

EUROPE AND PLAN COLOMBIA

Chronicle of a Commitment with an Uncomfortable Plan

Europe has consistently maintained objection to Plan Colombia due to the militaristic focus, which threatens the escalation of the armed conflict. The Colombian government erred, from the position of Europe, because it developed the Plan exclusively with the United States and did not have prior consent or even consultations with other sectors of society including the Colombian Congress. Plan Colombia, in fact, was originally drafted in English and was not even available in Spanish until February 2000, four months after it was already agreed to with the United States.

Despite this, at the request of the Colombian government and under the auspices of the Inter-American Development Bank (IBD) and the Spanish government, the Europeans discussed establishing a 'Table of Donors' and the mechanisms necessary to channel foreign aid to Plan Colombia. A thousand million USD was agreed as the target, which would be collected both from bilateral financing through individual European governments and multilateral financing through financial institutions. The one agreement between the countries was that the collected funds would be destined only for social development programmes and 'crop-substitution' programmes in various Colombian regions. This 'Table of Donors' took place on July 7th in Madrid and it was at this meeting that the Europeans announced their official commitment to these projects.

Prior to the Madrid meeting, however, European officials struggled with their positions throughout an intensive and confused series of meetings while several Colombian delegations travelled through Europe. The Committee on Latin America (COLAT) of the European Council of Ministers spent two full sessions in April and May 2000 trying to find a common European position. Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and France had strong reservations, Spain and the United Kingdom rivaled for a protagonistic role, while the other members were indecisive urging for more clarification. The UK decided to convene a meeting of the donors in London on June 19th to prepare for the Madrid meeting with the intention of getting closer to a common approach. European human rights and developmental organisations addressed both the European Union's COLAT and London meetings

offering critical joint statements. The lack of public consultation and the rejection of the Plan by civil society both in the region and in Europe, became a serious issue for discussion. The Colombian government tried to mitigate this area of controversy by hosting a conference in early June in Geneva with European officials, European and Colombian NGOs and social organizations. This attempt to rectify the European concerns was too late and at the London meeting it became clear that the majority of European countries would not support the Plan in its current form, despite not having a clear common position or direction. An option of 'compromise' was posed whereby the next donor meeting in Madrid would be reorganized from a 'donor conference on Plan Colombia' to 'a meeting of the group supporting the peace process in Colombia'. The impetus for this new meeting would involve civil society, integrating concerns into a new 'European plan based on the best elements of Plan Colombia.'

Until that point, the EU had not publicly rejected Plan Colombia despite the concerns raised about being perceived as the development aid 'carrot' compared with the US military 'stick'. To complicate things even more, Javier Solana, European Union Foreign Affairs Representative, visited Colombia and in a meeting with president Pastrana he conveyed confidence for Plan Colombia promising "generous support from Europe." Delighted with this the Colombian government used these statements in their preparations for the Madrid meeting. Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, applauded the integral strategy of the Plan and presented the UNDCP as the implementing agency of two projects in the package, as part of the global anti drug strategy to eliminate coca and opium poppy by 2008 worldwide. At that moment introducing the *Fusarium oxysporum* fungus in the fight against coca crops was still also under consideration.

The Madrid donor conference was polemic. Prior to Madrid an Alternative Round Table convened by Colombian and European NGO's rejected the Plan arguing that they were "not democratically consulted," as the government "did not listen to those groups of society directly affected by the Plan." The Plan includes the aerial

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DRUGS & CONFLICT
DEBATE PAPERS

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EDITORIAL

This briefing paper is the first in series TNI will produce on 'Drugs & Conflict.' Our intention is to stimulate public and policy debates on the connections between drugs and conflict.

The illegal drugs economy, as well as the current global anti-drugs policies, are important factors, which increase social tensions, fuel armed conflicts, aggravate related problems such as human rights violations, forced displacement and environmental degradation as well as obstructing and undermining the search for peaceful solutions. The intention of this briefing series is to encourage support for alternative drug policies based on principles consistent with a commitment to harm reduction, sustainable development, democracy, human rights, and conflict prevention.

This first issue is devoted to the controversies that have arisen around Plan Colombia. It is released at this particular moment to inform discussions on supporting the peace process in Colombia around the third round of the international donor conference in Brussels. The first and second rounds having taken place in Madrid last July and Bogotá last October, it is at this third round on April 30th in Brussels that the international community will clarify how the funds will be put to the most effective use in the promotion of a peaceful resolution in the Colombian armed conflict. When the US decided to create a predominantly military aid package to intensify anti-drugs operations, the eyes of the world turned to focus on Europe. During the past year, intensive diplomacy and internal debates took place within the European Union in the struggle to define its position. That process, which was often confusing, is reconstructed in the first of the three texts in this issue of Drugs & Conflict. It became clear that Europe has been reluctant to play the role of the development 'carrot' alongside the US-financed military 'stick,' which to many EU member states is an incompatible strategy. The central question now is whether Europe will manage to develop a strategy more in concert with the Colombian civil society and local authorities whose outright and unanimous rejection of the Plan is because the peace process has been systematically undermined precisely due to this anti-drug approach. The second article analyses how and why Plan Colombia became so thoroughly de-legitimised.

Latin America would welcome a stronger and more active role for Europe as a counterbalance to the US, which would help prevent further escalation of the conflict. In preparations for the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in April more than 100 prominent Latin American leaders called on President Bush to, "*suspend and reformulate U.S. support for the implementation of Plan Colombia, placing a greater emphasis on supporting the peace process.*" The impressive list of signatories, including former heads of state, cabinet ministers, legislators, prominent authors, intellectuals, and civic leaders, say in their letter: "*We join the European Union in calling for a consultative process to develop realistic proposals to address the root causes of the violence. Instead of expanding misguided, ineffective, and harmful policies, the international community should offer its resources for health, education, and economic development programs, and support efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the longest running conflict in the hemisphere.*" They express their hope that the Summit would provide an opportunity "*to explore more peaceful and effective approaches to our common drug problems.*"

Paz Colombia, a broad social platform, which developed as a response to Plan Colombia, calls for an end for the policy of aerial spraying and asks Europe to support the creation of an international commission to independently evaluate the past two decades of the War on Drugs in Colombia with the intention of recommending policy alternatives. Several elected Colombian governors touring Europe in April have also joined up with this request. These Governors represent six departments where almost 70% of the coca and opium poppy of Colombia is cultivated. A related proposal currently being discussed is that Europe support an independent monitoring of the environmental and health impacts of the fumigations.

The incompatibility of peace process efforts through Plan Colombia and European strategies is symbolized by the destruction of European-financed Alternative Development projects by US backed chemical spraying. The recently established 'Social Pacts' on manual eradication, which were negotiated under threat and blackmail of pending fumigations, have been trumpeted as the alternatives offered to small farmers. The third text in this series critically examines the fundamental flaws in the current schemes for 'voluntary eradication' and calls –as do the Colombian Governors from those departments– for an authentic dialogue process with the involved communities exploring options for real voluntary, manual and gradual eradication schemes.

The European Union still has not made a clear decision and is contemplating two options. There is a strong temptation to avoid tensions with the US and to avoid a direct confrontation of the contradictions, choosing instead some 'safe' projects from the social component of the Plan Colombia package. The other route would require more political courage, but many officials seem willing to take that risk. That spirit was also expressed in the European Parliament resolution on Plan Colombia, approved almost unanimously last February. Responding to the desperate appeals from Colombian civil society, local authorities, prominent Latin American and many European NGOs, this other route would take Europe, effectively, to step politically right into the complexities of the Colombian peace process. If guided by strong human rights principles and a less rigid drug policy framework, Europe could support initiatives that would seriously make a constructive difference and help prevent further escalation in the whole region.

(cont. from p. 1)

fumigation of illicit crops, which *"will destroy the livelihoods of the peasants forcing them to abandon their land and expand their cultivation into the Amazon forest, worsening the armed conflict and the ecological problems."* The final statement of the Alternative Round Table directed at the donor conference, which was to begin the following day, targeted Europe on the incompatibility of the military and social components of the Plan. Finally they proposed *"not to support Plan Colombia... and to propose a new program based on proper consultations with the Colombian civil society."*

The European Union, as expected, postponed making the decision on its financial contribution, however the Madrid meeting concluded with confirmation of contributions from Spain, Japan and Norway, the United Nations and the international financial institutions. Pastrana's government claimed to have raised 871 million dollars for Plan Colombia, which was trumpeted by the international press. This virtual figure however, did not represent the real sum. The IDB promised 300 million but it is in fact a loan. The Colombian government will assume this debt. The 70 million from Japan would also be a loan. The figure also included the 250 million from the USA that already was counted in the 1.3 billion dollar US aid package. The 131 million from the UN budget was already destined for Colombia irrespective of the Plan. Finally the 20 million from the Norwegian government was not specified as a contribution to Plan Colombia but could be seen as gesture of political support for the new mandate given to the Norwegian Jan Egeland, special UN envoy to Colombia. After a careful breakdown of the funds it became clear that only 100 million from the Aznar government was a genuine 'contribution' while the 771 million were either loans, conditional or funds already destined for Colombia but simply renamed.

The Madrid meeting also decided to create a Support and Control Committee to oversee and make decisions on the disbursement of the funds, with the first meeting planned for September 2000 in Bogotá. The committee would identify social projects coordinate the funding and transfer the aid. The Spanish government and Javier Solana, affected the tone of the meeting by clearly distancing their position from the other Europeans. The Spanish, at one point said it supported the inclusion of the 'military component' but then in the final conference communiqué supported the social project aid package.

A September meeting in Bogotá was also too early for most of the European officials to have clear decisions made on the amounts and the conditions for their contributions, and so the final numbers would not be announced before 2001. According to Cándido Rodríguez, EU ambassador in Colombia, there were conversations with the insurgent groups *"because projects cannot begin without assurance that they can actually be implemented."* Projects destined for certain areas depend on agreement with the FARC in order to guarantee that they will not be destroyed either by insurgency or as a consequence of counterinsurgency and counternarcotics operations. According to Mo Mowlam of the British ministerial cabinet while in Bogotá, *"For us, to feel easy about putting more money in economic and social programs, we need to see more progresses in human rights."* Increasingly, there are dis-

senting voices within the British government regarding Plan Colombia.

Brussels does not have a large budget allocated for the whole of Latin America. Allocating a significant part of these funds to Colombia and to a Plan the EU member states question is not likely. The Bogotá meeting was finally set for October 24th. The EU intended to show its plan for supporting programmes in the social and civil sectors including projects in health, education, agriculture and fishing, judicial reform and human rights initiatives.

Just prior to the Bogotá meeting an important international event on the Colombian conflict took place in Costa Rica, organised by *Paz Colombia*, which is a platform of civil society organisations working for peace. This meeting included various European diplomats who announced an estimated 250 million aid package from Europe, that it would be separate from Plan Colombia and subsequently channelled through various civil society organizations rather than the Colombian government.

Then at the October Bogotá meeting with participants from the EU, Scandinavia, Japan, Canada, the United States, various South American countries, World Bank, IDB, International Red Cross and the UN, the European Union took distance from Plan Colombia. The EU formally announced their contribution for an aid package for social projects of an amount equivalent to the figure destined by the US to the social component of Plan Colombia. Concentrated in five action areas, the aid would support; the rule of law; defence of human rights and international humanitarian law; reducing the causes for violence and support those victims of violence; biodiversity and environmental protection; and the consolidation of regional agreements and co-operation.

Renaud Vignal, European spokesman at the meeting, emphasised the support of the EU for the Colombian peace process but insisted that figures would not be decided or announced at that time but that they were prepared to match the US allocations for social development and institutional strengthening. He also said that the contributions would be distributed bilaterally rather than through the community. The EU also used this forum to express concern for certain methods of illicit crop eradication and their negative consequences. Their spokesman conveyed support for alternative crop programmes for the peasant communities. At this moment the EU committed to announce officially the details of this European aid package at the next donor conference, April 30, the 2001, in Brussels.

It was officially established that the EU will not support Plan Colombia but neither has it criticised it explicitly using the arguments that it only concerns Colombia and the United States. At this point the European Parliament began defining its position. In November 2000, the Development and Co-operation Commission started to study the proposal of the Portuguese deputy Joaquim Miranda, who's position was that the EU should define and follow its own strategy as quickly as possible within the framework of the peace process. The proposal would be approved by the plenary of the European Parliament a few months later.

In the meantime, the governments in Belgium and the Netherlands officially rejected Plan Colombia declaring publicly and clearly their distance from the Plan. A new controversy arose in the Netherlands regarding the signing of a treaty with the United States for the establishment of a Forward Operating Location (FOL) on the Caribbean islands of Curaçao and Aruba. These FOL's - there are others in Ecuador and in El Salvador - substitute the former military base of the Southern Command of the armed forces of the US in Panama. Their function is the recollection of aerial intelligence for counter narcotics operations in the region. The FOL's provide logistical support for the implementation of Plan Colombia involving the Netherlands in operations from which they distanced themselves politically. The Dutch parliament is yet to ratify the treaty and is currently discussing this internal policy contradiction.

**PLAN COLOMBIA CONTAINS ASPECTS THAT
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'That Colombia requires assistance from the international community is a reality unrelated to the precise 'title' of this assistance,' was the message expressed by the special UN envoy to Colombia, Jan Egeland, during his visit to Brussels in January this year. He spoke to high officials of the EU, amongst them commissioner of Foreign Affairs, Chris Patten. The important thing is the assistance the country needs, he stated when confirming a *"total harmony in the positions of the EU and the UN"* as promoters of the peace process. During this same visit, EU chancellor Solana conveyed to Egeland the willingness of the EU to collaborate financially not only with the Colombian government, but also with non-governmental organisations, and *"maintain contact with the United Nations in order to know how the distinctive parts of Plan Colombia are being executed"*. This statement of Solana was a reminder that differences of opinion on Plan Colombia still exist within Europe.

The peace process has been the main framework in which the EU has consistently shown its willingness to co-operate. Interested in facilitating future peace talks, a mission of European experts visited Colombia at the end of January, with the intention of exploring the possibilities of an eventual meeting zone between the Colombian government and the ELN. This is not an isolated incident. Top ranking European officials met with the FARC on several occasions to discuss stopping the violent practice of kidnapping, accept International Humanitarian Law and respect human rights. The EU has participated actively in the international hearings as part of the peace process including the one on manual eradication and crop substitution programmes, which took place at Los Pozos in the Colombian jungle in June 2000. In Paris, December 2000, the EU demanded FARC return to the negotiation table - the peace talks had

been frozen - and respect humanitarian law. The peace negotiations were re-initiated during the second international hearing in the Caguán, last March 8th again with the participation of many European delegates. A facilitation group was established to support the process with four European countries including Sweden, Norway, France and Spain. The others are: Cuba, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela.

Europe's role, under the critical conditions of the Colombian crisis today, is crucial in the process. Europe is in a position to act as a facilitator but also to help pressure the Colombian government to confront the paramilitary issue. The Swedish Prime Minister Goeran Persson, expressed this point explicitly to Pastrana during his visit to Stockholm in January this year.

Europe could also play an important role in the anti-drugs strategy. On February 1, 2001, the European Parliament, with an overall majority, approved the Resolution B5-0087/3001, which establishes that the EU *"must take the necessary steps to secure an end to the large-scale use of chemical herbicides and prevent the introduction of biological agents such as Fusarium oxysporum, given the dangers of their use to human health and the environment alike."* Meanwhile, the Colombian government rejected the use of the fungus and the UNDCP withdrew from the project. However, there are indications that President Bush might consider a re-launch of the Fusarium project in 2002, as part of the follow-up to the current aid package. The European Parliament resolution clearly rejects Plan Colombia, considering it as a bilateral affair between Colombia and the United States in which Europe does not want to become involved, while at the same time, *"warns that Plan Colombia contains aspects that run counter to the cooperation strategies and projects to which the EU has already committed itself and jeopardise its cooperation programmes."*

EU foreign affairs ministers have requested that funds currently designated to promote the peace process in Colombia are tagged with conditions regarding human rights, according to the conclusions of the Council of Ministers of the EU of the 9th of April in Luxemburg. The EU is currently deciding which projects it will fund and will make the announcement at the donor conference on the 30th of April in Brussels. The EU will present its programme of support for the peace process in Colombia. The programme is structured on the central aspects of peace promotion; the strengthening of national reform policies and human rights protection; the reduction of social impacts caused by the conflict; and the prevention of expansion to other areas. The EU will contribute 280 million dollars, 100 million from the European Commission and the remaining part from individual countries.

The European aid programme is more important symbolically than economically. Traditionally, Europe represents a "different" vision for Latin America compared with the vision represented by the US. On matters related to drugs, Europe proposes a co-responsibility of the problem, within a "different" spirit namely, in support of human rights and a negotiated peace. Its particular contribution therefore also should have a "different" character. It is the hope that the Brussels meeting will overcome the remaining differences between the EU member countries

between those countries supporting a social component of Plan Colombia and those supporting a social aid package distinct and outside of the Plan. The final outcome should be a European aid package coherent with the criteria of the resolution of the European Parliament, with the proposition to develop a strategy against drug trafficking from a perspective of peace building and the strengthening of democracy instead of increasing armed confrontation. The European Commission and the Council of Ministers

should take a critical position against the military dimensions of the anti-drugs strategy of Plan Colombia. Specifically, they should take a stand against the fumigations, which will negatively affect areas where the EU have projects planned and because massive spraying of herbicides is counter-productive to crop substitution policies and environmental protection. In line with *Paz Colombia's* proposal the European initiative could thus become a genuine 'European Programme for peace in Colombia.'

THE BLUE GARMENT IN PLAN COLOMBIA

The expression Plan Colombia is closely linked to President Andrés Pastrana's political peace discourse in 1998. His Plan was proposed as a process simultaneous to the negotiations that would allow the gradual financing of sectoral projects linked to the settlements achieved. It was also geared to rehabilitation and investment, chiefly in zones ravaged by violence, zones with illicit crops or environmental conflicts, upon the basis of constructing a link between the communities and the state. Much has changed since President Pastrana's initial plan, which was basically a development project, to arrive at what is currently known as the Plan Colombia, a more encompassing document that, to judge by its appearance, does not leave out a single relevant aspect of the Colombian reality.

Nevertheless, the Plan Colombia has sparked intense controversy both nationally and internationally. Its chief promoters, the Colombian government and the U.S. Administration, have had to face criticism from sectors as diverse as U.S. congress members, civil society organizations working for peace and human rights, well-known international mass media, representatives of countries bordering Colombia, the Catholic Church, potential donors such as the European Union and insurgent groups such as the FARC and the ELN. This criticism, however, has not always been directed at the contents of the Plan itself. Observing each of the strategies proposed, and each of the scopes of action contemplated in the project – peace, the economy, the anti-drugs struggle, the judicial reform, human rights and democracy – at first glance there are few grounds to raise objections to the Plan. Its flaws are not inherent to the Plan itself, but to the deficient and mistaken analysis of the Colombian reality that preceded its drafting. The flaw, that is, is in its foundations. And when the foundations of a building are not well made, the building ends up collapsing, no matter how impressive the façade.

Although the Plan acknowledges the need to consolidate the rule of law, both its reading of the national reality and the strategies it proposes to deal with this reality disregard essential aspects, such as the rampant social inequity and poverty, the constant violations of human rights and the impunity characterizing them, the degradation of the armed conflict and the role of the paramilitary in this degradation,

the effects of the anti-drug model applied until now, the need for a profound political and institutional reform, and the construction of a genuine and participatory citizenry. Consolidating the rule of law seems linked to an approach that gives priority to national security and stability, disregarding the need for democratic legitimacy (in spite of the fact that legitimacy is referred to expressly in the Plan on several occasions) as a mainstay of the rule of law. On the other hand, the Plan focuses its analysis on the destabilizing power of the drug traffic, ignoring the structural and current causes of the compounded violence that the country endures: ordinary violence, economic and social violence, violence related to the armed conflict, violence perpetrated by the drug traffickers, violence resulting from the counter-insurgency model under application, violence resulting from the anti-drugs operations. To ignore this reality falsifies the proposal as it stands.

It is in the area of the anti-drugs strategy, however, that the absence of a state policy is to be observed most clearly. The indiscriminate application of force in the fight against drugs is accepted as a transactional resource within the framework of the bilateral agenda drafted with Washington. The use of force during military operations is a prominent factor in the strategy, no distinctions being made between the stages of production, distribution and commercialization. Forced eradication of illicit crops stems from the premise that the supply must be affected and that production must temporarily be halted, as a way to reduce drug consumption. In reality, however, it has been amply demonstrated that the capacity to relocate production has not allowed the eradications carried out until now to exert any significant influence on the demand side, causing, on the other hand, greater negative environmental impact. Forced aerial fumigation (a policy applied since 25 years ago without success) and alternative development are incompatible. At present fumigation is being carried out using a new herbicidal mixture (Roundup Ultra + Cosmoflux) and, still, the introduction of a biological plague intended to attack the coca bush remains a pending threat. The fact that Washington has been categorical in affirming that its anti-drug scheme is not negotiable and therefore the course of the peace process is not supposed to interfere with the joint antinarcotics effort, has led to a series of contradic-

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tions and to the mutually excluding approaches that Plan Colombia entails with respect to drugs, the peace process and development.

As an editorialist in one of Colombia's main newspapers stated, the principal problem of Plan Colombia is that it was conceived as a strategy to solve problems for the United States and not for Colombia. This would explain why the greatest portion of the criticism aimed against Plan Colombia, from every sector opposing it, is that these sectors often tend to 'confuse' the Plan with the aid packet approved in July 2000 by the U.S. Congress, a 'confusion' that is no coincidence considering that the total amount of this packet is 1.300 million dollars. Such as sum, that is, is more than enough to cause the forecasted de-stabilization. By targeting its aid so exorbitantly to military purposes, the U.S. has placed a label on the Plan which it has not been able to get rid of ever since: the Plan Colombia is a militarist plan that will destabilize the zones where the conflict is being waged even more than they are now, degrading even more the already vulnerable human rights situation and generating tension between Colombia and the countries in the region. As the Austrian Ambassador in Colombia quipped during the discussion over the resources to be allocated by the

European Union, the Plan's military anti-drug component is the blue garment thrown in the wash with all the white laundry. In the end, everything will be stained blue.

The truth is that as long as aid from the rest of the donors does not materialize – the European Union,

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the large financial institutions and the rest of the international community – the difference between Plan Colombia and the U.S. aid package will remain purely theoretical. The only aid that has begun to flow into Colombia, in reality, is the U.S. aid. Everything else is still to be seen. It is also to be seen whether the Colombian government will be capable of rounding up the 4.000 million dollars of its own share in the 7.500 million dollar budget estimated for Plan Colombia. Finally, regarding the U.S. aid package, it is worth raising the following question: What percentage of this sum will really enter Colombia's National Treasury? Though the amount may seem impressive, at first, in reality the U.S. companies involved in the deal – those manufacturing the military helicopters, those doing the satellite monitoring, the military consultancy firms – make sure that the money stays within their own system.

President Pastrana's government has tried to sell Plan Colombia to the European Union, insisting that the Union targets its contributions to the 'social component' of the project. But the Europeans, with few exceptions, have not proved very willing to pay for the 'carrot' in a project they do not trust, due to the war-mongering nature of U.S. involvement in the Plan.

PLAN COLOMBIA

Plan Colombia is an enormous anti-drug, peace and development strategy intended to be implemented in five main spheres of the national reality:

I. Peace process. *The Plan is based on a characterization of the conflict in which there are only three actors, the guerrilla, the paramilitaries and the inhabitants caught in the crossfire. The objective is to negotiate and reach a peace settlement.*

II. Economic Recovery. *The current economic recession and growing unemployment are factors that favor the growth of illegal activities. The Plan proposes fiscal balance and stabilization of the economy, in order to cover the national security, anti-drug and social investment budgets.*

III. Antinarcotics. *The main priority of the government. The objective is to reduce the drugs market by 50% in the next six years; to dismantle drug-trafficking organizations; to strengthen the judicial system; to integrate various national and international initiatives; to strengthen alternative development plans. All this requires combined actions between the Police and the Army; respect for human rights during the course of their operations; reinforcing joint Colombia-United States efforts; destruction of the infrastructure for drugs production; increased security during spraying and eradication.*

IV. Reform of the Judicial System and Human Rights. *To construct an equitable and efficient judicial system and re-establish trust in the state. To protect and respect human rights in compliance with the international obligations incurred. To eliminate corruption.*

V. Democratization y Social Development. *To reduce the causes and manifestations of violence by strengthening civil society. Humanitarian assistance to victims of violence and the internally displaced. Integral and participatory approaches to alternative development. To relocate workforce from the illicit crop cultivation areas to lands confiscated from drug traffickers, employ them in small-scale urban enterprises or in local reforestation programs. To promote the conservation of fragile ecosystems. Support from local governments, NGOs, private enterprises and communities is considered essential.*

The Plan in its totality is to cost around 7.500 million dollars, 4.000 million provided by Colombia itself and the other 3.500 million in contributions by the international community. President Pastrana presented an appeal to co-operate with Plan Colombia before the European Union, during his visit to the European Council, Commission and Parliament in the last days of October 1999

ERADICATION PACTS: TRUST OR BLACKMAIL?

Background

The history of illicit crops in Colombia is mingled with social mobilizations, expressing a will to change in response to the hardships imposed by illegally based economies. The high visibility of the social actors engaged in growing illicit crops; the elevated cost of an anti-drugs policy hinging on forced eradication; the absence of a sense of territorial belonging and affirmation characterizing the greater part of the social sectors involved in these activities and, lastly, the way illegality affects security and social conditions, all these factors foster the search for alternatives to a mono-dependence on illegal crops.

This situation contrasts with the interests and types of responses displayed by the actors involved in other links of the drugs chain leading up to consumption: the organizations created to elude statal interventions; the habitual use of bribery; the security structures exerting a high degree of violence; sophisticated money-laundering mechanisms; in short, the links in the drug production chain that follow its primary production enjoy a control and management of illegality allotting them the greatest share of the drugs profit, in comparison with the constant vulnerability of the primary producers.

Thus it is usual to find alternative-seeking processes in Colombia, grounded on the mobilization of entire communities engaged in illicit crop production. To supplant illicit crops, these communities demand state presence in the form of policies and resources that can satisfy people's basic economic, social and cultural needs. The first experience to sign a pact with the state for the eradication of opium poppy was undertaken in May 1992 by the Paez indigenous community in the Department of Cauca. As proof of its willingness to change, the Paez community manually eradicated its poppy plants, thus pressuring the state into making social and economic commitments. For years, however, the state never fulfilled the obligations entered upon. In the mid-nineties it did design a specific project with the indigenous communities, but it has been carried out in a slipshod, fragmented manner having quite limited scope. Poverty and the other obstacles to a sustainable economy continue to afflict the indigenous people in the Andean mountain area, in spite of the fact that they inhabit geographically more suitable regions than the coca cultivators in Colombia's Amazon region do.

A second expression of the existing will to change courses were the social protests of 1996, which mobilized over 200.000 people against forced eradication and in favor of other development alternatives. Treaties endorsing the manual, voluntary eradication of illicit crops were proposed before the state then, in almost every pact entered upon that year in Putumayo, Caquetá, the Colombian mountain range and Catatumbo. This was a unique occasion in the history of illicit crop cultivation but the state proved incapable of using it to its advantage, thus wasting the chance to reach agreements directly with the communities, with very little interference from the guerrillas or the paramilitaries.

The Current Scenario

The situation just described has changed significantly since 1997, due to the fact that armed groups, guerrillas and paramilitaries alike, directly control a major share of the drug economy at present. Today, the various armed actors must approve the conditions expressed in any kind of agreement. Control of the illicit crop scenario is being fought out through territorial disputes that limit the autonomy of the communities and the state, since the latter has proved incapable of controlling vast territories now occupied by colonization and coca. Added to the context of the *Plan Colombia*, at present a third moment in the history of eradication pacts has been reached. In spite of the fact that it has been amply demonstrated to be detrimental, and to have serious effects on the environment, human health and the social and economic life of these regions, aerial fumigation has been reaffirmed by the Colombian state and Washington's anti-drugs authorities.

In August 2000, the Santa Ana community in the town of Puerto Asís took the initiative of proposing a treaty for the manual eradication of illicit crops to substitute fumigation. The immediate threat of spraying with disproportionate amounts of Roundup Ultra, to have even more harmful consequences than those experienced throughout the decade of the nineties, has served to pressure the communities into making this proposal.*

The Colombian government, which today lacks the autonomy to set a clear, consistent and effective policy regarding the drug problem, decided to accept the community's initiatives with respect to small and medium crop producers. The state, however, cannot pinpoint exactly where these sectors are located. It has no maps indicating the regional social differentiation of illegal production and its vantage point continues to be a satellite or fumigation aircraft alone. The authorities are also starting to present manual eradication as if it were a policy in itself, when it is only a technique having the advantage of exerting low environmental impact compared to chemical spraying.

The conditions drafted in the latest proposal are bound to limit its chances of success: the communities involved are meant to eradicate coca production in the span of one year and the state promises these communities a little under a thousand dollars as a one-time payment in support of food security, while at the same time the state commits itself to financing and supporting medium and long term income-generating projects. However, just the production of one kilo of coca paste guarantees an income of 1.200 dollars in less than three months to peasants. This allows them to survive in areas where inflation is double that in other parts of the country and where day wages are double or triple those paid to harvest coffee. Other factors also limit the scope of the pacts now being promoted by the government:

I These treaties are not being subscribed in an climate of trust between producers and the state; they are grounded, instead, on the lethal threat that fumigation represents, including a perverse use of the "mistakes" committed during the procedure, such as the chemical spraying

of legal crops, fish tanks, pastures, cattle, poultry and even dwellings. In practice, the measure constitutes genuine blackmail on the part of the state, based on the flagrant violation of the right to food security that peasants and indigenous communities should enjoy: as the pacts are being proposed, either they eradicate coca or they lose everything, including the farms that they live on.

- 2 It is a short-scope proposal; that is, it replicates state drug policies seeking effects in the span of two to three years. Viewed in this sense, the objective is to eradicate a given number of hectares or every hectare in the region. The social response is a kind of dangling "carrot" that bypasses the complex nature of the problem or the setting of realistic goals in terms of a given region's development.
- 3 Implementing this useless and discredited model of "alternative development," the aid resources invested are split among hundreds of atomized projects, having a singularly economic profile; there is no regard for long-term sustainability and no regional development model sustains it, acknowledging regional specificities or territorial ordainment, but one based exclusively on the will to change.
- 4 The chaotic promotion of the pacts in question has generated an unruly handling of the process, aggravated by an institutional weakness that tends to be substituted by centralist, personalized and management-deficient mechanisms. As an example, the state promised to deliver USD 18.600.000 by January 15 2001 to the counterparts closing treaties with the government. Up to April 2001, however, the state had not paid a single dollar promised. Fear among the coca producing communities for the threat of eventual fumigation continues to push them into making treaties, thus creating a scenario of dispersion, inefficient administration and a permanent absence of strategic planning.
- 5 At the same time that these pacts are being negotiated, fumigation is not suspended and abuses continue to be committed. Meanwhile, no attention is paid to the victims and the state bodies responsible for doing so, according to the Constitution, are not carrying out research, the Ministries of Health and Environment. Instead, these limit themselves to justifying the forced eradication policy, repeating an old, inconsistent and biased discourse about the presence of illicit crops itself being responsible for the country's environment situation.
- 6 If the current circumstances persist, the foreseeable future of the pacts is foreboding: the Armed Forces, through their Anti-Narcotics Battalion, have announced that they will enforce the stipulated deadlines by destroying all coca crops. From previous experience, this attitude, due to the type of actions that they are known to carry out, is bound to cause serious human rights situations and forced displacement among the population. The existence of lists of names included in the pacts can cause jail threats and persecution to those undersigning them, through the application of Decree 30 of 1986 (the Anti-Drugs Law). The local and regional authorities may then be attributed the political responsibility for the failure of the process.
- 7 To all the above, we can add the degradation of Colombia's armed conflict, a conflict that does not respect International Humanitarian Law conventions and forces the involvement of the civil population into the conflict. The existence of these factors hinders the minimum conditions for peace that are so necessary for the development of alternatives to illicit crops.

8 In short, if the conditions limiting the state drugs policy are not modified, it will be very difficult for the treaties entered upon to produce the effects desired with regard to the illicit crops cultivation:

- Fumigation continues being brandished as the main tool of the current policy, with the aim to eradicate much larger areas than those at present officially estimated to be devoted to illicit crops (136.000 has for coca). Since a reliable social map of does not exist, fumigation is carried out indiscriminately, hitting small, medium and large producers. Such was the case in San Miguel and Valle del Guamuez in the Putumayo between December 22, 2000 and February 7, 2001, when the region's entire legal economy was destroyed and its environment seriously damaged. Among other things, this will mean that the minimum conditions for the security of the population will continue to be violated, and so will the regional consultation mechanisms established in Resolution 005 of the National Narcotics Council. This makes it impossible to build trust among the parts.
- The absence of clear answers to the drugs issue on behalf of the government authorities and the armed groups controlling the territories in question poses the need to construct an independent response stemming from the organized civil society involved in this activity.
- The environment in the areas in question must be defended and adequately managed, finding productive solutions in areas apt for production or those having a sustainable productive potential in the medium and long term. Solutions must stem from government decisions, implementing measures such as confiscating the lands acquired by drug traffickers and applying pilot crop substitution schemes in them.
- Crop substitution must be accomplished gradually and comply with the structural conditions and the policies drafted in the rural and environmental sectors. It is just not possible to replace an economic system that has been running for decades in these regions within the lapse of one year.
- Technical environmental and territorial planning processes should be developed, among other reasons as a response to the shortage of resource channeling towards potentially productive areas.
- Priority must be allocated to the need to defend and guarantee the life and integrity of the communities now living in war scenarios, a situation presently aggravated by the irrational application of fumigation.

Finally, the conditions just described show the true nature of a policy that significantly increases the damages caused by the production and abuse of illegal drugs, a policy that needs to be transformed completely. Otherwise, the *vicious circle* of the perverse effects that this policy causes will escalate, with a high price to pay for the population.

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* At the end of 1999 in Puerto Guzmán, Putumayo, illegal testing of the new commercial mixture Roundup Ultra was carried out, a combination with two added surfactants to guarantee greater penetration of glyphosate, its active ingredient. The application of this formula was performed while totally ignoring every procedure required in Colombia for the use of such herbicides.