

## Drugs as war economy and the peace process in Colombia: dilemmas and challenges

By Ricardo Vargas M.<sup>1</sup>

*The fourth item on the agenda of talks “to end the conflict,” on the issue of drugs, seems to reflect rather a flat and simplistic view of the classic circuit of drug production, processing, trafficking and use. The relationship between drugs and armed conflict in Colombia is in fact much more complex. This report analyses the challenges that drug trafficking poses to the development of a sustainable peace.*

A year after the start of their talks to put an end to five decades of armed conflict, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are getting ready to address the issue of “solving the problem of illicit drugs,” the fourth of six agreed issues set out in the *General Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace*.<sup>2</sup>

The Agreement was signed on 26 August 2012 and the talks are under way in the Convention Palace in Havana (Cuba). To address the issue of drugs, the Agreement identifies three points:

- 1. Substitution programmes for illicit crops. Integrated development plans with community participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of substitution and environmental rehabilitation programmes in the areas affected by these crops.*
- 2. Drug use prevention and public health programmes.*
- 3. A solution to the phenomenon of narcotics production and sale.*

### Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Havana agenda on the subject of drugs ought to be restructured to address the issue of the relationship between drugs and armed conflict. The parties should shoulder their responsibility for this connection and acknowledge one common element: the existence of mafia practices at different levels, the ongoing presence of which may impede the implementation of the agreements.
- Develop a state-level strategy aimed at ensuring that mafia practices and powers are tackled effectively. This is a basic condition for building a sustainable peace.
- Reformulate the discourse that situates drug trafficking and other illegal economic activities as threats external to the state, and instead take it on board as an activity in symbiosis with political power, especially – though not exclusively – at the regional level.
- The illegal coca economy has been used as a mechanism to demolish the traditional cultural practices of indigenous communities, forcing processes of violent insertion into market economies upon them and dismantling the key elements of their social organisation and survival.
- Disregard for the validity of collective territories and failure to respect their autonomy is a dilemma faced today by both the government and the guerrilla.
- Agree on spaces for civil society to participate at different levels in discussions about drug policy.
- Reorient the policy on confiscated assets and resources.

To outline the scope and prospects of the drugs issue in the talks, we will first analyse the methodology for the peace process and the challenges that arise from it. Second, we will assess the way in which the drugs issue is structured on the agenda for the talks. Third, we will describe some scenarios that can be predicted after the Havana talks, and finally offer some conclusions.

### **The methodology: political dilemmas**

The methodology for the peace process starts with talks that are supposed to lead to the signing of an agreement formally putting an end to the conflict. After this, the focus will shift to the peace-building phase.<sup>3</sup> According to the Colombian government, the signing of the agreement will trigger the start of a phase during which the conditions for a ceasefire will be put in place. This means that there will be a transition period which is also the start of the peace process per se. The basis for the transition will be the agreements that are reached in Havana, and these agreements will need to be endorsed by Colombian society. The transition will also require legal measures, special funding and new institutions with a direct influence on the ground. The work of these institutions will have to have sufficient intensity and impact to achieve the goals of the transition.<sup>4</sup>

The culmination of this whole process will ensure what the government calls a *territorial peace*. This means putting in place the legal, socio-economic and political supports necessary to build trust and guarantee that the whole process is irreversible. There are significant challenges to be overcome in achieving this aim. We will mention just a few.

*What dilemmas and challenges will have to be faced along the peace-building path that the Colombian government is following today?*

The first is to reach agreements whose content is sufficiently acceptable to society as a whole. Colombian society has historically been divided, with discourses and practices that are socially and politically very much at odds, while the codes typically followed by democratic actors (with regard to impersonal rules of the game, respect for the law, equality, inclusion, etc.) are limited and scarce. Codes based on values such as order, tradition, strong leadership and authority, on the other hand, carry a heavy weight. Likewise, the inheritance of drug trafficking's prevalence for more than 40 years is the strong influence of mafia practices, characterised by getting round the law or bending it for private benefit, and the use of privately-contracted violence to exercise power, especially at the local and regional level. In such circumstances, the supposedly modern institutional structures of the 1991 Constitution have limited applicability and the vast majority of conflicts are not dealt with through institutions. In this context, the tendency for people to take justice into their own hands or to use privately-controlled violence to resolve conflicts permeates much of society.

The second lies in the deep disparities between rural and urban areas. The gap in terms of living conditions, education, income, inclusion and development between the countryside and the city is significant. By way of an example, per capita income in rural areas is equivalent to just 35 percent of urban incomes. 57 percent of rural households lack basic services, compared to 5 percent of urban households.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, land tenure in rural areas is highly concentrated and the proprietary use of much of this land predominates, with the vast majority of properties being used for cattle ranching – an activity with low levels of productivity and efficiency. The political power held by the traditional elite as a result of this has allowed it to benefit from low taxation by the state and to main-

tain its traditional dominance at both local and national levels.

Ownership of land continues to be a source of prestige. The relatively recent initiatives to modernise the farming sector are aimed at expanding agro-industrial models, mainly for the production of biofuels, although their efficiency is unproven and the sector continues to be heavily and selectively subsidised by the state or enjoy unjustified and costly exemptions.<sup>6</sup> The drive to include medium-scale farmers by means of strategic partnerships is still a recent process and there is no guarantee that it will have much of an impact on addressing the huge social demand for better living conditions. In addition, free trade agreements are leading to structural changes that will wipe out producers considered “inefficient” in the process of consolidating a transnationalised market economy. Basic conditions for improving the productivity and competitiveness of the small-scale farming economy (access to credit, technical assistance, infrastructure, market information, etc.) are absent in the new, rapidly-expanding scenario. This is causing small farmers to go bankrupt, triggering an explosion of protest movements up and down the country in 2013.

The third factor is the strong and widespread resistance to the idea of the guerrilla being present in public life. This is motivated among other things by the view that society has of the guerrilla due to their use of practices such as kidnapping and cold-blooded murder and their failure to respect civilians in line with the standards of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This is aggravated by a fundamentalist counter-insurgency discourse that gained ground after the events of 11 September 2001 and is associated with the fight against terrorism led by president Uribe. This discourse has put down deep roots in Colombian society. A significant number of its proponents oppose the peace process

going on in Havana with the argument that the guerrilla should surrender, demobilise and be brought to justice.

These are the complex scenarios in which the peace talks are taking place. Furthermore, due to the proximity of the presidential election (for the 2014-2018 term), the process has started to become increasingly politicised as one of the key themes in the election campaign. The issues of reparation for victims and political participation by the FARC – within the limits imposed by the International Criminal Court, to which Colombia is a signatory – in addition to the internal pressures that are growing as the talks gets closer to addressing these points, have been creating tensions and disagreements between the parties. In this scenario, how is the issue of drugs situated on the agenda for the peace talks?

### **The issue of drugs and the talks to end the conflict**

The wording of the section on drugs in the agreed agenda does not reflect the importance of the issue, bearing in mind that finding a solution to it could represent one of the key factors in ensuring the sustainability of the peace.

The first question that arises is: *What makes it so important to include the issue of drugs in the talks to put an end to the conflict in Colombia?*

According to President Santos’s high commissioner for peace, the peace process is not going to solve the problem of organised crime, but it can help to drastically reduce its geographical reach in the country and, above all, enable tens of thousands of Colombians to escape from the trap of illicit crops. In a public ceremony held in the town of Florencia in the Amazon-region department of Caquetá on 26 May 2013, President Santos himself

stated what, in the government's view, should be the aim of the negotiations on the subject in Havana: "Imagine if the FARC, instead of looking after coca crops and laboratories, are tomorrow on the other side. Think what that would mean for the country!" According to the president, if the FARC were to support the state in the fight against this scourge, "that would be a game changer in large parts of the country as far as drug trafficking and violence are concerned." Santos then threw down the gauntlet to the guerrilla: "You are not drug traffickers, no. So come, let's solve this problem together."<sup>7</sup>

This clearly illustrates the government's specific interest in having the issue included on the agenda for the talks. A policy was designed in the context of Plan Colombia back in 1999 to prevent the guerrilla from accessing the funds generated by controlling the markets for cocaine base paste (CBP), and from transporting and selling cocaine to organised drug-trafficking groups. This policy is still in force today, in the context of the talks to put an end to the conflict. The continuity of this war by other means can be observed in the government's initiative. The strategy, which combines the old formulas of aerial spraying and obligatory manual eradication of crops, has caused damage to the collective territories of black communities and indigenous reserves. It has even harmed the alternative development programmes of foreign cooperation agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, and the German agency formerly known as GTZ. Finally, this strategy has contributed to an increase in traumatic forced displacement, creating favourable conditions for the expansion of farming systems based on the concentration of land ownership and providing support for agro-industry projects. These are growing as the collective territories and areas where small and medium-sized landholdings still exist are becoming weaker.

The absence of people in fumigated areas has facilitated the expansion of large landholdings. In this process, de facto land occupations with the aim of planting agro-export crops seem to become legitimate almost immediately. One example among many is the takeover of land by consortia of oil palm investors.

From the other side, the question that arises is: *What is the guerrilla's interest in including the drugs issue on the agenda?*

Firstly, taking a pragmatic corporate stance with regard to the substitution of crops for illicit use, the guerrilla want the state to make a commitment to invest in the areas under their control that currently have an illegal coca economy. Their aim here is to maintain their dominion over territory that will translate into potential votes and political power.

Secondly, the guerrilla are demanding transactions (lobbying for areas to be set aside as reserves for small-scale farmers, - *Zonas de Reserva Campesina* - for example) in exchange for getting rid of the costs involved in providing a security service in areas with an illegal coca economy. The guerrilla know that this is highly significant for the Colombian government. The importance of this point can be understood in the context of the complex relationship between drugs and armed conflict. As far as the FARC are concerned, this involves knowledge and control of transport routes and contacts, the presence of processing laboratories, the control of landing strips and the laundering of assets from the drugs trade. This locates the issue in the transnational dimension inherent in this type of economy, which has contributed to an increase in GDP from the shady side of globalisation.

Thirdly, and related to the previous point, the guerrilla want to send a signal to Washington in the hope that this will lead to a less trau-

matic definition of the FARC leadership. At the moment, these leaders are accused of being accomplices in the shipping of cocaine to the United States, and thus have extradition requests hanging over their heads.

Given the asymmetry between the government and FARC positions, on this point the peace process has two possibilities: it can either continue to go forward with a pragmatic approach that seeks to achieve the aims outlined by the high commissioner for peace, as mentioned at the start of this section; or the FARC can bring to the table the complex context of the relationship between drugs and armed conflict. If that happens, the results would go beyond the “quick” solution determined by the need to put an end to the problem in the shortest possible time.

*What is the complex context of the relationship between drugs and armed conflict?*

The starting point must be the definition of drug trafficking as an economic activity that implies changes in social relations, discourses and cultural practices. Drug traffickers have links with political processes and at election times they subsidise party campaigns whose cost has grown exponentially. They thus acquire a huge capacity to influence politics and real power. In this sense, drug traffickers behave just like any other business conglomerate that needs to be represented in legal, judicial and/or administrative decision-making spaces.

Likewise, in situations of armed conflict such as those of Colombia or Afghanistan, drug trafficking has become a war economy, boosting the power and strength of the armed groups that control part of its production, processing, marketing and asset-laundering process.

Also in contexts of armed conflict, drug traffickers have facilitated the financing of coun-

ter-insurgency strategies by setting up and/or maintaining private armies (the paramilitary groups in Colombia), or have strengthened the control of territorial interest groups (the warlords in Burma and Afghanistan).

War economies may throw up powerful obstacles that make conflicts more difficult to end, among other reasons because they contribute to the fragmentation of the organisations involved in the conflict. They also help to generate pragmatic forms of cooperation between insurgent groups and organisations with a criminal profile, which end up carrying out joint operations motivated by a convergence of particular interests, thus creating new obstacles that reduce the possibilities for a sustainable peace. Comparative studies of 16 peace agreements reached between 1980 and 1997 confirm that two of the main factors in the failure to achieve peace were the proliferation of combatant factions and the continuing availability of valuable natural resources. The criminal networks related to the underground economy pose the greatest challenge in many post-conflict situations.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, in the Colombian case drug trafficking has helped to shape a mafia-like discourse whose codes lend legitimacy to cultural practices that have permeated different spheres of society. These are codes that accentuate and legitimise the practices of machismo, vigilantism, manipulation of the law to favour private interests, violent protection rackets, and local and regional arrangements leading to domination by an individual strongman or a regional power structure that controls municipal, departmental or national budgets. In many if not most cases, all this has the blessing of the traditional political parties.

This whole complex scenario is what underpins the relationship between drugs and armed conflict. Despite this, the agenda of

talks “to end the conflict” seems to reflect rather a flat and simplistic view of the classic circuit of drug production, processing, trafficking and use. This one-sided and simplistic view explains the statement made by Colombia’s high commissioner for peace about what can be expected to result from item four on the agenda.

Do the FARC also accept this superficial way of addressing the problem or are they committed to an in-depth and nuanced approach to it? This is the main dilemma facing the guerrilla at this point in the talks.

### **Strategic implications of continuing drug trafficking**

Seen from the complex perspective and as an illegal economic activity, drug trafficking continues to finance regional power structures with a façade of legality. Legitimation of the codes typically imposed by the mafia is evident in its way of working. Drug traffickers make use of private security structures through the misnamed BACRIM “criminal gangs,” which play the role of containing demands for land restitution and generally stem the flow of social pressure by selectively assassinating small farmers’ leaders. Between 2008 and 2013, for example, it is estimated that 65 leaders of small farmers claiming land under the law on reparations for victims and land restitution have been murdered, and at least 45 are under death threats today.<sup>9</sup>

In the medium term, the mafia network will act as a retaining wall thwarting all attempts to implement any agreement resulting from the peace talks that acts against or challenges its local or regional power. It will be a force dragging against the *territorial peace* that the government seeks to bring about in the second phase. The mafia’s power, however, has never been visible and never will be. One of contributory factors here is the weak

interpretation of the problem adopted by the Colombian government. In its view, threats to public safety, especially in urban areas, are said to be the result of “success” in the fight against drug trafficking. In other words, according to the country’s anti-drugs and security authorities, drug interdiction measures have been so “successful” that it is now impossible to take cocaine out of Colombia. This situation is said to have led to the appearance of criminal structures that conceal an (undemonstrated) explosion in cocaine use within Colombia. According to this interpretation, the criminal gangs are the problem today. The aim of the erratic statistical information about the drug problem in Colombia seems to be to provide support for this interpretation rather than to reveal real trends with regard to the problem. These weak arguments serve to lift the burden of responsibility from local and regional actors with political and economic power, giving rise to a mafia network that makes use of state resources and profits from illegal economic activities.

The invisibility of the mafia powers and the failure to properly investigate their political links actively facilitates the continuity of a status quo characterised by the increasing concentration of land ownership and the use of violence to protect it.

A public policy to combat these mafia forces is the key contribution that the peace talks could make to dismantling the intricate security and territorial control apparatus that feeds the ongoing war. Recognising and addressing this implies abandoning the biased discourse on security and discarding the perverse ideas that tend to identify illegal private security forces as “the problem.” The heart of the matter is not the armed wing of the neo-paramilitaries. It is the mafia powers, especially at the regional and local level, who are making use of these paramilitary forces to continue the process of expropriating land or to prepare for a preventive war against land

restitution, among other objectives. Their demonstrated effectiveness as an instrument of control means that these mafia practices are also being used by individuals and “legal” organisations seeking to defend and expand their interests through arrangements with those who control the use of force. We will now go on to consider what the drugs scenario might look like in the post-conflict setting or what the Colombian government calls the *territorial peace*.

### **The post-conflict drugs scenario**

One of the main difficulties in predicting scenarios is the bad quality of the assessments of the current situation in the illegal drugs economy in Colombia. Calculations such as those made by the US State Department, estimating cocaine production at 195 tonnes per year with average yields of 2.35 kilos per hectare of coca leaf, confirm the striking weakness of the methodologies used. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) calculates average yields of 6.4 kilos per hectare in 2012, which says quite a lot about the chaos in the empirical data used to confirm the results. The excessively ideological approach adopted by Washington, whose interest lies more in putting Colombia forward as a successful case in order to promote bilateral agreements to replicate its security strategy for the hemisphere, ends up seriously distorting its information on the current status of the drugs issue.

Nevertheless, to predict drug-related scenarios let us start with two basic considerations:

First, we must remember that Colombia has not always been a major producer of coca leaf. Until the end of the 1970s, during the 80s and the early 90s, Colombia imported and processed cocaine base paste (CBP) from Peru and Bolivia, and then exported the final product to the US and Europe. This

means that it is a mistake to establish dogmatic calculations of the cocaine production potential of a country, in this case Colombia, based solely on its domestic production of coca leaf. Today, Colombia’s so-called success is derived from this measurement, without considering the possibility that CBP is once again being imported. In fact, to mention just one example, the booming coca leaf plantations in the lower Amazon region of Peru, and even in Loreto, are now related to markets for CBP that cross the Colombian border.

Second, drug trafficking is a relatively open illegal economy whose dynamics are highly flexible and innovative (changes in organisational structures, highly mobile handling and transport techniques, finding new routes, asset laundering mechanisms, etc.), and a wide range of actors move in and out of its activities. The FARC are just one of these multiple actors. In the different references to the drugs issue, especially by the Colombian government’s delegates in Havana, fantasy phrases are uttered, such as “a solution to the phenomenon of narcotics production and sale,” as if drug trafficking depended solely on the involvement of the FARC or was an appendage of that organisation. What the Havana talks could resolve is “the problem of the FARC’s involvement in narcotics production and sale.” In pragmatic terms, this would seem to be the true scope of the peace talks. A “solution” to the phenomenon of production and sale would be transnational in scope and related to global policies. It would include countries where there is a significant demand, and involve both the international financial system and globalised illegal business structures that have operations and influence in many different countries. It would also have to be inter-related with other economic activities. As this makes clear, the conceptual assumptions adopted by both parties to address the issue in Havana are very weak.

With these considerations in mind, let us look at the elements involved in the potential short- and medium-term scenarios:

1. The historical causes that have led to production of the raw material for processing cocaine and heroin becoming established in Colombia have still not been tackled, and there is no sign of any strategy that would aim in that direction. What are the elements involved in keeping the maps of coca production the same for decades?

The continuing agrarian conflict outlined at the start of this article in the section on the fractures in Colombian society.

The absence of a policy for alternative development in the areas producing crops for illicit use. These are settlement areas, mainly in the Amazon and Orinoco regions, but also settlement areas in the country's interior such as Bajo Cauca or the Catatumbo region. The reason is that alternative development in Colombia has been financed mainly with international cooperation money, principally from the United States, and in 2009 the decision was taken to redirect these funds to consolidation areas. Rather than building democracy, what the state was seeking to achieve in these areas was to make them suitable for the private investment that was also part of the security strategy.<sup>10</sup>

2. The measures established by the FARC to control and regulate the CBP trade were a heavy blow to the income of many families who were seeking to access the resources involved, mainly by setting up service businesses (informal retail, shops, bars, hairdressers, etc.) that prospered thanks to the circulation of money generated in the CBP and opium latex markets. The FARC's control of the cash in circulation to meet its strategic objectives caused a crisis in many families' ability to access these resources.

In this sense, the Colombian government's calculations can be happy ones. If the mechanisms to control the CBP markets are re-defined, one possible scenario is that more people will return to the trading areas. In the Colombian government's quoted messages, however, the idea seems to be that the FARC will play a controlling role to ensure that the illegal coca economy is not reproduced in these areas. If the process involves laying down arms, it is unlikely that the FARC will be in a position to safeguard this aim once the new mechanisms to regulate the business are put in place. All this assumes that the Colombian state will continue to disregard the need to develop public policies to deal with the agrarian crisis affecting small and medium landholdings and poor people in rural areas generally.

3. While this is going on, thousands of producers have now moved into illegal mining. This does not mean that the sustainability of the apparent reduction in the amount of land planted with coca crops is guaranteed, as it has nothing to do with the supposed "success" of the policy. Even the latest UNODC report on illicit crops recognises this: "The boom in gold mining in the last few years has influenced the economic dynamics of some areas of Colombia, such as Chocó, Córdoba, Antioquia, Guainía and Nariño. These departments, previously characterised by the permanent presence of coca crops, have been reducing their participation in this illegal activity, but at the same time the territory has begun to be shared with a new activity: informal alluvial gold mining."<sup>11</sup> Together, the five departments mentioned above account for nearly 40 percent of the area currently planted with coca.

4. Finally, the absence of an effective and efficient institutional apparatus to deal with drug policy in Colombia constitutes one of the structural factors making it impossible to start to exert any significant influence on



local levels of the problem. This situation is reflected particularly in the resounding failure of models such as that of the National Narcotics Directorate (Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes – DNE). A hotbed of corruption, and with a structure well suited to it, long controlled by groups from the most traditional parties, this institution ended up making arrangements with the drug traffickers themselves in the business of confiscating and disposing of assets obtained from illegal activities.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, this *highest authority* has never been able to show results that would legitimise the achievements of *the fight against drugs* in a verifiable way. On the contrary, the blocking of attempts to expropriate assets obtained from illegal activities, sometimes by returning them to the same mafia families, is a good illustration of its failure. In addition, it reflects the results of a way of working characterised by secrecy and shady deals, which means that interdiction efforts do not lead to benefits for Colombian society, although it has borne the brunt of the costs of this *war*.

In the entire history of asset seizure and expropriation, the Colombian state has never offered civil society the possibility to participate so that it can say where or for what purposes the confiscated assets should be used. The state does not take the side of civil society, and in fact the scales are tipped toward increased meddling by the same mafia enterprises that are supposedly the target of the expropriation. The closed structure of the regime is also revealed in this regard, with no attempt to reconsider the situation despite constant failures.

The criteria used to evaluate the application of Bogotá and Washington's anti-drugs strategy usually leave out this very important aspect: what happens afterwards to the assets seized from drug traffickers? The answer is related not only to the commercial value of these assets but also to the symbolic message

that a reasonable and transparent use of them would communicate to the drug traffickers themselves, in a society permeated by mafia codes that in many cases has paid a high cost in terms of lives and security.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Havana agenda on the subject of drugs ought to be restructured to address the key issue: the relationship between drugs and armed conflict. The parties should shoulder their responsibility for this connection and acknowledge one common element: the existence of mafia practices at different levels and among a range of actors, the ongoing presence of which may impede the implementation of the agreements to put in practice the results of the conflict termination process. To proceed with an agenda that is *weak* on the subject of drugs (drug use prevention, blinkered views of crop substitution that see it mainly as a problem of resources, etc.) will only help to strengthen corporate patronage-based practices in areas under the influence of the insurgents, thus squandering an opportunity to address one of the key issues in the definition of Colombia's future as a country.

The persistence of a mafia power inherited from a long history of using violence to contain and "resolve" conflicts should be acknowledged clearly and pragmatically. This power has been heightened by the decision made by Colombia's elites to resort to a private counter-insurgency strategy.

The guerrilla – today one of the obstacles to the country's full insertion into the free market and the growth of transnational private investment – could end up adopting an eminently corporate type of behaviour, paradoxically aimed at overcoming that obstacle. Any arrangements seeking to obtain benefits in that direction would shape a scenario that

would deepen the fragmentation that already exists in the country as a whole.

It is necessary to develop a state-level strategy aimed at ensuring that mafia practices and powers are tackled effectively. This is a basic condition for building a sustainable peace and installing a liberal democracy in the terms originally envisaged in the 1991 Constitution. This would imply reformulating the discourse that situates drug trafficking and other illegal economic activities as threats external to the state, and instead take it on board as an activity in symbiosis with political power, especially – though not exclusively – at the regional level. This also implies abandoning the view that reduces security issues to organised crime or “criminal gangs,” and exploring the responsibility of hidden powers in making use of them.

Furthermore, both in the installation of illegal circuits perpetrated by the armed groups, and in the combating of these by state agencies, the autonomy of indigenous communities and collective territories has been systematically violated. The illegal coca economy has been used as a mechanism to demolish traditional cultural practices, forcing processes of violent insertion into market economies upon these communities and dismantling the key elements of their social organisation and survival. Likewise perceived as an obstacle to completing the process of bringing territories into the free market, communities in collective territories are taking forward processes that go against this trend, since their very foundations as peoples and ethnic groups militate against channelling the country toward an aggressive free market model that tends to treat nature as a tradable asset.

Disregard for the validity of collective territories and failure to respect their autonomy is a dilemma faced today by both the government and the guerrilla, together with the position they adopt in these territories to reap some of the benefits of local power. The public denun-

ciation made by indigenous communities in Cauca about how their autonomy as a people is being infringed indicates the persistence of conflict situations in which the FARC themselves are implicated.<sup>13</sup>

There is a need for debate and agreement about spaces for civil society to participate at different levels in discussions about drug policy as well as the reorientation of the policy on confiscated assets and resources, transparency in how they are handled and oversight.

## Notes

1. Sociologist. Research Associate with the Transnational Institute TNI. / English translation by Sara Shields.
2. See the text of the General Agreement here: <https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/sites/default/files/AcuerdoGeneralTerminacionConflicto.pdf>
3. Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz (2013). Text of the speech given by the High Commissioner for Peace at the Universidad Externado de Colombia, May 2013.
4. Ibid.
5. Forero, Jaime, and Sorne Ezpeleta (2007), *Las brechas entre el campo y la ciudad 1990-2003, y propuestas para reducirlas*, Serie Estudios y Perspectivas, CEPAL, Bogotá, 2007.
6. Kalmanovitz, Salomón (2013) “Lo que nos cuestan los biocombustibles”, *El Espectador*, 3 March 2013.
7. “El presidente Santos pide a las FARC luchar contra el narcotráfico tras acordar la paz”, *Agencia de Noticias EFE*, 26 May 2013.
8. Vargas, Ricardo (2009), “Economías de guerra y control de territorios: ilegalidad y reconfiguración del poder en el sur de Córdoba y Montes de María,” in: *A la sombra de la guerra, ilegalidad y órdenes regionales en Colombia*, Uniandes CESO, 2009.
9. See: “Impunidad en homicidios de reclamantes de tierras,” *El Espectador*, 5 May 2013. “Reina impunidad en asesinatos de líderes de tierras,” *Revista Semana*, 9 May 2012. Also, according to the Human Rights Defender’s Office, the murders of 71 claimants between 2006 and 2011 led to only one conviction.
10. For a reconstruction of the entire decision-making process on this issue, see: Vargas, Ricardo (2010), *Desarrollo alternativo en Colombia y participación social: propuestas hacia un cambio de estrategia*, DIAL Diálogo Interagencial en Colombia, 2010.
11. UNODC, “Colombia, Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2012,” June 2013.
12. The economist Salomón Kalmanovitz calculates the cost to the treasury of the corruption that was tolerated and the interference of drug trafficking in this case at three thousand million pesos (about US\$1.6 billion). See “Para quién trabaja el procurador,” *El Espectador*, 9 June 2013.
13. Letter from the Indigenous Peoples of Colombia to the FARC – EP, Colombian indigenous authorities - ONIC - CRIC – ACIN. Extracted from *Tejido de Comunicación y de relaciones externas para la verdad y la vida*, Corinto, Resguardo López Adentro, 16 May 2013.

## Other bibliographic references

- Makarenko, Tamara, 2004, “The crime- terror continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism,” *Global Crime* Vol.6 No.1, February, pp. 129-145.
- Malone, David and Heiko Nitzschke, 2005, “Economic agenda in Civil Wars,” Discussion Paper: /07, April.
- McDermott, Jeremy, “Las FARC, el proceso de paz y la posible criminalización de la guerrilla,” *Insight Crime*, May 2013.
- Pugh, Michael and Neil Cooper, 2004, “War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation.” Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

## Transnational Institute

Since 1996, the TNI Drugs & Democracy programme has been analysing the trends in the illegal drugs market and in drug policies globally. The programme has gained a reputation worldwide as one of the leading international drug policy research institutes and as a serious critical watchdog of UN drug control institutions, in particular the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).

TNI promotes evidence-based policies guided by the principles of harm reduction, human rights for users and producers, as well as the cultural and traditional uses of substances. The project seeks the reform of the current out-dated UN conventions on drugs, which were inconsistent from the start and have been surpassed by new scientific insights and new pragmatic policies that have proven to be successful.

For the past decade, the programme has maintained its main focus on developments in drug policy and its implication for countries in the South. The strategic objective is to contribute to a more integrated and coherent policy where illicit drugs are regarded as a cross-cutting issue within the broader development goals of poverty reduction, public health promotion, human rights protection, peace building and good governance.

Transnational Institute (TNI)  
De Wittenstraat 25  
1052 AK Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Tel: +31-20-6626608  
Fax: +31-20-6757176  
E-mail: [drugs@tni.org](mailto:drugs@tni.org)  
[www.tni.org/drogas](http://www.tni.org/drogas)

