order to sensitize and provide training to 113 municipal officials and 1,720 community leaders.
- Design and construction of the National Information System for the Participation Sector (SIDEPAR).

Community Councils and Regional Public Hearings

Community government councils are unquestionably the mechanism best suited for strengthening citizen participation. They permit a permanent and direct channel of communication with national, departmental and local government; representation agencies, and civil society on issues of regional public interest and progress made by the national government in that regard.

So far in 2007, 30 community councils have been held, at which some 67,000 individuals have been summoned to address regional aspects, follow up on commitments, and discuss sectoral issues. Proof of the effectiveness of these councils is that, to date, of the 1,852 tasks undertaken, 843 (45%) have been completed and the remainder are in process.

Regional public hearings are another of the transparency and citizen-participation mechanisms used by the national government, through which one billion pesos have been allocated for investment in regional budget items. These resources, which in the past were traditionally allocated by the central government with scant citizen participation, were for the first time budgeted following consultations on direct regional needs. To date, 338,000 million pesos had been appropriated, of which 193,000 million pesos (57% of the total appropriation) have been committed.

Another of the strategies implemented was training for nearly 17,000 inspectors, who included members of indigenous communities, representatives of civil society organizations, and former civil servants under the social protection plan. Departmental societal oversight networks were formed (16 in all), which means that the goal of promoting the creation of 32 departmental networks in the 2002-2006 period was 50% met. Youth societal oversight committees have been set up, as part of this policy, which includes efforts to involve young people in societal oversight. These committees have centered on: follow up of the elementary and secondary education information system, mass transit system, youth training programs, and school retention program (school canteens), in which 2,414 young people have been involved so far in the four-year period.

Interrelation between democratic governance and the social and economic development of peoples

Restoration of subnational governance

The democratic security policy has helped improve confidence in sectional and local leaders through implementation of specific strategies designed to secure territorial control, combat illicit

drugs and organized crime, and strengthen the justice system, all of which goals were comfortably surpassed, according to figures released by the National Planning Department in 2006 (see: www.dnp.gov.co). From 2003 to 2006 the country invested 9.4 billion pesos for these purposes, 8.7 billion pesos of which were part of the national budget for those years, with the remaining 669,000 million pesos coming from the budgets of the decentralized sector. The country is on a path of sustained economic growth, stable overall macroeconomic conditions, and improved security.

Subnational development, from the point of view of political decentralization, has made significant strides to overcome so-called armed patronage, which to some extent has undermined the political administrations of departmental and local authorities, for which reason a policy has been instituted of peaceful coexistence and strengthening of civilian authority and the capacity of mayors and governors to create these forums for coexistence. The purpose of the foregoing is to effectively reduce interference by armed actors in the country's regions through the formulation of plans and policies on security and coexistence, in order to make it possible in the long term to increase capacity to address, resolve and mitigate security-related problems and work for social coexistence.

A number of programs have been carried out with civil society in general by the Ministry of the Interior and Justice (Department of Subnational Affairs, Department of Human Rights, Department of Political and Electoral Affairs). These programs led to a substantial improvement in local governance over the last four years. This aspect is largely measured by the figures for 2002 and early 2003, which showed how large parts of the country were under the control of illegal armed groups while criminal activities and affected the peace and cause major disruptions to public order in different areas.

There has been a considerable decline in crimes committed against local authorities, such as murders, kidnappings, and displacement. Furthermore, judges, state prosecutors and officials from other institutions have returned to the municipal governments of departments that have been badly affected, such as Caquetá, Putumayo, Meta, Huila, Tolima and Cauca. Subnational governments have also been restored through the increased presence of security forces in these areas, at 1,099 municipal seats, 264 districts, and 69 police stations.

Local Governance

- 21 governors have taken part in specialized technical cooperation programs in the area of good governance, senior management, democratic security, and transparency, which represents 59.3% of the four-year goal. Under these programs training is given to local leaders and officials in participatory budgets, societal oversight of public administration (public hearings, watchdog bodies, transfers, royalties) and strategic planning for mayors who wish to get involved in the project.
- The Secure Departments and Municipalities Program is carried out under the coordination and supervision of the National Police. The purpose of the program is to devise security and civil coexistence plans in areas where public order has been disrupted. Activities are carried out with the support and guidance of governors and mayors in order to foster a self-regulatory approach. This program strengthens the joint work dynamic between government, the National Police and the public. In this way, the challenge of maintaining security is presented as an effort that involves everyone in the prevention of forced displacement and in decision-making that

respects human rights and international humanitarian law, where governors, mayors, and other authorities have specific responsibilities in their respective jurisdictions.

Electoral processes and procedures

- The Electoral Guarantees Plan was prepared and executed for the congressional elections on the second Sunday in March 2006 and for the presidential and vice presidential elections on the last Sunday in May 2006, which strengthened subnational entities against the scourges that disrupt normal governance and democratic institutions. As a result of the foregoing, the elections in 2006 were the most peaceful for the last 10 years, with voter turnout rising to 62.5%. Efforts will continue to encourage the forthcoming regional elections in October 2007 in order to strengthen the exercise of citizen control over public administration; and to hasten reform of the departmental system in Congress and reform of the law 152 of 1994 so as to ensure that land-use planning is in harmony and integrated with government policies.
- An Immediate Reaction Unit for Electoral Transparency was created in the Department of Political and Electoral Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, which serves as a single command center for national authorities responsible for electoral processes, and uses information and communication technologies to combat electoral offences.
- The National Committee for Coordination and Follow-Up of Electoral Processes was created. The Committee is composed of national authorities responsible for electoral processes and coordinates measures designed to ensure that elections are held in a normal manner.

Measures to increase citizen participation

- The *Information System for the Participation Sector (SIDEPAR)* was created in order to harness ICTs and has designed the information of all the citizen watchdog bodies, Community Action Boards, and public and private entities involved in participation. Accordingly this information is available to the public.
- In each electoral process, the Ministry of the Interior and Justice (Department of Political and Electoral Affairs) adopts different measures to encourage participation in government and safeguard the integrity of the elections. These measures are implemented in coordination with the entities responsible for the processes, oversight agencies, and security bodies, and make use of information and communication technologies to synchronize the efforts of national and local entities, in a bid to ensure transparency and combat electoral offences.
- National Program for Solidary Community Enterprise: The Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the Administrative Department for Economic Solidarity, and the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) have designed a business enterprise program for members of Community Action Boards, which, based on the principle of

solidarity, aims to create decent economic conditions for persons who engage in such commendable social work.

Fight against corruption – civil society participation

Colombia has developed instruments that can be used by government institutions, private enterprise, members of the public, the media, and civil society organizations in prevention, investigation, and punishment of acts of corruption, in keeping with the government anticorruption policy, unveiled in September 2006 with the following lines of action on prevention, investigation, and punishment of acts of corruption in government for: i) the executive branch; ii) investigation, prosecution, and punishment of acts of corruption; iii) political parties and groups; iv) for the national electoral system and to strengthen societal and citizen oversight.

In the area of societal and citizen oversight, the Presidential Program to Combat Corruption is working on a draft National Societal Oversight Plan through which to coordinate societal oversight strategies implemented by various government entities. This coordination will make it possible to unify and organize the available training programs and support for watchdog bodies and civil society organizations interested in exercising societal and citizen oversight of public resources. With respect to the fight against corruption, attention should be drawn to the following:

- The National Program on Training in Transparency and Societal Oversight provides training in techniques and information on all national sectors, in order to encourage civil society organizations, oversight agencies and members of the general public to play an active part in public decision-making and exercise effective oversight of public administration.
- At the international level, Colombia ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption on October 27, 2006. This Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on October 31, 2003, and entered into force on December 9, 2005. Furthermore, Law 599 of 2000 (Criminal Code) criminalizes the conduct provided for in the Convention. It should be noted that among its lines of action, the government's anti-corruption policy includes enforcement of the UN Convention and strengthening of international cooperation to confront such offences.
- At the regional level, Colombia, as a party to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, has already been evaluated in the first round and is at present undergoing a second evaluation round. On May 18 Colombia submitted a preliminary report on the Convention provisions under review in this evaluation round, that is, Articles III (5) and (8) and VI of the Convention.
- Subregionally, in November 2006, the negotiations concluded for the Andean Anti-Corruption Plan, the purpose of which is to promote adoption of policies, strategies, goals, and mechanisms to augment effectiveness and efficiency in the fight against corruption. Colombia played an active role in the entire process, advocating a multidisciplinary approach, so as to avoid the creation of additional obligations for States. The draft plan is awaiting approval by the Andean Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Access for municipalities to information and communication technologies

Through the Department of Political and Electoral Affairs of the MIJ, realizing the importance of ICTs in today's social relations and their contribution to governance, it was decided to form an entire information technology platform that integrates the legislative agenda, electoral affairs, citizen participation, and the studies center. At present it has two web pages that can be easily consulted by other entities and society in general (www.mij.gov.co and www.centrodeestudiosmij.gov.co).

Information systems have been designed in such a way as to permit the integration of other government entities in different sectors, making it possible to amass information from other parts of the country on the political and social issues with which the Department is concerned. An agreement has also been signed with the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) in order to provide virtual training through its portals on the different issues that concern it.

Constructive linkage between government and civil society

Colombia has applied itself to the task of strengthening a number of the more important civil society organizations for the implementation of government policy on participation. For that reason, it has centered its efforts on strengthening community-based organizations Community Action Boards, and citizen watchdog bodies, conscious of the important contribution they make to good governance.

Very important partnerships have also been forged through the Studies Center for the development of new democratic processes through which to coordinate joint efforts by the entity and academic institutions with a view to providing the Ministry with new approaches for its decision making. In this regard, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Georgetown University, as international entities, have believed in this work and mentored many of the processes carried out. Agreements have also been signed with prestigious academic institutions such as *Universidad del Rosario* and the *Instituto de Ciencia Política* in order to strengthen democracy in all respects.

In a bid to promote a culture of, and education for, democracy, the Colombian government has been pursuing a variety of efforts in coordination with other government institutions and civil society organizations to implement the following programs:

- **National 'Train the Trainers' Program for Community Organization:** The core purpose of this program is to provide legal, technical, and academic tools for community organization, in order to strengthen their organizational ties, relations with local governments and the national government, and, naturally, performance of their obligations to their communities. To that end, training is being provided in different stages of the program to members of Community Action Boards all over the country, in order to benefit the most isolated regions of Colombia.
- **National Training Program on Transparency and Societal Oversight:** This program makes it possible to generate a culture of democracy and participation in public administration, strengthening citizen watchdog bodies and the Citizen Watchdog Institutional Support Network as well as promotion of societal oversight,

in order to create a tradition of oversight and monitoring in administrations at different levels

- **National Program *Viernes del Concejal*** [Council Member Fridays]: This program seeks, through training workshops to strengthen municipal council members in the performance of their official duties, to bring council members closer to their communities as political leaders and ensure that they play a key role in their jurisdiction.
- **Studies Center:** The Center acts as a mechanism for dissemination and promotion of research on political, legal, and social issues of national concern, with a view to strengthening Colombian democracy.

Human Rights

To further and strengthen observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, Colombia has evolved the following policy guidelines:

1. Prevention of human rights violations and infringements of international humanitarian law through the Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee and the Decentralization Strategy in Implementation of Human Rights and IHL Policy.
2. Protection of vulnerable individuals and sectors.
3. Promotion of administration of justice in human rights.
4. Cooperation with the international community.
5. Dialogue with nongovernmental organizations.
6. Inter-agency coordination.

International Human Rights Instruments

Colombia is a party to the principal international human rights and IHL instruments in both the universal and the inter-American systems, thereby showing its long-standing abidance by the values and principles of contemporary international law.

Further to the foregoing, the goals set out in the National Development Plan and the government's pursuit of its human rights policy seek the observance and fulfillment of these international instruments.

By the same token, the Colombian Constitution provides at Article 93 that international treaties and conventions that recognize human rights and prohibit their restriction in states of emergency take precedence in the domestic system of laws.

The Constitution also provides that the rights and duties enshrined in it shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the international human rights treaties ratified by Colombia.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the Colombian State ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in January 2007, and signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 30, 2007.

Fight against impunity and strengthening of judicial systems

In view of the fact that the fight against impunity is one of the core concerns of the Colombian state, in recent years the government has developed a policy against impunity in cases of human rights violations and infringements of international humanitarian law. The overarching objective of the policy is to overcome any obstacles that prevent or hinder the investigation of human rights violations and infringements of IHL, punishment of those responsible, and reparation of victims.

The first step in implementing this policy was taken in 1998 when the government issued Decree 2429 “which created the Special Committee to Further the Investigation of Human Rights Cases.” The tasks assigned to this Committee were to: a) hasten investigations of human rights violations; b) coordinate, monitor, and oversee the progress of such investigations; and, c) report on the results of such procedures.

As things stand, the Colombian State has adopted this document, appropriated the funds necessary to ensure its implementation, and designed a system to follow up on the provisions contained in it. This system is in process of consolidation.

Subsequently, an international cooperation strategy was developed in order to launch a series of investigations into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In 2001, based on an inter-agency initiative, working guidelines and parameters were defined for the design of a capacity-building program for the Colombian State with a view to the investigation and punishment of a case involving the violation of human rights and infringements of international humanitarian law. These guidelines were: a) Strengthening of protection systems for personnel in charge of investigations; b) Training for staff and technical support for their work; c) Development of alternative dispute settlement mechanisms; and, d) Formation of an inter-agency coordination and communication network.

In July 2003, the government signed an international cooperation agreement on a “Framework strategy for inter-agency coordination and management of the fight against impunity in human rights violations and infringements of international humanitarian law” with the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This agreement, which is still in force, includes the following objectives: a) Design and implement a program to combat impunity; and, b) Institute and pursue a number of proceedings on violations of human rights and infringements of international humanitarian law.

On March 6, 2006, National Council for Social and Economic Policy (CONPES) Document 3411 (on the National Planning Department) was approved. The document parts from the recognition that the Colombian state must adopt comprehensive short-, medium-, and long-term measures to fight impunity in cases of violations of human rights and infringements of international humanitarian law, regardless of circumstances or changes in the dynamic of the parties the committed the violations. The aforesaid document instituted the government policy against impunity, which is implemented through four core lines of action: I. Institutional and organizational development; II. Resource development, in particular development of human resources. III. Assistance for victims and witnesses. IV. Specific operational conditions for investigation and punishment.

The development of the policy was spearheaded by the Office of the Vice President of the Republic, a body that reports to the Administrative Department of the Office of the President of the Republic (DAPR), through the Presidential Program on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (Project against Impunity in Violations of Human Rights and Infringements of International Humanitarian Law). Also involved were the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Office of the Attorney General, the Superior Judicature Council, the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Planning Department, the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the National Prisons Institute, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner (the latter provided advisory services and offered recommendations).

The policy against impunity is coordinated and combined with other government strategies and plans in order to avoid duplication of efforts and, at the same time, enhance synergies in the activities of the entities concerned.

Thus, in first place, the National Development Plan 2002-2006 “Toward a Community-Oriented State” includes the objectives of protection and advancement of human rights and international humanitarian law in a framework of democratic security.

In second place, the National Plan of Action on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law is part of the undertaking given by the Colombian state at the Conference of Vienna in 1993. One of the core lines of action of this program is “Strengthening administration of justice and the fight against impunity.”

In third place is the project on “Strengthening the Justice Sector to reduce impunity in Colombia,” which is financed by the European Commission’s Delegation to Colombia and Ecuador.

The fourth component of the fight against impunity consists of the need to integrate and coordinate the policy against impunity with the “Lines of Action to strengthen government policy on human rights and infringements of international humanitarian law,” adopted by CONPES Document 3172 of July 15, 2002.

Lastly, the final element consists of Law 975 (Justice and Peace Law) and its development and implementation, in which the principal objective is the search for truth, justice, and reparation for victims, while at the same time providing the necessary opening for systemic intervention channels.

The will of the State to fight impunity is also reflected in other fields, such as, for example, the investigation and punishment of human rights violations committed against trade unionists. In this regard, on September 15, 2006, the Office of the President of the Republic and the Office of the Prosecutor General signed Inter-Administrative Agreement 15406 to move forward with the investigation of human rights violations involving trade union members and officials.

The objectives of this agreement are to improve the investigation of cases, purge them, decongest office caseloads, and perform a qualitative analysis of the information and characterization of these offences, through strengthening of the National Unit on Human Rights, the National Unit on Terrorism, and the Sectional Departments that pursue the crimes.

Likewise, the agreement also provides for the creation of a Impetus Committee for cases under investigation, composed of the Office of the Vice President of the Republic, the Ministry for Social Welfare, and the Office of the Prosecutor General, which, thus far, have held various regional meetings with trade union representatives in cities such as Cartagena, Barranquilla, Villavicencio, Neiva, Medellín, Cali, Pasto and Bucaramanga, to explain the impetus strategy.

By virtue of this inter-administrative agreement, the Colombian State has taken the decision to hasten the investigations connected with Case 1787, which is being pursued by the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The proceeding was instituted in response to a complaint lodged by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) following killings and other acts of violence committed against leaders and members of trade unions.

By virtue of the agreement, the Administrative Chamber of the Superior Judicature Council approved at its session of November 30, 2006, a motion to extend the remit of two Special Judges, in order to contribute as an organ of the Colombian State to the progress of the judicial proceedings in the aforementioned Case 1787.

The Superior Judicature Council also adopted Decision 3882 of January 2, 2007, in order to continue to give particular attention to Case 1787, and adopted special measures over a period of six months, the personnel costs alone of which came to 211,011,446 pesos.

By the same token, the Office of the Prosecutor General assigned 13 Special Prosecutors and 78 Judicial Police Investigators, accompanied by 24 lawyers, tasked with working on the relevant investigations. As the result of these measures, the Office of the Prosecutor General has informed that convictions have been handed down on 59 persons found guilty in 37 cases of human rights violations committed against trade union members.

Fight against war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in accordance with international law

In keeping with its commitment to fight war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, Colombia became a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which has subsidiary jurisdiction over such crimes. By Legislative Act 2 of December 27, 2001, which reformed the Constitution, the Congress authorized the Colombian State to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court under the terms provided in the Rome Statute adopted on July 17, 1998, and, therefore, to ratify the treaty in accordance with the procedure set forth in the Constitution. Thus, the Rome Statute was adopted by Law 742 of June 5, 2002. The instrument of ratification was deposited with the Secretary General of the United Nations on August 5, 2002, and the treaty came into force for the country on November 1 of that year.

In the text of its instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute the Colombian government invoked Article 124 of the Statute, according to which it did not accept the jurisdiction of the Court over war crimes for a period of seven years after the entry into force of the Statute.

In Judgment C 578 of 2002, the Constitutional Court found that the ratification of the Rome Statute was consistent with the objectives of protection and assurance of human rights and observance of international humanitarian law.

In the aforementioned judgment, the Court noted that the Rome Statute recognizes genuine efforts designed to get at the truth of crimes, the criminal liability of the culprits, and reparation for victims and injured parties. For that reason, efforts have been made to enforce the contents of the Statute internally.

As a result, Colombia's domestic law punishes all the crimes that come within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Law 599 of 2000 (Colombian Criminal Code) classifies the crime of genocide at Article 101, a fact reinforced by the recognition of the crime of advocacy of genocide at Article 102 of the same Code. By the same token, Title II of the Code covers crimes against persons and property protected by international humanitarian law. The foregoing is entirely in keeping with the provisions contained in Articles 6, 7, and 8 of the Rome Statute, which define these forms of conduct.

As regards judicial cooperation mechanisms, the new Code of Criminal Procedure (Law 906 of 2004), which came into force on January 1, 2005, contains a general clause concerning the International Criminal Court in the section on international cooperation mechanisms. At present, the Chamber of Representatives is debating proposed legislation (Bill 040/2006 C) on the subject which will be submitted for review in 2007.^{1/}

Apart from the Rome Statute, in order to confront war crimes, the Colombian State is also a party to the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. These Conventions were adopted by Law 5 of 1960 and promulgated by Decree 1016 of May 14, 1990. Colombia ratified the Conventions on November 8, 1961, and they entered into force for the country on May 8, 1962.

Colombia has also ratified the two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. The country ratified the aforesaid Protocols on September 1, 1993, and they entered into force on March 1, 1994.

With respect to the relationship between the rights protected in the Rome Statute and the Colombian Constitution, the Constitutional Court found that the definitions of crimes against humanity contained in the Statute protect the effective exercise of right to life, the prohibition of torture and disappearance, equality, and the prohibition of slavery enshrined in the country's Constitution.

It should also be pointed out that Colombia is a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Law 76 of 1986), the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (Law 26 of 1987), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Law 22 of 1981), which reinforces the fundamental rights protected in the Constitution.

National Plan of Action on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

The Colombian government has been working on the preparation of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. The overarching objective of the Plan is to ensure full observance of human rights and respect for humanitarian standards in Colombia.

1. Taken from the Internet on May 9, 2007: www.cajpe.org.pe/RIJ/bases/dpi/lena.htm.

The induction of the Committee that will be in charge of the consensualized preparation of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law took place on September 26, 2006. The induction ceremony was presided over by the Vice President of the Republic and attended by representatives of the international community and civil society organizations.

The entities involved in the preparation of the Plan are as follows:

- For the Government: Ministries of: Interior and Justice, National Defense, Foreign Affairs and Social Welfare; Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, and the Presidential Program on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.
- Oversight and Control Organs: Office of the Prosecutor General, Office of the Attorney General, and the Ombudsman.
- Organizations of the London-Cartagena Consensus: Colombian Confederation of NGOs, National Trade Union Council, Colombian Municipalities Federation, National Planning Council, Social Pastoral National Secretariat and the Restrepo Barco Foundation.
- Colombia-Europe-United States Coordinator
- ESCR Platform
- Social sectors: eight and 14, to be determined

Overall, the operating framework for consensualization of the contents of the Plan has been designed according to the following guidelines:

- Inclusion of an international humanitarian law approach,
- Consideration of the situation of confrontation and violence that impairs the fundamental rights of Colombians
- Need for the Plan to be of a 'State' nature and to transcend government administrations.
- The notion of integrality of human rights and of reciprocal dependence between civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights, in light of the priorities which the country deems it necessary to establish.
- A commitment to international human rights standards and the obligations acquired by the State.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the following core lines or work routes have been identified:

1. Promotion of a culture of human rights.
2. Guarantee of the rights to life, liberty, and integrity of the person.
3. Fight against discrimination and promotion of recognition of identity.
4. Promotion of a rights-based approach in government policy on education, health, housing, and labor.
5. Administration of justice and fight against impunity.

Implementation of the Declaration on the right and duty of individuals, groups, and institutions to advance and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental liberties.

The work of nongovernmental organizations, which consists of the protection and advancement of human rights, is regarded as a form of citizen participation, which is a crucial part of the construction process of democratic debate and unquestionably enables citizens to increase their influence in policy decision-making processes.

The Constitution of 1991 contains 65 articles that govern the right of citizen participation; Statutory Law 134 of 1994 develops these articles and makes it easier for nongovernmental organizations to carry out their activities in full.

The current administration has expressly recognized the important work performed by human rights defenders in strengthening democracy in Colombia. Furthermore, the Vice President of the Republic, on March 16, 2006, in his address to the LXI Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, recognized the efforts of NGOs and invited them to undertake permanent and widespread monitoring of all human rights violations, in order to encourage justice for victims and enable their voices to be heard.

It is also worth noting that in a speech on September 8, 2003, the President of the Republic said that he respected human rights organizations, that under his government these organizations had every opportunity to carry out their work, and that he was prepared to listen to objective criticism from them.

In addition, in 2003 the Ministry of Defense issued Directive 9, the purpose of which is to strengthen the policy of advancement and protection of the human rights of workers, trade union members, and human rights defenders. In that connection, the Directive provides that the Armed Forces and the National Police are required at all times in the performance of their duties to respect the activities of trade union leaders and human rights defenders in society, provided that said activities are within the law.

Consequently, it is up to the Armed Forces to issue the necessary instructions to ensure that requests for protection from trade union leaders and human rights defenders duly met, within the scope of their respective authority; and give particular attention to information pertaining to death threats from illegal armed groups against trade union leaders or human rights defenders, following their verification, etc.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Ministry of the Interior and Justice has a protection program that includes human rights defenders as a target group. The program was created in 1997 as the result of a joint effort between the government and civil society to address the consequences of the situation of violence against populations particularly at risk at the time. The program initially targeted trade union leaders and human rights NGOs and has gradually been broadened to include other groups, such as officials and former officials responsible for the design, coordination, or implementation of government policy on human rights or peace; witnesses of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; and leaders of displaced persons' organizations.

The following table shows the number of people whom the program has benefited between 1999 and March 2007.

TARGET GROUP	QUANTITY								
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
UP - PCC	0	77	378	775	423	1,158	1,402	1,648	378
TRADE UNIONISTS	84	375	1,043	1,566	1,424	1,615	1,493	1,504	165
COUNCIL MEMBERS	0	0	0	404	1,120	832	1,195	1,198	638
NGOs	50	224	537	1,007	1,215	733	554	683	91
LEADERS	43	190	327	699	456	545	552	516	276
SPOKESPERSONS	0	0	0	26	125	65	45	94	60
DISP. PERSONS JUDGMENT T-025	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	92	223
MAYORS	0	0	0	212	344	214	87	76	91
INSTITUTIONAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	69	21
PEACE ACCORDS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68	0
JOURNALISTS	0	14	69	168	71	125	46	64	50
DEPUTIES	0	0	0	0	43	45	33	58	72
WITNESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	10
DOCTOR'S MISSION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7
FORMER MAYORS	0	0	0	0	0	114	41	2	0
TOTAL	177	880	2,354	4,857	5,221	5,446	5,507	6,097	2,082

From 2006 to March 2007, the protection program executed 5,370 million pesos just on protection for nongovernmental organizations and human rights defenders.

The Ministry of the Interior also has a Communications Strategy for Protection of Human Rights Defenders. The purpose of this strategy is to broadly disseminate the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and build awareness about the importance of reporting death threats and violations against them. The Ministry has produced three television commercials, three publicity posters, and 25 radio programs

Finally it is important to mention that all of the measures and activities adopted by the Colombian state coincide fully with the guiding principles on nongovernmental organizations published by the Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the US Department of State.

The foregoing demonstrates that nongovernmental organizations enjoy full legitimacy in Colombia and that they have countless mechanisms available to them to carry out their activities by upholding their right to citizen participation on behalf of the defense and protection of human rights.

Human Rights of Women

The will of the government to mainstream gender in all of its policies, plans, strategies, and activities has been made clear in the National Development Plan 2002-2006 and will be strengthened in 2006-2010 period by the new Development Plan, in which the government has included a chapter that deal specifically with Gender Equity.

The Colombian State pursues three strategies to seek the advancement of women and gender equity:

- *Affirmative Action Measures* implemented, *inter alia*, on behalf of women, children, youth, ethnic groups, and persons with disabilities by entities specially created to combat various forms of discrimination against these groups. The executive branch adopted an affirmative action policy entitled “Women Builders of Peace and Development” which centers on four intervention areas: employment and business development; education and culture; participation in government; and prevention of violence against women. A number of programs and strategies are implemented under this policy in coordination with other central and local government policies and entities. This policy has produced satisfactory results and the challenge is to ensure its continuity.

For the 2006-2010 period the Affirmative Action strategy proposes a Strategic Plan for Protection of the Women’s Rights in the Justice System in Colombia, with more than 100 measures exclusively connected with protection of women against domestic violence, in marital disputes, and against labor discrimination; more than 30 entities and various government sectors will be involved in its implementation.

- The *Social Reactivation Policy* promoted by the national government amounts to a large-scale Equal Opportunities Plan, bearing in mind that it is founded on seven social equity mechanisms and has made a significant contribution to real equality between men and women as confirmed by the results (disaggregated by sex) of the programs that comprise it.
- With respect to *Gender Mainstreaming*, a strategy that calls for a national agenda involving every branch of government, it is fair to say that Colombia has been consolidating a genuine government policy designed to eliminate discrimination against women, with major strides made in the areas of rule-making, jurisprudence, institution building, and government policy.

Finally, it should be noted that Colombia was elected Vice Chair of the Inter-American Commission of Women in the framework of the Organization of American States, which constitutes recognition for the efforts of the State on this important issue.

Observance and assurance of freedom of expression

The right to freedom of opinion, the press, and information is enshrined in Article 20 of the Colombian Constitution, which provides, “*Everyone is guaranteed freedom to express and disseminate their thoughts and opinions, to provide and receive truthful and impartial information, and to found mass media organizations. Such media are free and have social responsibility. The right to make corrections under equitable conditions is guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.*” Journalism is also protected in Colombia by the Constitution, Article 73 of which stipulates, “*Journalistic activity shall be guaranteed freedom and professional independence.*”

Colombia is also a party to several international treaties that recognize freedom of expression, such as the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19) and the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 13). On January 27, 2003, President Álvaro Uribe signed the Declaration of Chapultepec and undertook to support and promote freedom of the press and information in Colombia.

It is important to mention that President Álvaro Uribe has said on many occasions that his government wants the country to have courageous, fair, broadminded and analytical media, so that Colombia can continue to have the kind of journalism that generates opinion, provides complete information, and is committed to multiple opinions, and is simultaneously judicious.

The State of Colombia also recognizes that every authority has the duty to ensure effective protection for the freedom and lives of journalists and other social communicators whose rights have been violated. Assurance of the rights of all those who live in the national territory is a priority for the government.

The Colombian Government, in exercise of the democratic model recognized in the 1991 Constitution has rejected a number of opinions and recommendations that the press makes about certain situations in the country; however it has never closed its borders to them or subjected them to censorship. Nor have they been denied effective protection for their lives and liberty, which is the reason for the creation of the protection programs operated by the Ministry of the Interior and Justice to provide protection for persons in situations of imminent risk to their lives, integrity, safety, or liberty for reasons associated with political or ideological violence or with the internal armed conflict.

It was in keeping with the foregoing that the Protection Program for Journalists and Social Communicators was created by Decree 1592 of August 18, 2000, targeting those whose professional activities involve dissemination of information; protection, preservation, and restoration of human rights; and application of international humanitarian law, and who, accordingly, are in a situation of risk to their lives, integrity, safety, or liberty for reasons associated with political or ideological violence or with the internal armed conflict that the country endures.

The indicators with respect to human rights violations committed against journalists have improved. Nevertheless, the government is aware that more work is required on the part of the appropriate authorities in this area in order to attain the ideal in which no journalists are threatened or killed.

As regards protection of journalists, the results are as follows:

**JOURNALISTS BENEFITED BY THE PROTECTION PROGRAM OF THE
THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
2001 – 2006**

YEARS	NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS BENEFITED
2001	69
2002	168
2003	71
2004	125
2005	46
2006	64
2007	50

**MEASURES IMPLEMENTED ON BEHALF OF JOURNALISTS
2001 – 2006**

YEARS	SECURITY SCHEMES	BOARD AND LODGING	AIRLINE TICKETS	INTERNATIONAL TICKETS	TOTAL
2001	0	6	27	30	131
2002	0	1	3	21	59
2003	3	0	59	17	250
2004	11	1	9	11	171
2005	1	0	11	4	168
2006	4	0	22	2	207
TOTAL	19	8	131	85	986

It should be noted that in all cases the National Police has been requested to adopt preventive security measures for journalists, such as police patrols at their residences. Furthermore, the members of the Committee for Regulation and Risk Evaluation of the Protection Program for Journalists, of which the most reputable organizations in this profession in Colombia are part, has recommended police escorts as a protection measure for a number of journalists who have requested it. Lastly, it should be mentioned that 2,940 million pesos in national budget funds have been executed between 2006 and March 2007 on protection measures for journalists.

Strengthening of the Inter-American System for Protection of Human Rights

The State supports a robust and effective inter-American system for protection of human rights. That is why it makes every effort and has taken all the necessary steps to ensure effective compliance with the decisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, due consideration of the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and effective implementation of all friendly settlement agreements reached. In furtherance of this purpose, Presidential Directive 02 of 2005 was issued to facilitate a coordinated strategy for handling cases

submitted to the organs of the inter-American system of human rights and other international proceedings in the same area.

As regards compliance with the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, it is important to note that the State of Colombia provided compensation to the victims in the following cases: “Caballero Delgado and Santana”, Las Palmeras, 19 Merchants, Wilson Gutiérrez Soler, and the Mapiripán Massacre (to the next-of-kin identified).

With respect to the obligation of the State to take the necessary steps to provide justice in cases where the State of Colombia has been attributed responsibility, it should be mentioned that in the Case of the 19 Merchants, a motion for review was admitted on May 19, 2006, and in the Case of Gutiérrez Soler the Office of the Attorney General filed a motion for review on August 25, 2006. Furthermore, the State is adopting the measures necessary to meet its obligation to provide medical and psychological assistance to victims and their next of kin

Accordingly, the State is making all the arrangements necessary to retain an entity that specializes in providing treatment to victims in cases of this type, so that it might make a diagnosis and subsequently provide the necessary services. Furthermore, as a result of its compliance with one of the obligations imposed by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Case of Wilson Gutiérrez Soler, the Office of the UN High Commissioner, at the request of the State, has agreed to lend its cooperation in providing training (scheduled for the last week in June 2007) on the Protocol of Istanbul to the staff of all the entities involved in the investigation or documentation of torture. Finally, it is important to note that all judgments have been made public, with the exception of those in the cases of the Pueblo Bello Massacre and the Ituango Massacres. The formalities for publication of the judgments in the two aforementioned cases are in process.

With regard to implementation of recommendations made by the IACHR under Article 50 of the American Convention, in the case of Leidy Dayán Sánchez, Colombia has been complying fully with the recommendations. Thus, in the second half of 2006, it held a public act of acknowledgement of State responsibility and apology to the family of the victim, a public act to restore the good name of the victim and of reconciliation between the Nation (National Police) and the family of the Leydi [*sic*] Dayan Sánchez, in which it agreed to provide compensation as determined by the inter-American system of human rights. Furthermore, in the case of Jesús María Valle, the Colombian State reached a settlement with a number of family members. Approval by the Council of State of that settlement is pending.

As regards implementation of the recommendations of the IACHR under Article 51 of the American Convention, the State has continuously monitored such compliance and submitted periodic reports to the IACHR in order to keep it informed of progress in their implementation. Thus, for instance, in the case of Amparo Tordecilla Trujillo the State managed to locate the victim’s next of kin and, so far, has conciliated with them with a view to providing them just compensation. In addition, in the case of Arturo Ribón Avilán it was agreed to review one of the criminal proceedings; a motion for review was also admitted in the criminal proceeding against Jose Alexis Fuentes Guerrero. Conciliation was also approved in the case of Jesús Isaza Echeverri.

As to implementation of measures agreed on in the framework of friendly settlement procedures, an agreement was signed with the relatives of Jorge Antonio Barbosa Tarazona and the representative of the victims. In this act an apology was offered by the Vice Minister of Defense and

a plaque and an appropriate letter were presented to the mother of the victim. The state also gave a number of undertakings which it has been fulfilling. In the case of Oscar Iván Tabares Toro a memorandum of understanding was signed and approval should soon to be given for a study by the subcommittee created under the memorandum of understanding to review the criminal proceeding, in order to hasten the investigation underway into the alleged disappearance of Mr. Tabares. The State keeps the IACHR constantly updated on progress in friendly settlement procedures.

With respect to precautionary measures requested by the IACHR and provisional measures ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the State of Colombia created a mechanism to follow up on and expedite these measures. This mechanism is composed of the various government institutions called on to comply with these measures based on their jurisdiction and powers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the group and is the body that invites the various entities, beneficiaries, and petitioners to follow-up meetings on the measures. In order to ensure effective compliance with these measures, in some cases the State of Colombia has found it seemly to create working groups, mixed protection committees, workshop-seminars, etc.

Following, Colombia mentions some of the measures adopted by the Colombian State to guarantee due compliance with precautionary and provisional measures.

In the framework of the provisional measures for the Kankuamo indigenous people, the State created an Inter-Agency Working Group. The purpose of this group is to move forward with follow-up on the security situation and obligations acquired in the framework of the provisional measures. The working group is composed of authorities at the national, departmental, and municipal level, as well as the Kankuama indigenous organization and the petitioners of the measures. The results of the creation of this group, of which the Security Forces are a part, show that the presence of armed groups in the zone has declined by 80%. Peace is being maintained in the zone, which is under the control of the Army and the National Police.

In the context of the precautionary measures for the Embera Katio Indigenous People, in May 2002, the indigenous people and their legal advisers submitted a proposal for special protection for the Community, which consisted of the creation of a mixed protection committee (CMP). The CMP commenced its activities in November of that year following several rounds of talks between the petitioners, community representatives, and the Colombian State. The Committee was formally inducted in September 2004.

The Mixed Protection Committee has been going about its work in an efficient and effective manner. As a result of the foregoing, the security forces and the Embera People use the committee as a forum to reach agreements, the effect of which is to ensure the well-being, respect, and protection of the latter. Furthermore, in 2007 improvement was achieved in the security and integrity of the communities, which has enabled the Mixed Committee to monitor other key issues, *inter alia*, health and education.

On another matter, in keeping with the commitments adopted by the Colombian state with the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women of Colombia (ANMUCIC), which are beneficiaries of precautionary measures requested by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights since 2001, a workshop-seminar was held on November 20, 2006 in the city of Barranquilla on the significance and importance of the precautionary measures. The purpose of the workshop was

to establish channels of communication with local and national authorities in order to permit the satisfactory implementation of the protection measures.

The workshop-seminar was attended by 30 women members of ANMUCIC, 17 municipal police officers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Presidential Program on Human Rights.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in the framework of the precautionary measures requested for the Wiwa indigenous people, the Colombian state provided financial support for a meeting that was attended by a considerable number of members of that community. The purpose of the meeting was to appropriately analyze, consider, and discuss the implementation of collective measures in keeping with their uses, customs, beliefs, and traditions, as well as to present and examine a proposal for the creation of a Working Group presented by the government to implement and follow up on the precautionary measures.

Human Rights of Children and Youth

Colombia has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991. Furthermore, it ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2003, and likewise, in 2005, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Following, this report mentions a number of activities underway in Colombia in fulfillment of the commitments adopted by the country with its ratification of these international instruments:

Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in persons

- **National Plan of Action for Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth, 2006 – 2011**

The “National Plan for Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth, 2006-2011”, in the framework of Law 679 of 2001, was produced through a process led by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (the coordinating entity of the National Family Welfare System), the Ministry for Social Welfare and the Office of the Attorney Delegate for Family Matters, with the participation of government entities at the national and departmental level, public- and private-sector organizations, civil society organizations, and in partnership with international cooperation agencies such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) of the International Labor Organization (ILO), with technical support provided by Fundación Renacer.

This plan constitutes a significant stride by the Colombian State to unite efforts, resources, and wills in a bid to prevent and tackle this problem that undermines the dignity and development of our children and youth, and to contribute to the effective and efficient enforcement of the legal principles that inspire the Constitution and the international conventions designed to ensure and restore the rights of this population.

The issue is a social priority as it seriously impairs the integrity, dignity, and equality of its victims and causes considerable physical, mental, and social harm. As a result, all government agencies and subnational entities shall be required to include this problem as a priority in their development plans and allocate sufficient budget funds and human resources for its prevention and eradication.

The development of the **National Plan and Local Plans** had several stages.

Each of those stages entailed the active participation of various institutional and social actors with the conviction that the broader the involvement, the greater the possibility of successfully carrying out the plans designed.

It was proposed as a specific objective to have one National Plan and 15 Local Plans of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (ESCNNA), to be designed and validated in a participatory manner that involved governmental organizations, NGOs, and civil society organizations at the national and local level.

The objectives of the Plan for Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sector Exploitation of Children and Youth are as follows:

1. Know the characteristics and dimensions of the problem so as to contribute to its exposure and generate strategies to confront it at the National, departmental, and local level.
 2. Have in place standards that govern the comprehensive protection of the rights of the groups affected or at risk, as well as coherent rule-making mechanisms and criminal, administrative, and police matters that tackle the problem in its current guise.
 3. Ensure quality, efficient, and timely comprehensive assistance by which to restore and repair the violated rights of victims of sexual and commercial exploitation in any form.
 4. Prevent the problem, augmenting and strengthening protection factors and reducing risk factors among the groups most at risk as well as in society at large.
 5. Choreograph efforts among government institutions, and the efforts of the latter with non-governmental organizations, international cooperation agencies, the private sector, and civil society in order to generate public policy and work for the eradication of the problem.
 6. Include the active and informed participation of children, youth and their families in the Plan's design, implementation, and evaluation, as well as in all policies, projects, and programs connected with the issue.
- **Comprehensive assistance program for sexually abused and exploited children and youth**

In the four-year period from 2002 to 2006, the Comprehensive assistance program for sexually abused and exploited children and youth was implemented through the National Family Welfare Service (SNBF). The purpose of the program is to protect minors who are at risk or in danger of becoming victims of these crimes.

In 2001, Law 679 against commercial sexual exploitation of children was enacted, introducing preventive and punitive measures to protect minors against sexual exploitation, pornography, sexual tourism, and other forms of sexual abuse

There has been positive progress with inter-sectoral and inter-agency measures in the areas of information, training, and communication, particularly through implementation of the project “Construction of social networks for prevention and detection of sexual exploitation of children” in five cities in the country.

In order to prevent access to and dissemination of child pornography, social mobilization and awareness-raising processes have been carried out against child sexual exploitation through implementation of self-regulation and codes of conduct in the commercial use of global information networks. In addition, Internet child pornography classification guidelines have been published and communication campaigns, such as “*Internet sano*” [“Healthy Internet”], have been staged to prevent sexual exploitation of children via global information networks.

Research and publications on the problem of child sexual exploitation have also been encouraged in the media. Furthermore, reporting mechanisms have been set up and training given to tourist services providers in 14 regions in the country

Research: Partnerships have been developed with local authorities, scholars, and the private sector to examine the characteristics of the problem of sexual exploitation in children, families, client-exploiters -as well as its social, individual, and environmental dimensions- in a number of particularly prone regions and cities and at the national level. A feasibility study is also underway for implementation of reliable information systems on the issue.

Government policy: Efforts have centered on lines of action such as promotion of the principles of joint responsibility and participation; direct assistance for children and their families in psychological recovery, medical, social, and education programs and services; and legal and administrative measures for restitution of rights, through the choreographed and coordinated intervention of authorities and institutions in the justice, health, education, and welfare sectors. These efforts are pursued in coordination with local authorities (mayors and governors) for the allocation of funds for prevention and assistance in cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Rule-making: The main efforts in this area have been the work of the Committee against Trafficking in Women and Children, created by Decree 1974 of 1996, and the enactment of Law 985 of 2005, which adopts measures against trafficking in persons and introduces rules on assistance and protection for trafficking victims.

Prevention of recruitment of children and youth by illegal armed groups and assistance for children separated from these groups

1. Legal Framework

Apart from possessing all of the rights recognized to them in the Constitution and laws of Colombia, children and youth separated from armed groups operating outside the law are entitled, under international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international labor law, and the decisions of the organs of the United Nations, to specific and strengthened legal protection as victims

of political violence, of the crime of illegal recruitment, and of violation of the right to be protected against use in one of the worst forms of child labor.

The following laws have been recently adopted in this area:

- **Law 1098 of 2006 (Children's Code)**, which introduced substantive and procedural standards designed to ensure the exercise of the rights and freedoms (of children and youth) enshrined in international human rights instruments, the Constitution, and Colombian law.
- **Law 599 of 2000 (Criminal Code)**, Article 162 of which provides as follows: "Illicit Recruitment. Any person who, on the occasion of or during an armed conflict, recruits minors under the age of 18 or obliges them to take a direct or indirect part in hostilities or in armed operations, shall be liable to imprisonment for six to 10 years..."
- **Law 1106 of 2006**, which extends and amends a number of provisions contained in Law 782 of 2002, recognizes minors who take part in hostilities as victims of political violence, and orders the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) to design and implement a special protection program to provide assistance to any minors who have taken part in hostilities or been victims of political violence in the framework of the internal armed conflict.
- **Decree 3043 of 2006**, which creates the Office of the Special Adviser for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Armed Individuals and Groups, whose functions, *inter alia*, are to: "Advise the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) on the definition of policies and strategies for prevention of recruitment into illegal armed groups; their demobilization from said groups, and their social reintegration. Another of its functions is to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate measures adopted by government entities that, in the performance of their duties, engage in activities or functions designed to facilitate reintegration for minors removed from the conflict and for adults who demobilize voluntarily, either individually or collectively".
- **Decree 395 of 2007**, which partially amends Decree 128 2003 and provides, "The benefits received under Decree 128 of 2003 in the framework of the reintegration process by persons who demobilize either individually or collectively from illegal armed groups, may be granted to each person in accordance with guidelines previously determined by the Office of the Special Adviser for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Armed Individuals and Groups, and shall terminate upon the conclusion of the social and economic reintegration process, which shall be determined based on the progress of each person."

It should also be mentioned that the High Courts have developed the following case law in their judgments:

Judgment C-203/05 found that "Any measures adopted by the authorities in respect of minors demobilized from illegal armed groups should seek, first and foremost, to advance and ensure: i) their higher interests; ii) their predominant fundamental rights, and, iii) their status as

persons entitled to strengthened legal protection. The fact that these minors may have belonged to one of these armed groups and engaged in conduct that violates criminal law not only does *not* deprive them of these rights, but makes observance of these three guiding principles much more important in the proceedings regarding their situation.”

It also ruled, “...that the guarantees that surround the prosecution of juvenile offenders should also be of an especially protective nature for the children and youth involved, due to their condition as victims of political violence and the special and reinforced protection to which they are entitled under international law as child soldiers. Such a nature makes it essential to include considerations of this type in the process of determination of their criminal liability, as appropriate, and the measures to be adopted. The foregoing notwithstanding any arrangements reached by the competent judicial authorities and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, which are in charge of implementing the protection and social integration process mandated by law.”

2. Program of assistance for children demobilized from illegal armed groups

In Colombia, adults who demobilize from armed groups operating outside the law are treated differently from juveniles in the same position.

The Program of assistance for children demobilized from illegal armed groups implemented by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute has three components: prevention, assistance, and follow-up on former combatants:

a. Prevention

Among the preventive measures adopted, it should be noted that the “National Initiative to Prevent the Recruitment of Children in Irregular Armed Groups” was launched in 2004 in conjunction with the Office of the Ombudsman, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Labor Organization (ILO), with the support of the governments of the United States, Norway, and Sweden. The purpose of the Initiative is to prevent the use and recruitment of children and youth by irregular armed groups, in order to ensure that they continue to live as children, and to raise awareness in the Colombian population to ensure that children enjoy their rights. At first, the Initiative was carried out in the Departments of Huila, Santander, Antioquia, Cesar, Valle de Cauca, and Tolima.

The prevention policy pursues the following lines of action:

- Support for formulation of public policy on children at the departmental and municipal level, in order to make such policies consistent with those of UNICEF, the IOM and the Office of the Attorney General.
- Targeted social investment on specific projects for children and youth in municipalities with the highest incidence of recruitment.
- Particular emphasis on fostering youth participation initiatives for implementation of preventive projects as a way of ensuring rights.
- Institutional and community-based information, sensitization, and mobilization programs. The purpose of prevention is to pinpoint and impact on the factors that

encourage recruitment through programs in a variety of areas, such as education, food and nutrition, use of free time, strengthening social fabric and community life in high-risk urban and rural areas, as well as institution-building at the national, departmental, and municipal level.

The socio-family assistance mechanism is also being strengthened in the framework of the program implemented by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), in particular as regards assistance through the 'development home' [*hogar gestor*] scheme with a conditioned allowance and support unit. At present, assistance is being provided under this scheme to 86 youth (impacting on the same number of families) and 344 individuals.

b. Assistance

The assistance model is implemented through two mechanisms: institutional and socio-familial. Under the institutional mechanism assistance is provided through the following services: Temporary Home (first phase), Specialized Assistance Center (second phase), Youth Home (third phase), Protection Agencies Network (specific cases such as substance users and psychiatric patients). Under the socio-familial model, assistance is provided through Guardian Homes or Development Homes.

Institutional Mechanism:

- **Temporary Home:** An institution which carries out the process of identification, diagnosis of the psycho-affective and family situation, evaluation of skills and health status, and design of an assistance plan.
- **Specialized Assistance Center:** An institution that initiates implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Program's team of experts, which are put into effect in processes of psychosocial coaching, enrolment in school, training, and use of free time. The length of the stay at this center is approximately one year.
- **Youth Home:** a setting where the youth begins to live under the principles of joint responsibility and independence in a framework of ongoing school attendance and social integration. When this phase concludes they can enroll in the program of the Office of the Special Adviser for Social and Economic Reintegration, subject to compliance with the necessary legal requirements, conclusion of legal proceedings, and certification by the Disarmament Committee [*Comité Operativo de Dejación de Armas*] (CODA); or they may return to their family if the security conditions allow.

Socio-Familial Mechanism:

- **Guardian Home:** An assistance scheme in which a family selected and trained according to ICBF technical criteria voluntarily takes in on a full-time basis a boy, girl, or youth under the age of 18, with orders to be placed in a family environment because their welfare is in danger as a result of demobilizing from an illegal armed group and because they were used by this group in unlawful activities; in the home they receive comprehensive assistance in a caring environment designed to ensure and restore their rights.

- **Development Home:** The purpose of this scheme is to provide overall conditions for the personal, familial and social development of boys, girls, and youth in their family environment (original or adoptive), if the security conditions allow. **Support units** monitor the progress of the children and youth and their family environment in their place of residence.

c. Follow-up

After the youth graduate from the assistance program, in each region one of the following follow-up strategies is implemented:

- **Referral and Youth Opportunities Centers (CROJ):** These are centers intended for persons over 18 who have graduated from the ICBF program. They are places where youths who have reintegrated with their families or are leading an independent life can go for personal guidance and referral. It is part of the network of public, social, and private services that provide support so that young people can exercise their rights fully in society, develop as independent individuals and consolidate a life plan through referral to the services network.
- **Support Units:** The purpose of these units is to provide comprehensive and specialized assistance to children and youth permanently placed in a family environment and their families, in order to mentor the processes of family reintegration; enable the restoration and repair of affective ties; help to ensure the restitution of their rights; and facilitate the process of rejoining their families and society by means of links to services networks in the family's area of residence.

As part of the process of ensuring effective and permanent observance of the rights to comprehensive health care, education, rehabilitation, and public assistance, as well as fulfillment of measures to ensure their effective social reintegration, steps have been taken, through arrangements and coordination with different sectors and international cooperation agencies, which have led to the establishment of agreements with entities such as the Ministry for Social Welfare, the National Social Security Council, the Ministry of Education, the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), the Office of the Special Adviser for Social and Economic Reintegration, and international agencies, such as the IOM, UNICEF, ILO, GTZ, and the European Union, among others.

According to the ICBF Information System, from 1999 until March 31, 2007, the specialized program has provided assistance to 3,154 children and youth.

Indigenous Peoples and Minorities

Elimination of all forms of discrimination

Colombia is working on the design of a National Plan of Action on Human Rights, one of whose core components is entitled "Fight against Discrimination and Promotion of Identity." Jointly spearheading the activities and measures that have been carried out in this process are the Ethnic Peoples Department of Ministry of the Interior and Justice and the Presidential Program on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. The purpose of the Plan is to reduce everyday discrimination practiced against targeted population groups (Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal

(original Afro-Caribbean population), and Romany); close the gap between formal equality and actual equality; and moved forward in the recognition of the rights of population groups through a government policy that includes affirmative action and indicators to measure the impact of anti-discrimination policy.

It should be mentioned that the various activities that have been carried out (workshops, seminars, and meetings) have provided opportunities for interagency dialogue and consensus-building with civil society and made it possible to define a methodological framework for development of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights.

In the second half of 2006, a situation analysis, scenario, and objectives were prepared for the core component “Fight against discrimination and promotion of identity”. At present, the strategies, lines of action, and implementation schedules are in process of construction.

Furthermore, in order to comply with the conventions and documents adopted at international conferences that the country has signed as a member state of the United Nations, as well as with recommendations put forward by agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Ministry for Social Welfare, through the Working Group for Ethnic Affairs and Gender of the Bureau for Social Advancement drew up a document entitled “Rights and Duties of Ethnic Groups in the Framework of Social Welfare,” which compiles and analyzes the laws that protect the rights and duties of ethnic groups in Colombia, in particular with regard to health. The intention of this document is for the bodies responsible for observance and application of these rights and duties – such as administrative entities, social security providers, mayors, governors, the various branches of government, and oversight agencies- as well as ethnic groups and the rest of the public, to protect and exercise said rights and obligations.

Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Colombian State has participated actively in the work being carried out in the framework of the Organization of American States, by providing it with all the information requested in order to continue to press forward with the negotiations designed to culminate in the adoption of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in a framework that guarantees rights and in keeping with the Constitution of Colombia and the international treaties that the Colombian State has long since ratified.

The working methodology adopted in the OAS gave rise to an unprecedented negotiation system that enables the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples who have formed an “Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus,” with their respective regional coordinators. Their participation is financed by a special fund that receives voluntary contributions from several states.

The Caucus negotiates with the States, which negotiate with each other; agreements also have to be reached within Caucus itself. This participation shows that the OAS wanted an open and participatory process in which nothing would be approved unless the opinion of the Caucus was first considered. For its part, Colombia has always demonstrated –as it must continue to do- its support for the Declaration. It is an imperative and a debt owed to the indigenous peoples of the Hemisphere.

Rights of Afro-descendants and full access to education opportunities

In keeping with Law 70/1993 (Law on the Rights of the Afro-Colombian Population as an Ethnic Group) and the regulatory decrees issued under it, the State has worked with organized communities to strengthen the institutions and organizations of the Afro-Colombian population, in a bid to make an effective contribution to the efforts to overcome the poverty in which many of them live. This Law introduced the concept of the Development Plan for Black Communities with the aim of proposing “long-term policies and providing a frame of reference so that policies adopted under the National Development Plan might respect the country’s ethnic diversity and foster sustainable development in these communities, in keeping with their vision in that regard.” The Law also provides that the National Planning Department (DNP) is the agency responsible for contributing to their formulation and financing.

The DNP has gone to considerable lengths to pursue different initiatives to create and implement the Plan. In first place, it facilitated the creation and operations of the review committee to design the plan and has furnished the necessary technical and administrative assistance for it to operate. In second place, based on the documents produced by the review committees, it has prepared the following public policy documents for black communities: CONPES 2909 of 1997 “Program of support for the development and recognition of black communities;” CONPES 1369 of 2002 “Policy on the Afro-Colombian population;” and CONPES 3310 of 2004, “Affirmative-Action Policy.”

In third place, and as a result of the foregoing process, a general draft was prepared for the Comprehensive Long-Term Plan for the Black, Afro-Colombian, Palenquera, Raizal Populations, as well as different thematic documents on the core issues of Human Rights-Gender; Land and Environment-Gender; Economic Development, and Social Development-Gender.

As regards the National Development Plan 2006-2010, general strategies for ethnic groups as a whole, and specific strategies for the Afro-Colombian population in particular, were included in the chapter on ethnic groups as well as in sectoral issues. These issues include economic development and ethno-development; social development; environment and land; human rights; governance and institutional sustainability.

At the same time, in order to move forward with strengthening the differential approach on the Afro-Colombian population in all government policies, ethnicity was included as a variable in the 2005 census, the results of which revealed that more than four million Colombians regard themselves as Afro-descendants.

Furthermore, 68 collective title deeds were issued and 1,228,121 hectares of land adjudicated to black communities from 2002 to 2006. From 2004 to 2006, 8,668 million pesos were allocated to the non-refundable credit fund for Afro-Colombian students. Also, Decision 319 was adopted, which lowered the cost of extending the Subsidized Health System by 20%.

Traditional Knowledge and the Convention on Biological Diversity

The necessary mechanisms are being deployed to implement the Akwé:Kon Guidelines for the cultural, social, and environmental preservation of indigenous communities settled in areas where development projects (megaprojects) would be carried out. The Ethnic Peoples Department of the

Ministry of the Interior and Justice, as interagency coordinator of prior consultation processes with ethnic communities, in accordance with ILO Convention No. 169, has been carrying out the necessary studies so that the voluntary Akwé:Kon Guidelines can be applied in the aforementioned processes in the near future.

Implementation has been discussed of a project on Protection of Traditional Knowledge through which to design and put into effect a comprehensive strategy to respond effectively to the provisions of Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which Colombia ratified by Law 165 of 1994. To that end, the need has been proposed to strengthen the institutions responsible for designing that strategy, which include indigenous organizations and traditional authorities and municipal authorities.

Accessibility of education services for indigenous peoples

The Ministry of Education has been providing support for the creation of Regional Higher Education Centers (CERES), the purpose of which is to advance professionalization in the indigenous population. At present there are eight CERES in operation. In 2006, the Álvaro Ulcue Chocue Fund awarded 1,762 credits.

Promotion of cultural and linguistic needs

The Ministry of Culture has carried out 170 projects with indigenous communities to support strengthening of their cultural identity. In addition, there are 127 libraries in municipalities with indigenous reserves in their territory that have been supplied with indigenous and Afro-Colombian literature.

Promotion and participation of indigenous peoples in public policy shaping

The Ethnic Peoples Department of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice is coordinating efforts between the State and indigenous peoples and their organizations in order to formulate general policy guidelines from which to design programs and projects to meet the needs of the indigenous population. The project to that end includes four core components one of which is Identity, which covers four themes, including education, health, and culture.

Indigenous peoples also have access to participation forums, such as the Permanent Consensus-Building Committee and the health and education committee. With regard to participation in the social security system, attention should be drawn to the free inclusion of this population in the subsidized system. They also enjoy comparative advantages with respect to other deprived populations in the country. For instance they are not required to undergo the Beneficiary Identification System (SISBEN) survey nor are they charged moderating quotas and co-payments, which all other insureds under the social security system are required to pay. As of December 2006, the number of members of the subsidized system was estimated at 892,216. Also as of that date, 6,558 senior-citizen subsidies had been approved.

The funds to pay for the subsidies are channeled by the State to indigenous health insurers (EPSIs), created by the traditional authorities of these communities. They, in turn, provide services to their members through indigenous health service providers (IPSI) that operate in their territories and are part of the public health system

As regards rule-making for indigenous peoples, the Ministry for Social Welfare, through a permanent committee, has been holding a series of meetings with the Indigenous Health Committee (composed of representatives of indigenous people's organizations and their outreach enterprises and health service providers) with a view to adopting implementing regulations for Law 691 of 2001, which permits the participation of indigenous peoples in the Social Security System. These consensus-building meetings, held since 2004, led to the adoption of National Social Security Council Decision 326 of 2005, which introduces guidelines for the organization and operation of the Subsidized System for indigenous peoples, as well as Decree 4127 of 2005, which sets a minimum membership for indigenous health insurers.

Furthermore, in concert with the Indigenous Health Committee, terms of references were drawn up and zones selected for studies to be conducted to design proposals for adapting the Health Benefit Plan for indigenous communities. The foregoing will be carried out in participation with work teams formed with the consent of the traditional authorities of each of the indigenous peoples selected, which will be composed of bilingual indigenous staff belonging to the indigenous organization who are familiar with the region and have health-related expertise.

Closing the digital and communications divide

The Ministry of Communications, through its "Indigenous Community Radio Stations" program, which is designed to help indigenous peoples in the country develop communication strategies by providing them with audio broadcasting infrastructure and intercultural training, has set up 22 indigenous radio stations and 172 tele-centers, which have benefited approximately 392,606 members of the indigenous population.

Statistics on the ethnic composition and socioeconomic characteristics of indigenous populations

The National Statistics Department (DANE) is working on the inclusion of ethnic origin and territoriality variables in the vital statistics records, which makes it possible to extend the coverage and identification of behavior and factors related to births and deaths in these population groups. At present a pilot test is underway in the Department of Cauca, where training has been provided to departmental health staff, as well as to traditional leaders and healers from the various communities in the zone.

An origin component is also being included in the Household Survey to obtain continuous data on the country's different ethnic groups. The design is also underway of a 'self-registration' form for indigenous reserves and collective territories of black communities to provide ongoing up-to-date information on the ethnic population.

Finally, the attempt is being made to create a single, national basic information system on ethnic groups based on data from the 2005 national census, in order to develop a sample framework on which to conduct post-census studies that reveal the current situation of multiple aspects of this population.

Dialogue with indigenous peoples and government policy

In keeping with Decree 1397 of 1996, which created the Permanent Committee To Build Consensus with Indigenous Peoples and Organizations, in February 2006 a meeting was held in Bogotá to approve the methodology for formulation of general government policy guidelines consensualized with indigenous peoples.

As regards promotion of a respectful and constructive dialogue with indigenous peoples and design of policies for their sustainable integral development, the Ministry for Social Welfare, as part of the process of shaping policies on assistance for vulnerable populations and their classification, specifically with regard to the country's ethnic groups (indigenous peoples, Afro Colombian population, Raizal population, and the Romany or gypsy people), has been taking a series of steps to define draft social security policy guidelines for these groups, review the current state of health care, and prepare a draft health-care model or models.

As regards support for the Indigenous Peoples' Health Initiative proposed by PAHO to shape comprehensive government health policy and health systems for indigenous peoples and design and implement an inter-cultural health model, the Working Group on Ethnic and Gender Affairs of the Bureau for Social Advancement attended a meeting in Nicaragua in 2004 to study challenges and approaches to indigenous health care in the countries of the Americas in the context of the renewal of the Primary Health Care Strategy and completion of the Millennium Development Goals; conduct an evaluation of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People 1995-2004; and concoct future guidelines for the 2005-2015 Plan of Action.

In addition, with a view to designing differential assistance strategies in the area of social protection for displaced indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups situated in border areas, in 2004, a study was conducted on the nature of the conflict, displacement, and health conditions in ethnic groups located near the borders with Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Panama, with a view to preparing guidelines and the necessary inputs that would enable the Ministry for Social Welfare to devise differential strategies. At present there is a document that includes a bibliographical and regulatory database, a draft theoretical approach, a conceptual framework, and a partially completed diagnosis and review of the population.

The diagnosis and review will be completed in 2007. Once all the information has been consolidated it will be submitted to the target groups for consideration, with a view to its validation and adjustment. This would ensure that the necessary elements were in place to engage the indigenous peoples and Afro Colombian population in discussions on the guidelines and inputs for the design of differential assistance strategies.

The "human resources in health" bill has been submitted for presidential approval. The law would establish the regulatory framework on training, medical practice, performance of health workers, and related ethical and bioethical aspects.

It is also important to mention that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals have led to the tackling of the issue of human resources in health and their direct contribution to the accomplishment of the said goals. In this connection, all of the countries of the Americas adopted the Declaration of Toronto in October 2005, which established 2005-2015 as the Decade of Human Resources in Health.

The Declaration has since been put into effect at meetings of observatories on human resources in health, through the design of 10-year health plans. In the case of Colombia, the Bureau of Human Resources Review and Policy is the entity that proposed the plan of action enclosed.

Gender Equity

Program “Women Household-Head Entrepreneurs”

This program promotes empowerment and social and economic advancement for women heads of household in strata 1 and 2, in urban and rural areas, who engage in an economic activity or productive project. As of February 2007, 24 departments and the city of Bogota had entered the program, which had disbursed 9335 loans (4,402 in rural areas and 4,933 in urban areas) with a total value of 19,735 million pesos.

National Business Training Program

The purpose of this program is to create a sustainable platform to provide comprehensive instruction to women heads of household, so that, through productive training, they can then foster and support job creation at the local and regional level.

The instruction courses as well as business surgeries and technical training programs have the same coverage as the Program “Women Household-Head Entrepreneurs” as they to the extent that it is being implemented in the same departments. The National Business Training Program has imparted training to a total of 26,200 women household-head entrepreneurs.

National Women’s Business Fair

The aim of the Fair is to consolidate a commercial showcase of a social nature in order to stimulate women’s entrepreneurial activities, launch competitive small businesses on the national, regional, and local markets, and establish ties between small business owners, consumers, and governmental institutions that work for the development of the micro-enterprise sector.

The Fourth Women’s Business Fair, to be held at Corferias on August 2 to 5, 2007, will be attended by an estimated 518 women micro-entrepreneurs from 24 departments and the city of Bogota, where they will have the opportunity to display their goods and services; of these, 368 are first-time participants and 150 have taken part before.

Strengthening of gender-differentiated data systems

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on Equality for Women created the **Gender Affairs Observatory (OAG)** in 2004 as a mechanism to monitor compliance with national and international standards in force on equality for women and gender equity, as well as to follow up on government policies, plans, programs, projects, and budgets, in order to formulate recommendations to help eliminate discrimination and gender inequity from the country. **Law 1009 of January 23, 2006**, approved its creation as a permanent body that reports to the Administrative Department of the Office of the President of the Republic (DAPR) through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Equality for Women.

Based on a review of five core issues previously identified in the policy on women (Employment, Health, Education, Political Participation, and Violence against Women), the OAG monitors 81 indicators that keep a watch on three aspects: a) measures adopted by the Colombian state based on follow-up through a gender perspective lens of four equity mechanisms; b) Progress and results of the CPEM, and, c) population indicators to measure inequality between men and women.

Statistical information systems

The Gender Affairs Observatory monitors five core issues, one of which is “Employment and Business Development” based on statistical data collected by the National Statistics Department (DANE). It also published OAG Newsletter No. 4 devoted to the issue of “Colombian women in the labor force” and commissioned two research projects: “Quality of women’s employment in Colombia” (Javier Pineda, 2005) and “Private-sector employment of women in comparison to men” (Hay Group, 2005). Both are available for consultation at the CPEM documents center.

At the same time, a delegate of the OAG attends the meetings of the Antipoverty Strategy – Juntos Network as the representative of the CPEM.

Advancement of full recognition for the human rights of migrant workers

The Constitutional Court of Colombia has ruled on the issue of migrant workers and observance of their rights, and held that:

- At the domestic level, the Constitution establishes correlative rights and duties for foreigners. Thus, it provides the possibility for foreigners to acquire Colombian nationality by adoption (Article 96); forbids any foreigners domiciled in the country to be forced to take up arms against their country of origin (Article 97); recognizes for them the same civil rights and guarantees that Colombians enjoy; and provides the possibility for the law to grant them the right to vote in elections and plebiscites at the municipal or district level (Article 100). However, the Constitution has provided that the law may subject the civil rights of foreigners to special conditions, deny the exercise of a number of those rights, and impose limits on the guarantees that they enjoy. Furthermore, it requires them to abide by the Constitution and the law and to respect and obey the authorities (Article 4).
- Precisely for that reason, the Court has consistently held that while the imposition of duties is inherent to the legal status of foreigners in counterweight to the rights recognized to them, their regulation cannot be conceived in such a way as to propitiate the disavowal of their fundamental rights because under the constitutional order those rights are a limit on the discretionary power of the State to impose rules on the entry and stay of foreigners in its territory.

Justice and the Rule of Law

Fight against the global drug problem

Colombia works actively in the framework of CICAD to enhance and improve hemispheric cooperation in the fight against the global drug problem. Thus, it will take up the chair of this hemispheric organ in November of this year. As regards follow-up on the commitments acquired at the Summit of the Americas, it should be noted that Colombia, along with the other countries in the Americas, has continued to advance full implementation of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). Furthermore, with regard to money laundering, Colombia has one of the most advanced financial intelligence units in the Hemisphere, through which it cooperates closely with other countries in the Americas as well as providing technical advisory services to many of them.

Multilateral and Bilateral Mechanisms to Monitor Drug Trafficking

The Colombian government has a drug observatory that collects and evaluates information on the improper use and supply of illicit drugs. The Colombian Observatory on Drugs (ODC) is under the supervision of the National Narcotics Department (DNE) which acts as a center of expertise that enables a better understanding of the different manifestations of the drug problem and at the same time contribute to the design and adjustment of policies, plans, and programs to tackle the issue in a well-rounded manner.

The National Narcotics Department (DNE) represents Colombia in the continued coordination with, participation in, and support for the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) of the OAS.

In March 2006, Colombia attended the meeting of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG), which is composed of officials designated by each of the OAS member states. The purpose of the meeting was to draft 34 final country reports on Implementation of the Recommendations for 2003-2004. The report on Colombia contains 21 recommendations, of which the Colombian state has fulfilled six; has 11 in progress; has not started two; has provided no information on one recommendation, and is unable to comply with another.

That same year, Colombia was present at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the MEM, which reviewed the MEM process applied in the Fourth Review Round, 2005-2006. Colombia proposed changes to the process and, in particular, to the indicators on each subject covered by the questionnaire. The meeting also reviewed the document entitled Basic Structure of the Introductory Document. Colombia is required to meet commitments acquired at home and abroad with multilateral agencies and embassies, and provide objective, reliable, continuous, updated, comparative information on drugs and related crimes generated by different domestic sources.

Funding for the war on drugs

In the first three years of President Uribe's administration (2002-2005) approximately US\$1,150 million in funds from the national budget were appropriated to curb cultivation, production, manufacture, distribution, trafficking, and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as related crimes.

The National Narcotics Department, in coordination with other government agencies, continued to design a project proposal to determine the economic, social, and human cost of the drug supply reduction strategy.

Legal mechanisms against illicit drug trafficking

In 2006, the Colombian government signed 145 extradition warrants, which represents a record and makes a total of 521 extraditions ordered between August 2002 and December 2006. Of the 521 extraditions approved by the Colombian government, 458 have been carried out.

In the framework of the Inter-Institutional Coordination Committee for Money Laundering Control, legislation was drawn up with a view to including in Colombia's domestic law the provisions contained in the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and in resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, in particular resolution 1373.

Access to justice and dispute settlement

As regards access to justice, the Colombian State decided to confront the issues of impunity and delays in administration of justice at the same time as improvement in the performance and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Legislative Act 03 of 2002 adopted the new oral accusatory system of criminal procedure, which is being phased in between 2005 and 2008.

This process, which has required a huge effort and the appropriation of significant budgetary resources, has been supported by the international community and is currently in the third phase of its implementation.

In the area of dispute settlement, attention should be drawn to the Houses of Justice Program, which has made it possible to pave the way for coordination among different justice operators (formal and informal) and offer alternative mechanisms for peri-urban communities.

There are 44 Houses of Justice in Colombia, which are on their way to becoming centers for strengthening public knowledge about the legal system as well as timely, universal, and equal access to it.

Also, at present there are 270 conciliation centers, which seek to strengthen the use of this mechanism as a successful tool for access to justice and to generate a new culture with regard to dispute settlement.

Security

Fight against terrorism

Colombia's foreign policy utterly repudiates terrorism, which it considers unjustified in any circumstances, and it supports hemispheric and international cooperation initiatives to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism. The measures that Colombia has adopted against terrorism are a matter of state policy and consistent with the international conventions signed by our country.

As a general framework, mention should be made of the National Development Plan 2006-2010 presented by the National Government to the Congress of the Republic. One of the core objectives of the Plan is to consolidate a policy of defense and democratic security that encompasses measures and strategies designed to ensure territorial control, combat drugs and organized crime head-on, guarantee citizen security, find a solution to the scourge of displacement, protect and ensure observance of human rights, seek reconciliation, involve subnational entities in the framework of a global strategy, and design and implement a peace and development model. In this context, as part of its foreign policy, Colombia fosters a *policy of defense and democratic security* at the international level, developed to protect democratic order and the rule of law, ensure the safety and liberty of the population, protect human rights, and stimulate economic and social advancement.

The domestic strategy to counter terrorism and its financing includes reform of domestic laws, mechanisms to permit interagency coordination, strengthening of intelligence gathering capacity (both to prevent terrorist attacks and to dismantle terrorist networks and support structures), creation of rapid reaction forces, and active citizen cooperation.

In order to meet its commitments to the international community to prevent and suppress terrorism, Colombia has ratified nine of the 13 international conventions on terrorism adopted in the framework of the United Nations. As regards the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism, the National Congress approved this international instrument in December 2006 by passing Law 2108, which is currently under constitutional review.

In the framework of the United Nations, Colombia has been working for the effective enforcement of all internationally adopted instruments and mechanisms in order to deny terrorist organizations all avenues of financing, movement, and action, through prompt and unfettered international cooperation. In this connection, at various international forums Colombia has called on states to intensify the secure and rapid exchange of information on all aspects of prevention, punishment, and elimination of terrorism.

Colombia also promoted the development of the Global Strategy against Terrorism approved by the General Assembly in resolution 60/288, which adopts urgent measures to prevent and combat terrorism in all of its forms and creates a plan of action designed to strengthen the capacities of states and the Organization to confront this problem with full respect for human rights.

Colombia has been advocating the following at international forums:

- Non-justification of terrorism under any circumstances;
- The need to enhance cooperation to confront this threat;
- Recognition of the existence of alliances between terrorism and other forms of transnational organized crime that finance and facilitate it, such as illicit trafficking in arms, illicit drug trafficking, kidnapping, trafficking in migrants, piracy, etc.
- The need to strengthen domestic measures and cooperation to confront terrorism financing.

In the Hemisphere, Colombia took up the Chair of CICTE in 2006 and set as priorities broadening of technical assistance programs to improve the quality of and security measures in travel documents; strengthening of assistance for the creation and implementation of computer security

incident response teams (CSIRT) in countries that do not yet have them, and improvement of training programs on combating the financing of terrorism.

Furthermore, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and take the greatest possible advantage of limited resources, Colombia encouraged coordinated and joint activities between CICTE and other OAS organs and international agencies. Thanks to these partnerships, CICTE broadened the scope of its activities and included the issue of security for major events in its Work Plan.

With respect to bilateral cooperation, the Colombian government considers that the fight against terrorism requires a cooperative approach and, therefore, while it has not signed any bilateral agreements against terrorism, it has signed bilateral instruments of an executive nature that enable it to foster cooperation to combat terrorism in a joint manner. Among the mechanisms in place, attention should be drawn to the Meetings of Defense Ministers, Binational Border Committees, rounds of talks between high-ranking military commanders, and Bilateral Intelligence Conferences.

Fight against the financing of terrorism

Colombia is certain that to increase their funds terrorist organizations develop links with other criminal organizations, such as drug traffickers and arms traffickers. For that reason it has been pressing for acknowledgement of the close ties that exist between terrorism and other forms of transnational crime, which is why it advocates that the concept of joint responsibility be extended to the fight against terrorism.

Among the various aspects of its counterterrorism policy, Colombia gives particular attention to attacking their finances and, therefore, the competent authorities seek to extend channels of cooperation and information sharing through which to identify, freeze, and seize the property and funds of terrorist organizations.

To that end, **Law 1121 of December 29, 2006**, the most recent development in Colombian law in this area, “Introduces rules on prevention, detection, investigation, and punishment of terrorism financing, among other provisions.” The law extensively addresses as a crosscutting issue the financing of terrorism through the financial system and agencies subject to the oversight of the Superintendency of Finance of the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIAF).

Law 1121 marks a stride toward compliance with the obligations set forth in the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, UN Security Council resolutions, and the Special Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force. The Law, *inter alia*, defines the crime of terrorist financing as follows:

“Whomsoever directly or indirectly provides, collects, delivers, receives, administers, contributes, protects or keeps funds, property, or resources, or performs any other act that promotes, organizes, supports, maintains, finances, or economically sustains armed groups operating outside the law, or members thereof, or national or foreign terrorist groups, or national or foreign terrorists, or terrorist activities, shall be liable to between 13 and 22 years of imprisonment and a fine of between 1,300 and 15,000 times the monthly minimum wage in force.”

In addition, with respect to prevention, reporting, and detection of transactions, the powers of the Financial Intelligence Unit were broadened to enable it to receive reports on suspicious transactions connected with terrorist financing.

Furthermore, in compliance with the measures set forth in UN Security Council resolutions, in particular those provided in resolution 1373, a procedure was designed for publication of, and fulfillment of obligations contained in, international lists that are binding on Colombia under international law.

International cooperation and mutual legal assistance

Regarding the legal framework in force for international cooperation, Law 906 of 2004 (Code of Criminal Procedure) broadly provides for international cooperation mechanisms. Articles 484 *et seq.* provide for the possibility of collecting evidence and information, or any other type of judicial assistance with foreign authorities or through legally prescribed channels. These provisions allow judicial officials to travel in order to conduct their business, gather evidence, and carry out any other activities necessary to prosecute crime.

Further to these provisions, Colombia has signed a large number of bilateral treaties on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, as well as conventions on specific related subjects, such as police cooperation. On January 13, 2003, Colombia deposited its instrument of ratification of the Inter-American on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Optional Protocol related thereto.

As regards the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Office of International Affairs acts as the conduit in all matters concerning assistance provided to and received from other states, sharing of evidence and similar activities, through letters or commissions rogatory and extradition processes.

In the area of law enforcement, the Office of the Deputy Director of Interpol of the DAS permanently exchanges information with appropriate authorities in other member states of the Organization and with liaison officials in offices such as the ATF, DEA, FBI; all accredited embassies in the country; State security agencies; and the Ministries of Justice, Defense, and Foreign Affairs.

In this way, information is supplied to the other law enforcement institutions, supporting intelligence efforts and any necessary judicial proceedings at the domestic and international level, in order to identify, dismantle, and arrest anyone who takes part in the execution, planning, and financing of terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, control activities are coordinated with the Office of the Deputy Director for Migration Affairs of the DAS to verify information on foreigners who have entered Colombian territory, in order to determine their immigration status in the country or to verify what data they might have registered in another, so as to be able to ascertain their real activities

Fight against transnational organized crime

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children came into force for Colombia on October 4, 2004.

Colombia's criminal laws recognize a wide range of crimes, the punishments for which depend on the seriousness of the conduct provided for in the Convention and on the nature of the protected legal interests; however, the minimum penalty is four years of imprisonment. Provision is also made for generic circumstances as well as specific aggravating circumstances in connection with certain offences that give rise to stiffer punitive measures. With respect to membership of a criminal organization, this comes under the crime of conspiracy.

Colombia took part in the Third Meeting of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention held in Vienna in October 2006. On that occasion, Colombia gave a presentation on its progress on the subject and set out its priorities with respect to implementation of the Convention and its Protocol; technical assistance in areas where difficulties have been identified, in particular witness protection; to technical assistance for the full implementation of the National Strategy against Trafficking in Persons.

Furthermore, in the framework of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice which met in Vienna, on Colombia's initiative a resolution was adopted to strengthen international cooperation and technical assistance in the fight against kidnapping. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with our Attorney General, launched the Operational Manual to fight Kidnapping, which was prepared under the leadership and initiative of Colombia. We hope it will serve as the basis for technical assistance provided by the UNODC.

At the hemispheric level, the issue was included on the OAS agenda by Mexico, through CICAD, as one of the indicators of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). A meeting of governmental experts was held in September 2006 to examine the draft Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime, at which Colombia was present. The Plan of Action was approved by the permanent Council.

Colombia has also engaged in bilateral efforts to find common ground on the issue of transnational organized crime through the negotiation and signing of bilateral plans of action in this area, in order to implement the recommendations that arose from the Palermo Convention, as well as the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime. In this vein, we signed a Plan of Action with Paraguay in 2005; the final stage is now underway in a Plan of Action with Chile, which we expect to see signed by the ministers of foreign affairs in the near future.

Contacts have also been established with Canada, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guatemala, which have expressed interest in implementing bilateral plans of action as an effective tool in the fight against transnational organized crime.

Measures against trafficking in persons

Within the United Nations, Colombia is a State party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, Especially Women and Children, which is supplementary to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This was approved by Colombia through law 800 of March 2003.

Colombia has been a regional and multilateral leader in the fight against trafficking in persons. The country's efforts have been aimed at attaining a real commitment and cooperation from States, so as to make progress in the fight against this crime, which is usually committed by organized criminal groups.

With the passage of Law 985 in 2005, Colombia gained one of the most advanced pieces of legislation on the subject. The Law adopts measures against trafficking in persons and standards for the care and protection of victims. At the regional level, Colombia has promoted the inclusion of this item on the OAS agenda, urging that it be comprehensively addressed by the Organization. In this context, Colombia fostered the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Meetings of Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General of the Americas (REMJA)

Colombia made a voluntary contribution of US\$ 30,000 to the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security of the OAS in order to hold a *Regional Workshop on National Legislation on Trafficking in Persons*. Colombia has also offered to host and organize this workshop, which would be attended by 19 countries and held in Bogotá on August 15 and 16 of the year in progress.

At present our country is finalizing the National Strategy to fight Trafficking in Persons. Through this document we hope to improve the training of government officials and foster action, particularly regarding assistance and protection for victims.

Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs)

Colombia recognizes the value and importance of CSBMs as instruments to prevent crises and conflict, as well as for strengthening peace and security throughout the region. In this connection, at the bilateral level, the Ministry of National Defense of Colombia has put into effect with its neighbors and other countries in the region mechanisms such as binational border commissions (with Ecuador and Panama); rounds of talks with high-ranking military commanders (Peru and Brazil); bilateral working groups on defense and policing (Peru); and interagency agreements among the armed forces of various countries (Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica).

CSBMs do not only depend on bilateral mechanisms; their implementation also extends to the multilateral plane, examples of which are the South American Intelligence Congress, which has been held annually since 1998, and the First Meeting on Comprehensive Defense and Security of the Amazon Region under the auspices of the Amazonian Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) in 2006.

Combating new multidimensional security threats identified in the Declaration on Security in the Americas

The Declaration that came out of the Special Conference on Security held in Mexico in 2003 refers to threats such as environmental degradation, drug trafficking, terrorism, and trafficking in firearms.

The democratic security and defense policy identifies terrorism and illicit trafficking in firearms as threats to the security of the Colombian population. Terrorism is the method used by violent groups to strike fear into the civilian population and illegal economic activities; illicit drug

trafficking is the main source of revenue of the main terrorist groups and a root of corruption in Colombian society and the country's institutions

In the fight against the terrorist threat considerable efforts have been made in the military arena with respect to troops and modernization of the security forces. Thus, between 1999 and October 2006, the number of personnel increased by 130,485 (51.5%) and advances were made in the professionalization of troops. In this way, the number of professional soldiers went up by 126% (40,830). Thanks to strong pressure exerted on criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking and a combined approach of crop eradication, interdiction, and extradition, the counter-narcotics strategy has reversed the rising trend in drug output in Colombia. Thus, in the period from 1999 to 2005, the number of hectares under coca declined by 46.4%.

Further to the foregoing, and in order to enhance hemispheric cooperation in this area, Colombia has signed interagency agreements with the following countries:

- **Mexico**
Ministry of National Defense of Colombia (National Navy) and Ministry of the Navy of the United Mexican States (Navy of Mexico), signed an “Inter-Agency Agreement on Maritime Cooperation” in January 2005, which has served to promote cooperation in the fight against the global drug problem and related crimes, intelligence sharing, and training on maritime matters.” The second meeting on the Inter-Agency Agreement between the Navies of Colombia and Mexico was held in Mexico City, in August 2006.
- **Venezuela**
The Ministers of Defense of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos C., and of Venezuela, General-in-Chief Raúl Isaías Baduel, have met on two occasions: the first, at the time of the swearing-in of President Uribe Vélez, on August 7, 2006, and officially on September 1, 2006, in San Cristóbal, Venezuela, in the framework of the Binational Meeting of Ministers of Defense, the conclusions from which were set down in the Document of San Cristóbal.

In the aforesaid document special mechanisms were agreed for coordinated efforts by the armed forces and other security agencies in order to increase the effectiveness of operations against actors that generate violence. Implementation of the agreed measures remains pending, in particular a meeting of the Ministers of Defense to examine how to put the agreements into effect.
- **Chile**
The Plan of Action against Organized Crime and Terrorism was signed by the two governments in April 2007.
- **Paraguay**
Pursuant to the Joint Declaration signed by the Presidents on March 7, 2005, a Plan of Action was drawn up to strengthen mechanisms for bilateral cooperation on security and justice that covers the following core issues: Counter Narcotics; Illicit Trafficking in Firearms; Intelligence; Institutional and Inter-Agency Strengthening; and Kidnapping.

At the meeting of the binational working group, the urgent need was put forward for the attorneys general of the two countries to meet in Bogotá. On June 5, 2006, the Attorney General of Paraguay paid an official visit to Colombia at the invitation of the Attorney General of Colombia.

Priority activities for conflict prevention and peaceful dispute settlement

Colombia has a long tradition of observance of and abidance by the various instruments on conflict prevention in the framework of the inter-American system

The experience of the Ministry of Defense and the security forces in their fight against threats with evident transnational dimensions, such as terrorism and drug trafficking, has shown that it is essential to keep open channels of communication and cooperation. The foregoing has to do with the fact that they are necessary for addressing complex situations that arise in combating threats such as those mentioned above, including border incidents.

Promote a higher degree of understanding and cooperation among governmental security agencies.

The democratic security and defense policy has sought to establish cooperation mechanisms among the security agencies through the holding of security councils, the creation of a joint intelligence board, and joint operations.

Support for Meetings of Ministers of Defense of the Americas

The Minister of Defense of Colombia has attended all seven Conferences of Ministers of Defense of the Americas held thus far. Colombia has expressed its full support for progress on issues such as the hemispheric security system, confidence-building measures and regional initiatives, and hemispheric cooperation on security and defense matters

Disaster Management

The Department for Prevention and Disasters of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, as the coordinating entity of the national system for disaster prevention and management, has been strengthening hemispheric cooperation in three areas: i) Consolidation of Andean integration through CAPRADE; ii) The presidential objective to participate in the Puebla Panama Plan, for which approaches have already been made and will be consolidated in the course of the year through participation in the preparation of the Mesoamerica and Colombia regional risk map and experience and expertise sharing in the design of contingency plans; iii) The aim to facilitate integration with other international organizations, such as the ACS, OAS, and UN, through the ÚNETE group and others interested in providing assistance to the country.

Colombia has a National Plan for Disaster Prevention and Management, the objectives of which include risk reduction and disaster prevention, effective response to disasters, and rapid recovery of disaster areas. Colombia also has a Program on Reduction of Economic Vulnerability of the State to Natural Disasters, which has five components: risk identification and monitoring; risk reduction; policy implementation and institution building; awareness-raising on risk management; and financial transparency in residual risk management

In 2006, the country strengthened its monitoring and surveillance systems through instrumental updating of the national weather system and the national seismology and vulcanology system. In this connection, the Program on Reduction of Economic Vulnerability of the State to Natural Disasters has progressed with the identification and monitoring (for early-warning purposes) of hydrometeorological hazards and geohazards. The Program has provided technical advisory services to 106 municipalities on inclusion of disaster prevention and risk reduction in land-use planning processes, a project that has continued into 2008.

The Department for Prevention and Disasters has a variety of training programs underway that target institutions, regional and local committees, schools, and communities situated in high-risk zones. In addition, through the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) the country has been arranging training activities on aspects to do with damage assessment and needs review, as well as coordination of humanitarian aid and assistance in emergencies or disasters.

The Geographic Information System of the National Disaster Prevention and Management System (SIGPED) has been successfully consolidated in recent years and at present is receiving information from five modules, which are to be made available for information input purposes to all 64 Regional and Local Committees for Disaster Prevention and Management in the country and to relevant technical entities that participate and contribute vital information for risk management in the country. In addition, steps are underway to strengthen monitoring and surveillance systems through instrumental updating of the national weather system and the national seismology and vulcanology system.

Colombia has been taking part in the creation of an Andean Disaster Prevention System in the framework of PREDECAN, which would make it possible to share information on risks, mitigation measures, recovery, and reconstruction.

Culture

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is a crosscutting theme of the Colombian government's cultural policy. In keeping with the mandate adopted at the Québec Summit, the Ministry of Culture attended the first two hemispheric seminars on cultural diversity organized by the OAS and the Ministry of Canadian Heritage, as well as organizing the First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Culture in the framework of CIDI (Cartagena 2002). It is one of the core issues of the National Plan on Culture 2001-2010 and of all the plans and programs that derive from it.

Following the Summit of Mar del Plata, at the Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Culture in the Framework of CIDI, held in Montréal in 2006, the Ministry of Culture offered a presentation on the relationship between the Colombian government's cultural policy and the generation of decent work for poor people. The presentation centered on a description of the domestic agenda on competitiveness and productivity in the culture sector prepared in collaboration with the National Planning Department (DNP) and civil society organizations, the guidelines for regional mapping of creative industries, and the manual on business enterprise in the arts and creative industries, all of which was positively received by the those who attended the meeting.

The Ministry of Culture of Colombia has campaigned extensively to promote the value of cultural diversity both in the education sector and in the culture sector. *Inter alia*, mention should be made of the National Prize on Cultural Development which rewards initiatives in the education sector that promote cultural diversity; the National Campaign on the Value of Nonmaterial Cultural Heritage; various awareness-raising strategies on the value of cultural diversity, and another series of activities in the framework of national plans that invite dialogue among different cultures.

Children and youth

Colombia has made progress with comprehensive protection mechanisms in this sector of the population through policies and programs that require additional support from the international cooperation community.

The Colombian State believes in the power of participation as a factor for ensuring consensus and effective of results. For that reason, for the last several years it has adopted policy-shaping methodologies that allow broad participation. As a result of this, different government policies have been implemented to ensure the effective exercise of the rights of children and youth, in particular in the most vulnerable sectors. The foregoing include the National Plan for Children and Youth, National Policy for Early Childhood, the Ten-Year Plan for Promotion, Protection, and Support for Maternal Breast Feeding, the National Program on Food and Nutrition Security, and the “Municipal and Departmental Strategy for Children and Youth.”

These initiatives have been implemented in collaboration with broad sectors of society under the principle of joint responsibility, given that the protection of children and youth involves parents; institutions in the education, health, justice, sport, culture, and welfare sectors; target communities, and civil society as a whole.

The other major undertaking in Colombia has been to encourage the participation of the regions in their development, as well as to manage and design their own plans on childhood and youth. The participation of authorities and civil society organizations in regional areas ensures relevant national policy that is coherent with local realities and needs, helping to overcome regional differences that result in unequal levels of development for children, youth and their families. The foregoing is carried out with the aim of ensuring that Colombia achieves all of the Millennium Development Goals in an equal manner.

The country believes that to continue to move forward with the consolidation of a comprehensive protection system for children and youth, it is necessary to work on the design and implementation of government policy and strategies that target the population as a whole, with particular attention given to specific population groups. The National Development Plan 2007 – 2010, “Toward a Community-Oriented State: Development for All,” sets out the following main areas of work with respect to children and youth:

- Adoption of regulations for, implementation, and evaluation of the Children’s Code.
- Consensualization and approval of the National Policy on Early Childhood, including, *inter alia*, health promotion, setting of quality standards for early education services; gradual transformation of traditional community homes into multi-purpose or group homes; broadening of early education coverage.

- Attainment of universal coverage in elementary education (preschool and primary) and 73% in secondary education.
- Reduction of child labor. Design and implementation of the National Strategy for Consolidation of Policy on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor at the national and subnational level, and strengthening of coordination between government agencies (Ministry for Social Welfare, Colombian Family Welfare Institute and Ministry of National Education) and cooperation agencies (UNICEF, ILO), among others.
- Implementation of the Social Welfare Network to Combat Extreme Poverty, which would cover 1.5 million families in extreme poverty and provide comprehensive access to government social programs and services.

Public policies and standards for the well-being of children and youth

At present, the country is moving forward with important reforms and projects with a view to the development of a government policy on children and youth with a rights-based approach that meets the particular needs and characteristics of different population groups.

Children's Code (Law 1098 of 2006): This Law aligns Colombia's laws with the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It introduces substantive and procedural rules for the comprehensive protection of children and youth in order to ensure the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms recognized in international human rights instruments and the country's Constitution and laws, as well as for the restoration of those rights and freedoms. The Code is founded on the basic principles of the higher interests of the child, the preeminence of children's rights, the joint responsibility of the family, society, and State as guarantors of rights, and the inalienability of the rights of children and youth. At present, the Law is pending the adoption of implementing regulations and application.

Ten-Year Plan for Children and Youth: In keeping with the commitment adopted at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly held in May 2002 in New York, in 2003, work began on the design of the National Plan for Children and Youth, with the participation of national and subnational entities. This process led to the identification of objectives, goals, and strategies in order to improve quality of life for children and youth in the next 10 years

The Plan, known as the "Country Plan," is implemented under a rights-based approach in the framework of the social welfare system and a social-risk management approach, and adopts as the guiding principle for its activities the joint responsibility of the family, society, and the State. In this way it is intended to provide guidelines on the design of subnational development plans in the next... . In the long-term the aim of the Plan is to consolidate assistance for and investment in children and youth as a priority on the government's agenda.

Approval was recently given for its inclusion in the government's Development Plan 2006-2010, and the Plan's nationwide publication, distribution, and implementation is scheduled for November 2007.

Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health: The country has been pursuing this policy since 2003 in order to promote the exercise of rights and improve sexual and reproductive health conditions for the entire population, with particular attention given to reduction of vulnerability

factors and high-risk behavior, as well as encouragement of protection factors and assistance for groups with specific needs.

This policy makes it possible to strengthen the measures that the country has been implementing in recent years with a priority on reduction of maternal and perinatal mortality through application of the National Plan on Reduction of Maternal Mortality and of the Bio-Psychosocial Model.

National Program on Food and Nutrition Security: The National Program on Food and Nutrition Security was designed based on the recommendations contained in the evaluation of the 1996-2002 National Food and Nutrition Plan. The program was designed by the ICBF with the support of various government entities. The overriding objective of the program is for people living in all of Colombia's regions to have access and consume sufficient food of an adequate quality. The program mainly targets persons living in the most vulnerable areas.

National Youth Policy: The National youth policy is designed to guide the measures adopted by all those working with and for young people in Colombia. It is set down in a document developed as a joint effort of various government sectors, civil society organizations, young people, and youth experts, under the coordination of the Presidential Program "Young Colombia."

The policy centers on capacity building for young people and institutions; that is, it seeks to channel the efforts of the State and society toward the generation and strengthening of opportunities, in order to ensure the rights of young people and provide them support in developing as independent, responsible individuals able to make their way in life and to contribute to the development of the country as well as their personal advancement.

Early Childhood Policy: There is an alliance between the ICBF, the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare, and universities, NGOs, and community-based organizations, among others, to determine intervention goals and strategies in conjunction with boys and girls in this segment of the Colombian population.

To implement the policy, its objectives, which are set down in the Development Plan 2006-2010, will be harmonized with the Millennium Development Goals, Colombia Vision 2019, and the National Plan for Children and Youth. Furthermore, particular attention will be given in the policy's implementation to comprehensive early childhood assistance. In this four-year period, comprehensive assistance (childcare, nutrition, health, education) will be provided to 400,000 boys and girls at levels I and II of the SISBEN.

In addition, the community-based education project will be reviewed and adjusted in order to harmonize it with the life-skills framework used by the country's education system. This harmonization is crucial to ensure a pleasant and satisfactory transition for children among the ICBF assistance modalities and on entrance to the formal education system. By the same token, using self-generated and cooperation funds, the gradual transformation will continue of traditional community-based homes into multi-purpose homes and kindergartens or modalities of similar or superior quality.

Municipal and Departmental Strategy for Children and Youth: This strategy is the result of a national process led by the Office of the Attorney General, UNICEF and the ICBF, in order to follow up on: i) the inclusion of the child issue in development plans, and, ii) living conditions and quality of life for children and youth.

With the participation of subnational entities eight priority areas were identified: maternal health, child health, breast-feeding and nutrition, early education, sexual and reproductive health (with a priority on prevention of teenage pregnancies), prevention of violence and child abuse, water and sanitation, civil records, and prevention of and restitution for rights violations.

In this strategy baseline studies were conducted for the main indicators and meetings held with governors to seek commitments on core issues. This year, a six-year strategic plan was designed and subnational technical assistance continued to be provided with particular attention to the two monitoring objects. There have been three meetings of governors at which the latter reiterated their commitment to accord priority in their administration to the eight core issues, give emphasis to the National Development Plan, and analyze and assess public spending on children and youth.

Family strengthening programs

The Colombian government has implemented programs targeting socially and economically vulnerable population groups, which center on the family as the focus of the intervention and, therefore, are designed to benefit children living in poverty. **Particular mention should go to:**

- **Families in Action:** (Explained above)
- **Forest ranger families:** Financial and technical support provided for a limited time to rural, indigenous or Afro-Colombian families located in environmentally strategic ecosystems involved in or under threat of illicit crop cultivation, who wish to eradicate them and pursue legal, alternative productive activities.”
- **Food Security Network (RESA):** (Explained above)
- **Rural Youth:** This program is implemented by SENA in partnership with municipal governments. In 2004 and 2005, SENA provided assistance to **147,600 students** through the program.
- **National Food and Nutrition Security Plan:** Colombia designed the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2015 with the support of the FAO, and is currently working on the design of regional plans.
- **Family Strengthening:** Promotes training and advancement for families, so that they can perform their socializing and upbringing functions with their children. In 2006, the program's coverage was 1,308,472 persons.
- **Support for Isolated Rural Populations:** An assistance mechanism whose purpose is to provide support for children, youth, and families in rural areas to develop a life plan as a foundation on which to build social and community cohesion and promote the full exercise of rights. In this context, assistance coverage in 2005 was 122,702 persons, compared to 91,956 in 2004 (16,375 more than in 2002); coverage in 2006 was 172,677 individuals.

Early-childhood programs

The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) is the entity in charge of early-childhood assistance programs which include a comprehensive approach and a diversity of assistance mechanisms.

These mechanisms, which are described below, constitute different modes of early-childhood (under-six) assistance delivery, in keeping with regional characteristics and local or target group needs. Furthermore, while all have minimum parameters for nutritional, psychosocial, and legal assistance, they differ in terms of child coverage, volume of human resources assigned to assistance delivery, and the infrastructure planned for each mechanism.

- **FAMI Community Welfare Homes:** These homes provide assistance to expecting mothers, breastfeeding mothers, and children, in order to strengthen affective ties that support children's development; promote appropriate child-raising practices, and prevent child abuse. These homes supplement this assistance with food in the form of meals or food packages for the families who benefit from the program. In 2006, the program's coverage was **392,252 individuals**.
- **Corporate Community Welfare Homes:** These homes provide assistance to the children of low-income employees of the companies that co-finance the program. Assistance is provided to children up to the age of seven. In 2006, the program's coverage was **392,252 individuals**.
- **Multipurpose Community Welfare Homes:** These homes engage in educational activities that foster the psychological development and socialization of children under six through activities with the children themselves, the family, and the community. The program also seeks to encourage breast-feeding for children between the ages of six months and two years and supplies food that covers 70% of the daily caloric and nutritional requirement. In 2006 the program's coverage was **4,664 individuals**
- **Nurseries:** These provide assistance to families and children in order to ensure their harmonious and well-rounded development through activities to strengthen family ties and involvement in the educational processes of children everywhere in the community. In 2006, the program's coverage was **124,258 individuals**.
- **Community group welfare homes:** An assistance mechanism produced by grouping between two and 15 community welfare homes. In 2006 their coverage was **44,623 individuals**.
- **Breastfeeders, preschoolers and community kindergartens:** An assistance mechanism that benefits families through nutritional, psychoeducational, and training activities for parents; strengthening of relations and good treatment; and prevention of neglect. Coverage in 2006 was **15,248 individuals**.
- **Maternal and child:** An assistance mechanism that targets children in rural areas. Coverage in 2006 was **361,335 beneficiaries**.

- **Nutritional assistance for school-age children and youth:** In keeping with its functions, the ICBF carries out multiple activities to tackle malnutrition. The regional offices of the ICBF have put into practice new assistance mechanisms that contribute to food security, and also cover the isolated rural population. Furthermore, in the framework of comprehensive protection measures for minors under 18, the ICBF meets all the food needs of the children covered. In this action framework, the ICBF, through its various food security mechanisms, served a total of 3,941,031 beneficiaries in 2005 and increased its coverage to 5,210,602 in 2006. In 2005 the ICBF supplied *Bienestarina*² as part of its daily meals. In 2005, *Bienestarina* output totaled 39,333 metric tons, and 41,192 metric tons in 2006.

Table 1. ICBF Programs (Nutrition)

Program	2002	2005	2006
Children's breakfasts	78,152	1,006,074	1,006,534
School canteens	2,229,687	2,786,509	4,058,186
Nutritional recovery	90,571	148,448	145,852
TOTAL	2,389,410	3,941,031	5,210,602

Situation of juvenile offenders

Juvenile crime (committed by minors between the ages of 12 and 18) is a growing phenomenon in the country, based on the number of judicial proceedings, and data on assistance services. According to the consolidated information of the Superior Judicature Council, which is supplied by all courts in the country with jurisdiction over infringements committed by minors, the number of juveniles aged 12 to 18 who were prosecuted for criminal offences rose from 24,130 in 1998 to 35,799 in 2002. Between 2002 and 2003 there was a 6% drop in the number of judicial proceedings from 35,799 to 33,774. The records show that there were 22,251 proceedings in 2004. As regards type of crime, the highest proportion corresponds to crimes against property, followed by crimes against life and physical integrity, public health, liberty, and sexual morality.

It should be noted that the country has made efforts to improve coverage for juvenile offenders by creating more courts. At present juvenile courts achieve nationwide coverage and are also supported by family courts and mixed courts.

The common denominator in the backgrounds of the children and youth who commit criminal offences is the presence of exclusion factors in the family, school, and labor market. Accordingly, understanding this phenomenon entails recognizing the social processes that give rise to it, as opposed to interpretations that regard problems with the law as isolated incidents.

Laws, standards, and regulations on children and youth

The new Children's Code (*Ley de la Infancia y la Adolescencia*) was enacted on November 8, 2006. The Code creates the Juvenile Criminal Liability System, which introduces substantial changes to the provisions contained in the earlier code, as follows:

2. A food supplement in the form of a vegetable meal enriched with vitamins and minerals that is mixed with powdered milk.

- Age: the minimum age for criminal prosecution is increased from 12 to 14 years.
- Condition: adolescents aged between 14 and 18 who infringe criminal laws may now be charged.
- Procedure: A change from a special procedure, in which the judge is the sole instance, to an accusatory criminal procedure that involves a government prosecutor and two instances for all punitive measures. This procedure includes all of the criminal due-process guarantees.
- Guarantees: the main purpose of the Code is to provide comprehensive protection for juveniles in the criminal justice system through Offices of Family Defenders, who ensure that all their guarantees are observed and that all international instruments signed by Colombia in this area are enforced as constitutional rights.
- Penalties: incarceration is restricted to serious crimes. Community service is included as a new penalty.
- Objective: the criminal justice system and penalties have an educational aim which is to instill social responsibility in juveniles, through a restorative approach that entails comprehensive reparation both for victims and for the adolescent and the community. There is also a focus on the family, with importance given to the inclusion of the family throughout the judicial and education process.

With these regulatory advances in the area of juvenile criminal liability, Colombia is meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, other international mechanisms, and its Constitution, regarding adolescent lawbreakers as persons with full rights and obligations as appropriate to their level of development.

Based on the Code, Colombia formulated “Technical and Administrative Guidelines for Treatment of Adolescents in the Criminal Liability System,” which also set out the regulatory and conceptual framework for the treatment of this group, the treatment process, liable persons, and procedures under the various programs established for enforcing legally stipulated penalties and measures.

Recommendations of the Kingston Consensus

Construction process of the National Plan for Children and Youth, 2006 - 2015, “Colombia: A country for boys and girls”

Based on the undertaking given at the Special Session on Children of the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, the Colombian government, through the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), began development in 2003 of the National Plan for Children and Youth, the purpose of which is to guide all measures adopted by institutions and citizens in Colombia over a period of 10 years, in order to make effective progress in promoting a culture of observance of the rights of children and youth in Colombia; an improvement in their quality of life, and the assurance and restitution of their rights.

To implement the plan, six strategic intervention areas were identified: advancement and dissemination of children's rights; promotion of a healthy lifestyle; education and development; comprehensive protection; participation; and monitoring and evaluation.

The main stages in the development of the plan were as follows:

June 2003-2004: Initiation of the process with the participation of government and state entities, nongovernmental organizations, and international cooperation agencies. It was coordinated by a technical secretariat that comprised the ICBF, the Ministries of Social Welfare and National Education, and the National Planning Department. In addition, four working groups, composed of representatives of different institutions, were set up on the issues of promotion of a healthy lifestyle (including issues associated with HIV/AIDS); access to a quality education; protection; and participation. The purpose of these working groups was to review the situation of children with reference to each of these issues and to design and propose goals for the improvement of the quality of life of children over a 10-year period.

June 2004: Systematization of an initial document on the conclusions of these working groups in addition to the outcomes of 15 forums on related issues with the participation of different institutions and experts. This document was made available for public consideration on the Internet, in order to canvass opinions and recommendations on the proposals and, in that way, enrich its content in a participatory manner. A workshop was held at the regional level, along with two at the municipal level, to consult on the plan's orientation and test the methodology developed beforehand for the design of plans on the issue of children at the subnational level.

Furthermore, the national government, through the ICBF sent out an invitation, via different mass-media organizations, to the children of Colombia, asking them to describe how they imagined a country fit for children. In response, more than 10,000 drawings were sent in by children and adolescents aged two to 17. A number of the drawings selected as winners would be used to illustrate the final text of the plan.

July 2004 - June 2005: The institutions that comprise the Technical Secretariat (ICBF, Ministries of Social Welfare and Education, and the National Planning Department) held technical discussions on the document and incorporated the adjustments agreed on in the conclusions from those discussions. By the same token, in March 2005, the Alliance for Colombian Children was invited in order to provide a progress report on the process, and the document was submitted for comments.

June 2005 - April 2006: The Technical Secretariat has been working on the review and adjustment of the goals in the Plan in order to align them with goals set forth in other policy documents, in particular, National Council on Economic and Social Quality (CONPES) Document 091 of 2005, which sets out Colombia's objectives in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals; and Colombia Strategy 2019, which describes long-term development objectives for the country.

The draft is currently in the final stages of review, adjustment, and publication and is scheduled for release in November this year. Once the Plan has been finalized the challenge for the country will be to put it into action and to monitor and evaluate the strategies it contains, with a view to attaining the goals and objectives described in it.

In March 2007, Colombia presented to UNICEF its national report 2003-2006 in follow-up to the Plan of Action for "A World Fit the Children" (WFFT) which will provide the basis, together

with other national reports, for discussions at the Special Session on Children to be held at the United Nations next November.

This document describes the progress made by Colombia in implementing the WFFT Plan of Action and the MDGs, as well as a summarizing the main lines of action on protection of minors and the strides made by the country with respect to children and adolescents between 2003 and 2006. The final part of the document contains recommendations from competent entities in the area of international cooperation in support of children and adolescents.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 1980; The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993, and the Inter-American Convention on the International Return of Children of 1989

The Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was ratified by Colombia by Law 173 of 1994 and declared enforceable by the Constitutional Court in Judgment C. 402 of 1995. The Convention entered into force on March 1, 1996, and the central authority for its application is the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, which function it performs through its Department of Direct Interventions. Having started to implement the Convention in 1996, as of March 31, 2007, this Department had processed 369 requests concerning return or access, 182 of which are currently active.

Law 1008 of 2006, which came into force on January 26, 2006, provides that authority over the application of The Hague Convention of October 25, 1980, pertains to Family Defenders in administrative proceedings and to family courts or mixed family courts in judicial proceedings.

The Children's Code, which entered into force on May 9, 2007, states, with regard to international return, that family courts have jurisdiction in a single-instance proceeding, and provides that the judge has two months in which to rule on a matter. These provisions are in accordance with the principle of promptness recognized in the Convention.

**Requests Received under The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects
of International Child Abduction
(1996 – March 31, 2007)**

YEAR	RETURN	VISITS	TOTAL	ANNUAL PERCENTAGE INCREASE
1996	4	0	4	
1997	5	1	6	66.67%
1998	9	1	10	60.00%
1999	12	2	14	71.43%
2000	18	2	20	70.00%
2001	29	2	31	64.52%
2002	28	3	31	100.00%
2003	39	4	43	72.09%

The Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption came into force for Colombia on November 1, 1998, by reason of Law 265 of 1996. The central authority for adoptions is the Colombian Family Welfare Institute and, as such, it grants authority to accredited organizations and international agencies subject to compliance with the requirements set forth in the law and the international conventions ratified by Colombia, as well as taking need of the service into consideration. The Ministry of the Interior and Justice certifies standing of accredited organizations and international agencies and registers their legal representatives.

Both international agencies and accredited organizations are required to obtain fresh authorization from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute every two years.

In Colombia, international adoption is governed by the international treaties and conventions ratified by the country in this regard.

The Inter-American Convention on the International Return of Children was adopted at the Fourth Inter-American Specialized Conference on Private International Law on July 15, 1989. This international instrument has not entered into force for Colombia despite its approval by Law 880 of 2004 and the fact that the Constitutional Court declared it enforceable in Judgment C- 912 of 2004. At present, the instruments of ratification are in the process of being deposited with the OAS.

Civil Society

Civil society participation in the Summits process

Through the *Universidad de los Andes*, Colombia is involved in the Project “**Citizen Participation in the Summits of the Americas,**” which is coordinated by *Corporación PARTICIPA* of Chile and financed by the Canadian Agency for International Development (ACDI). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia has coached the *Universidad de Los Andes* in the process.

Corporación PARTICIPA of Chile has been pushing for the implementation of a new phase of a hemispheric project designed to strengthen participation by the region’s civil society organizations in the Summits of the Americas process. This new phase of the project, known as “**Citizen Participation in the Summits of the Americas,**” entails systematic monitoring and evaluation of government compliance with mandates they have adopted; effective partnership building at the domestic level between civil society organizations and government agencies in the countries concerned; and appropriate dissemination of these partnerships in order to generate an impact on decision-making processes. Efforts will center on three core themes:

- Access to Public Information and Freedom of Expression.
- Decentralization and Local Government.
- Strengthening of Civil Society Participation.

In a new development, the project will include gender as a crosscutting theme in its treatment of the three above-mentioned core themes.

In November 2006, *Corporación PARTICIPA* organized and staged a hemispheric meeting attended by both civil society and government representatives from most of the countries in region, including Colombia. According to *Coporación PARTICIPA*, the aim of this new phase of the project “is to forge alliances among government, civil society, and the private sector representatives in a bid to reach agreement on a plan of action that includes concrete steps to strengthen democratic governance, in the framework of the Summits of the Americas process.” It has been determined that 10 of the 24 countries present at the meeting of November 2006 in Santiago, Chile will be involved in this project strategy (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay, United States, and Uruguay).

Implementation of this new phase is about to commence. Thus far, the coordinators have been chosen for preparing the methodologies on each of the four core themes, as follows:

- I. For Access to Public Information and Freedom of Expression, Pedro Mujica of Chile.
- II. For Decentralization and Local Government, Gabriel Murillo of Colombia.
- III. For Strengthening of Civil Society Participation, Francine Jácome of Venezuela.

The methodology coordinator for gender will be Luciana Sánchez, who works in Chile and Argentina.

It has also it being decided that hemispheric coordination for this phase will fall to the Hemispheric Coordination Team (HCT) thus:

- The Regional Coordinator for Economic and Social Research (**CRIES**) of Venezuela will act as coordinator for Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Canada.
- The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (**FOCAL**) will be the coordinator for the United States, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Chile.
- *Corporación PARTICIPA* will coordinate for Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The work schedule has also been determined and will run from April 2007 to March 2008.

This new joint activity by Latin American civil society in partnership with the governments of the countries involved is expected to make it possible to strengthen the goals contained in the plans of action.