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The Colombian Conflict: Regional Impact and Policy Responses

By Kimberly Stanton

Introduction and summary of findings

Colombia's internal armed conflict is nearly fifty years old. It has outlasted the cold war and persisted in spite of repeated attempts to negotiate peace, some of which succeeded in decommissioning insurgent groups. The conflict has co-existed with formally democratic institutions, but political exclusion has been a major cause of the violence. Colombia is a middle-income country with a wealth of natural resources, yet nearly 60 percent of the population lives in poverty. The country has one of the most progressive constitutions and one of the most innovative constitutional courts in Latin America, and has ratified virtually every international and regional human rights treaty. Yet drug trafficking and corruption are pervasive, and the Colombian government's human rights record remains among the worst in the western hemisphere.

In 2000, the U.S. Congress gave bipartisan approval to Plan Colombia, a major foreign aid initiative with the stated goals of reducing drug crop cultivation, improving human rights and the rule of law, and promoting a peaceful end to the decades-old internal armed conflict. Renamed the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) in 2001, the six-year package has provided more than USD \$4 billion in aid to Colombia. In spite of Plan Colombia's broad aims, 80 percent of the assistance has been directed to the security forces.¹ U.S. and Colombian officials regularly describe the aid program as effective and successful, citing statistics that indicate reductions in acreage planted with illegal drug crops and declining rates for some violent crimes. In February 2005 the Bush administration requested a renewal of the aid package for a seventh year with no significant modifications, and administration officials have signaled that significant United States involvement in Colombia will continue for the foreseeable future.

¹For a summary of U.S. aid to Colombia and the Andean region in recent years, see www.ciponline.org.

WOLA convened a conference on April 19, 2005 to examine the state of the Colombian conflict, its regional impact, and the role of the international community.

This conference report synthesizes the main findings and recommendations of the remarkable group of scholars, advocates, and practitioners who participated.



The idea of the conference was not to be utopian, but to develop recommendations that build upon initiatives already in place and take advantage of opportunities that can already be perceived.

The Colombian Conflict: Regional Impact And Policy Responses

April 19, 2005 • 432 Russell Senate Office Building

- 8:30 am Registration and continental breakfast
- 9:00 am Welcoming remarks—Joy Olson, Executive Director, and Kimberly Stanton, Deputy Director and Director of Studies, Washington Office on Latin America
- 9:15 am **PANEL I: THE STATE OF THE INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AND ITS REGIONAL IMPACT**
Chair and moderator: Virginia Bouvier, U.S. Institute of Peace
- ▶ **Alfredo Rangel**, Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, on the internal military balance of the conflict (Mr. Rangel's paper was presented by Gastón Chillier, Washington Office on Latin America.)
 - ▶ **Socorro Ramírez**, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, on the impact of the conflict on regional security and border security, including Brazil
 - ▶ **Ana María Sanjuán**, Center for Peace and Human Rights, Universidad Central de Venezuela, on the regional political effects of the conflict, with particular attention to Venezuela
 - ▶ **Diana Ávila**, Project Counselling Service, on the refugee and humanitarian situation in the border regions
- 10:45 am Coffee Break
- 11:00 am **PANEL II: RESPONSES TO THE CONFLICT**
Chair and moderator: Marc Chernick, Georgetown University
- ▶ **Raul Rosende**, UN Development Programme, on the role of the G24 and the international donor community
 - ▶ **Javier Moncayo**, Redprodepaz, on civil society's role in constructing a durable peace, with attention to civil society-led peace-building efforts and the peace laboratories
 - ▶ **Representative Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves**, Colombian Congress, on the debate over a legal framework for the demobilization of armed actors
 - ▶ **Susana Villarán**, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, on norms and standards set by the Inter-American human rights system and their relevance to Colombia
- 12:30 pm Lunch (provided)
- 1:00 pm **PANEL III: POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**
Chair and moderator: Louis Goodman, School of International Service, American University
- ▶ **Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo**, Planeta Paz and former Peace Commissioner, on the importance of international and regional diplomatic engagement
 - ▶ **Gustavo Gorriti**, La República Newspaper (Peru), on security, governance and rule of law
 - ▶ **Morris Panner**, Harvard University, on avoiding the consolidation of organized crime
 - ▶ **James C. Jones**, independent consultant, on comprehensive development strategies
- 2:45 pm Concluding Remarks

In this context, WOLA, with the support of the U.S. Institute of Peace, convened a conference on April 19, 2005, to examine the state of the conflict, its regional impact, and the role of the international community. Participants from Colombia, neighboring countries, the United States and multilateral agencies were asked to consider what more can and should be done by the international community, including the United States, to bring an end to the protracted conflict. The idea was not to be utopian, but to develop recommendations that build upon initiatives already in place and take advantage of opportunities that can already be perceived. Particular attention was paid to the cross-border aspects of the conflict, and to the impact of the conflict on democracy and rule of law.

This report provides a summary of the each panel's presentations and the accompanying discussion. Certain themes recurred throughout the day. On every panel, profound concern was expressed regarding the Colombian government's negotiations with illegal paramilitary forces, and their potential consequences for democracy and rule of law. The panelists argued forcefully that the government's focus on disarmament rather than dismantlement, coupled with the paramilitaries' deep, continuing involvement in criminal activity and their reliance on violence, threaten Colombian democracy. Policy-makers focused only on the threat posed by the guerrilla movements are failing to grasp the risks inherent in the consolidation and legitimating of organized crime in Colombia. Providing effective international support for truly democratic actors and institutions will be absolutely crucial in the coming months.

The need for more comprehensive analysis and more integral responses to the Colombian situation was a second recurring theme. That Colombia is enduring an internal armed conflict is undeniable, and everyone recognized the state's responsibility to provide effective

security in that context. But the current tendency to conceptualize the conflict primarily from a security perspective is having widespread perverse effects. The deep structural problems that gave origin to the conflict and still nourish it are not receiving adequate attention. Meanwhile the single-minded emphasis on a military solution has provoked a resurgence of security concerns in neighboring countries, to the benefit of the armed forces and leaders with authoritarian tendencies. The contributions that many local, regional or border initiatives could make to peace-building tend to be undervalued in this context.

The importance of increased Latin American engagement with Colombia was a third theme throughout the day. For a variety of reasons—the practicalities of addressing border problems, the lessons of Central America, the election of new government leaders with fresh political orientations, the risks to the OAS of accompaniment poorly done, the possibility that the U.S. and Europe may be exhausting their roles—the panelists saw both a need and opportunities for Latin American nations to assert leadership in the search for long-term solutions to the Colombian conflict and its consequences. One expected benefit from an expanded role for Latin America would be to clarify what Colombia is not—the cause of all the turmoil throughout the Andean region—and what the Andean region is: a set of countries with serious problems that merit attention on their own terms.

Against the backdrop of these three themes, the conference generated a set of specific findings and recommendations. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ While the Colombian security forces have been strengthened since the late 90s, they are not within reach of



Susana Villarán of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights discusses the Colombian conflict during the conference, which was held in the Russell office building of the U.S. Senate.

Illegal paramilitary organizations have grown in size and strength, and consolidated political and economic gains under the current government, in ways that threaten democracy and legal enterprise in many strategic regions of the country.

defeating the major remaining guerrilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on the battlefield. The FARC's command structure and operational capacity are largely intact, as has been demonstrated in renewed offensive attacks in recent months. A military strategy alone will not be sufficient to bring the internal armed conflict to an end.

- ▶ Illegal paramilitary organizations have grown in size and strength, and consolidated political and economic gains under the current government, in ways that threaten democracy and legal enterprise in many strategic regions of the country.
- ▶ The conflict's impact on the borders is multi-faceted, but derives less from traditional military spillover than from the disruption of daily life, including normal commercial relations, and the increase in insecurity that have accompanied the growing militarization of the borders.
- ▶ The U.S. focus on Colombia in isolation from its regional context, and its reliance on bilateral rather than multilateral approaches, has had a number of unintended and problematic consequences. These include the elevation of security concerns on the national agendas of neighboring countries, to the detriment of attention to problems of development and democratic consolidation.
- ▶ An international consensus framework for responding to Colombia's conflict, informed by international human rights and humanitarian law and principles, has been developed through the Group of 24 process, and is reflected in the London and Cartagena declarations.
- ▶ Many innovative initiatives are underway in Colombia that are building peace and strengthening democratic governance from the ground up, by

fostering multi-sectoral participation in development activities that respond to the daily needs of the population.

- ▶ The lesson from other experiences of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism in Latin America is that the greatest risk to democratic institutions tends to come not from the insurgents or the terrorists, but from those fighting terrorism in democracy's name. The purported defense of democracy by non-democratic means has been the greater source of damage to democracy.

The findings suggest the following recommendations for the international community, including the United States:

- ▶ Fostering peace in Colombia should be put back on the agenda of the international community. All opportunities for multilateral diplomatic engagement to bring an end to the conflict, or to bring a Latin American or Andean perspective to bear on the conflict, should be pursued. States with overlapping membership in the G24 and the OAS should seek to ensure that these efforts are mutually reinforcing. States should strongly support the continued presence of all major UN agencies in Colombia.
- ▶ The international community should continue to pressure Colombia to recognize the existence of an internal armed conflict and the humanitarian consequences, and to fully comply with all its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.
- ▶ International political and financial support for the negotiations with the illegal paramilitary groups must be contingent on the existence of a legal framework that protects victims' rights to truth, justice and reparations, and on clear, verifiable steps by the Colombian government to fully dismantle underlying networks of financial and political support.

- ▶ New forms of judicial collaboration to prevent the consolidation of organized crime in Colombia, including the broadened use of extradition and the full implementation of international anti-corruption treaties, should be developed. Leaders of international criminal organizations should be investigated and prosecuted to the full extent of domestic and international law.
- ▶ The international community should increase its political and financial support for development and peace programs, as a critical contribution to the construction of democratic governance throughout Colombian territory. Recognition of the interrelationships between development and security, and development and democracy-building, should be incorporated into the design of foreign assistance programs.
- ▶ Political, business, and civil society leaders in Colombia advocating the rule of law often operate at great personal risk. The international community should recognize and support these leaders in order to help ensure that their views are not excluded through violence.

Panel I: The state of the conflict and its regional impact

The first panel of the conference examined the current state of the internal armed conflict and its political, security and humanitarian impact along the borders and in the Andean sub-region. The regional perspective provided by the panelists was particularly important, since so often discussion of the Colombian conflict focuses on its internal dimensions.

The presentations began with a paper² provided by Colombian security analyst Alfredo Rangel, director of the *Fundación Seguridad y Democracia*, which reviewed the achievements and limitations of President Uribe's "democratic security policy." The policy has succeeded in placing the issue of security and the need to strengthen the state's coercive capacity on Colombia's national political agenda. Another major achievement is the widespread perception that internal security has improved, as indicated by overall declines in the number of homicides, kidnappings, internal displacement and attacks of economic sabotage by guerrilla forces. Rangel attributed many of the improvements to the implementation of the democratic security policy, while also noting that some, such as the decline in the homicide rate, pre-date the policy, and that other factors, in particular the paramilitary ceasefire and the guerrillas' retreat, have played a role.

At the same time, the Rangel paper identified a number of weaknesses of the democratic security policy. From a military perspective, although the armed forces have increased in size, they appear to be reaching the limits of their operational capacity. The rate of increase in the number of military actions is declining, as is the number of irregular combatants killed in combat. The guerrillas retain their capacity to undertake attacks; in the first two years of the Uribe government, they carried out as many actions as in the prior four years of the Pastrana government. Although these were largely "low intensity" actions, such as ambushes and the laying of land mines, they demonstrate that the guerrillas retain the ability to carry out destabilizing



A family displaced by the conflict prepares to leave their home.

² Alfredo Rangel, "La sostenibilidad militar de la seguridad", talk prepared for the Foro Sostenibilidad de la seguridad democrática, 23 February 2005. Available on-line at www.seguridadydemocracia.org.



A Colombian Armed Forces soldier stands guard in Putumayo province.

actions in many parts of the country. While the counterinsurgency strategy against the guerrillas has had some successes, in particular in dismantling FARC fronts around Bogota, Rangel's analysis does not lead him to believe that a military victory is just around the corner.

Meanwhile, Colombia experiences one illegal roadblock and five hijackings every two days, principally in major cities. Night-time traffic is still regularly interrupted on major

highways, including the Bogota-Medellin route. In some regions, in spite of a heavy presence of security forces, illegal armed groups are still able to immobilize transportation; the province of Arauca is one example. While overall murder rates have declined, statistics register a sharp increase in homicides in certain sectors of the population, especially mayors, ex-mayors and teachers. The intensification of aerial herbicide spraying of drug crops by the Uribe government has not led to a significant reduction in the supply of illegal drugs leaving Colombia. Such facts feed skepticism about the extent to which effective state control has been established in key parts of the country, and challenge the government's claims that the democratic security policy has been an overwhelming success.

The Rangel paper pointed to two additional areas of concern that were focal points for discussion throughout the conference. First, he identified an absence of adequate attention to Colombia's borders. Because the security forces are focused on internal security, their presence in the border regions is precariously thin, and they face problems of mobility. The

result is that Colombia is depending, de facto, on the good will of neighboring countries for protection of its notoriously porous borders.

Second, Rangel raised serious questions about the Uribe government's strategy vis-à-vis the paramilitary forces. His analysis noted that the paramilitaries have experienced a sustained period of growth during the last two years, the only one of the illegal armed groups to have done so. They possess significant economic resources; are continuing to arm and recruit; are shaping and penetrating local and regional government, including by managing investment resources of municipal and provincial administrations; and have infiltrated many agencies of the national government, including the intelligence agencies. Although the paramilitaries are currently engaged in negotiations with the Uribe government, their power "has not been touched by the implementation of the democratic security policy,"³ and so if the talks fail, their position will allow them to re-mobilize and re-arm most of their fronts. In Rangel's words, "no Plan B exists in case the conversations with the paramilitaries break off."⁴

The effects of the conflict, the democratic security policy and United States policy along the borders and on the dynamics of the Andean sub-region were the focus of the interventions by Socorro Ramírez of the National University of Colombia, Ana María Sanjuán of the Central University of Venezuela, and Diana Ávila, executive director of Project Counselling Service.

Ramírez began by analyzing the various meanings encompassed in the concept of the "regionalization" of the conflict. The most common is spillover, the idea that the military conflict itself would cross into neighboring countries and become a factor of instability in the

³ Ibid., 4.

⁴ Ibid.

region. This has not occurred to the degree many had expected and feared. But guerrillas and paramilitaries regularly cross the Ecuadorian and Venezuelan borders, and since 1997, as the conflict has intensified, disputes among the illegal armed actors for control of strategic corridors in border zones have increased. Although quantitative indicators do not support the argument that the conflict is being fought primarily in the border regions, the impact on the borders is still significant. The disputes for control have been accompanied by an increase in terrorist attacks against infrastructure and the civilian population, political killings, massacres, forced displacement, and the placement of anti-personnel mines. The increase in violence is a direct threat to the lives and well-being of inhabitants of the border regions, and has penetrated the culture of daily life. Assassination has become a form of conflict resolution in border communities, where local authorities are weak and the institutions of the state are barely present. Intimidation of border residents by armed groups is serious, in particular on the border with Venezuela.

The borders are also characterized by an expanding war economy. The strategies of the illegal armed actors play a part in this. For example, kidnappings in municipalities near the Venezuelan border doubled between 1997 and 2002, and the cultivation of illegal drug crops was concentrated near the Ecuadorian and Venezuelan borders. But the war economy is also the product of daily commercial interactions between border residents and the armed actors, in a context of limited economic opportunities. Besides the illegal drug economy, which includes the cultivation and sale of illicit crops and the sale of precursor chemicals, there is trafficking of arms and explosives, contraband gasoline, money laundering, prostitution, and the proliferation of businesses set up to provision the illegal

armed groups. Certain sectors of the normal economy are penetrated by the armed groups, such as taxis and border transportation in Venezuela.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict are highly visible in the border regions. There are approximately 8,000 Colombian refugees in Ecuador,⁵ and the number in Venezuela is growing. As the number of people fleeing over the Ecuador border has increased, the percentage of formal applications for refugee status accepted has declined. At this time, about thirty percent of the cases are being resolved in the applicants' favor. In Venezuela, the number of recognized refugees is low at 102 families,⁶ but the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports receiving double the number of applications of a year ago. Figures based on formal applications for refugee status are the tip of the iceberg, however, since most Colombians crossing the borders choose to remain invisible, either by seeking shelter with local peasant communities along the borders, or moving inland to settle in the anonymity of larger towns and cities.

Although the problems of the border regions are by definition transnational, Ramírez, Sanjuán and Ávila all noted the absence of the cross-border cooperation needed to effectively respond. Colombia has sought and obtained from neighboring countries an increased military presence along the borders. But Uribe's single-minded emphasis on security, and the role his very close alliance with the U.S. has played in militarizing the Andean region and the Amazon, have provoked a strongly negative response in some sectors in Brazil and Ecuador, making it more difficult to pursue more effective cooperation on border issues.

In Venezuela, tensions created by the extraterritorial exercise of the democratic security policy in the case of Rodrigo

The guerrillas retain their capacity to undertake attacks; in the first two years of the Uribe government, they carried out as many actions as in the prior four years of the Pastrana government.

⁵ A similar number of Colombian refugees are present in Costa Rica.

⁶ The 102 cases cover include 249 individuals.



Map showing Colombia's borders and neighboring countries. The effects of the conflict along the borders and on the dynamics of the Andean sub-region were the focus of the presentations by Ramírez and Sanjuán.

Granda⁷ were greatly exacerbated when William Wood, the U.S. ambassador to Colombia, made public statements siding with Colombia. As a consequence, Uribe was forced to turn to Cuba to help mediate, and national security shot to the top of Venezuela's policy agenda. Venezuela has come to identify Colombia's counter-terrorism policies as an immediate and tangible source of threats to its own security. This perspective has been nourished by U.S. officials' frequent expressions of hostility toward the Chávez government. By inserting itself into the Granda debate, the U.S. government strengthened those in Venezuela who believe that an eventual U.S. intervention against the "Bolivarian revolution" will arrive via Colombia.

More generally, in the context of its strong alliance with Colombia, the U.S. preference for bilateral diplomacy over multilateral approaches, its failure to recognize the social causes of the

Colombian conflict, and its suspicion of the growing strength of left-of-center popular movements in the Andean region are all factors that inhibit increased regional cooperation.

The panelists argued strongly that the tendency to view developments in the Andean region primarily from a security perspective—to "securitize" the agenda—is counter-productive. Sanjuán emphasized the contradictory aspects of the current situation: never has so much been invested in security, with so little result. The reigning premise is that more security is needed in order to strengthen democracy, but she argued that more democracy is needed to ensure greater security. The role of the armed forces in social and political life is being strengthened, in particular in Venezuela and Ecuador, while democratic institutions remain weak, and civil and political rights are permanently restricted in the border regions. Colombia's border province of Arauca, described by Uribe as a laboratory for the democratic security policy and characterized by a heavy presence of security forces, is one of the most violent and conflict-ridden in the country, and generates a disproportionate share of denunciations of severe human rights abuses. In short, the current dynamic is having perverse results.

The panelists' concluding remarks also pointed toward several preliminary recommendations.

All pointed toward the need and opportunities that exist for greater engagement with the Colombian conflict on the part of neighboring countries. The security and humanitarian problems in the border regions clearly demand a more cooperative regional response. For this

⁷ Last December, Colombian authorities paid members of the Venezuelan security forces to seize FARC leader Rodrigo Granda in Venezuelan territory and deliver him to the Colombian authorities. The Colombians initially claimed they had apprehended Granda themselves in Colombia, but were later forced to admit that Granda had indeed been abducted from Venezuela. No international arrest warrant for Granda was in effect at the time. Granda's passport bore several Colombian entry stamps, indicating that he had previously crossed the Colombia-Venezuela border freely and with some frequency. The incident caused a major crisis in the Colombian-Venezuelan bilateral relationship. The U.S. ambassador exacerbated the crisis by publicly siding with Colombia, despite the illegality of the Colombian authorities' method of seizing Granda.

to occur, it is important not to view the problems simply as “contamination” from Colombia, and to leave aside recriminations. Along the borders, existing relationships and extensive economic relations among diverse actors, including local governments, provide the basis for a greater capacity to confront violence, and should be strengthened. The militarization of the borders is having the opposite effect. One approach would be to look at projects that integrate the borders; recent initiatives and proposals by the Andean Community provide an opening for projects along these lines.

At the diplomatic level, participants recalled the decisive role that neighboring countries played in resolving the Central American conflicts of the 1980s, and argued for encouraging greater engagement by Latin American governments in the Andes and beyond. The emergence of new government leaders with a different perspective and significant social backing, especially in the southern cone, offers new opportunities. The Granda case is an example of conflict resolution from within Latin America. Another is the dialogue that is occurring in the Southern Cone on Latin America’s responsibility to contribute to resolving or stabilizing the situation in the Andean region through political means.

Ávila emphasized the urgent need to increase the visibility of the humanitarian situation in the border regions. Statistics do not do justice to the extent of the trauma that the refugees are experiencing. She also highlighted newer measures that demonstrate promise. These include technical services offices recently established in several border locations by Venezuela’s National Refugee Commission. Just now becoming operational, these are improving the response to applications for refugee status. Another positive initiative is the creation of refugee reception programs in the Southern Cone, with the

involvement of political leaders who were themselves refugees, and who recognize the importance of Latin American solidarity.

Ávila also identified specific issues that require attention. These include protection for refugees⁸ and attention to their mental health needs, and the importance of strengthening the institutional capacity of local NGOs and service providers, especially in Venezuela. More generally, Ávila emphasized the need to facilitate access by local actors to resources, in order to strengthen their capacities and to help consolidate existing but fragile institutional spaces.

Finally, Sanjuán called on the international community, especially the United States, to reflect seriously on the relationship between democracy and security. That greater security—meaning larger and better-equipped security forces, and greater reliance on these forces for an ever-widening set of objectives—strengthens democracy is not so clear. There was consensus among participants on the need to avoid the “securitization” of everything, especially development.

Panel 2: Controversies and opportunities

The second panel brought key actors together to discuss their roles and approaches to some of the most important controversies raised by the conflict. Panelists examined the diplomatic and financial role of the international community, the relationship between development and security, and the legal framework for the demobilization of illegal armed actors, all issues with implications for the larger Andean region. In each case,

Ávila emphasized the urgent need to increase the visibility of the humanitarian situation in the border regions.

⁸ Ávila voiced concern about Venezuela’s decision, over the course of the last five years, to nationalize as many as 270,000 Colombians who were in the country without valid documents. While the process clearly improved the Colombians’ legal status, it did so without addressing the need to provide protection for those who were in fact refugees fleeing the conflict. UNHCR has also identified protection for Colombian refugees as an issue of concern.

Twenty-four governments in the Americas and Europe formed the “Group of 24” at a conference in London in order to foster coordination of aid programs and policies toward Colombia.

it became clear that ongoing activities are contributing to peace-building even as the conflict rages, by strengthening civil society organizations, fostering new alliances, and encouraging engagement with government. But the panel also highlighted the great risks to democracy and rule of law that are inherent in the current dynamic.

International cooperation and development

Raúl Rosende of the UN Development Programme in Colombia explained the origins and significance of the Group of 24 (G24) process, which has structured international discussions of cooperation with Colombia in a context in which the country has many competitors for the attention of the donor community.

In July 2003, following earlier failed attempts, a donors’ conference for Colombia was held in London, with several important results. First, the London conference issued a statement, known as the London Declaration (see box, page 25), which has become an obligatory point of reference for the international community. In terms of process, the Declaration emphasized the need to re-orient and coordinate international cooperation programs, and affirmed the importance of civil society participation. Substantively, it recognized the existence of an internal armed conflict and the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law; highlighted the need for mechanisms to protect civil society leaders; committed signatory countries, including Colombia and the United States, to implement the recommendations issued by the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (UNOHCHR); and called for strengthening government and multilateral organization efforts to help bring about an end to the conflict.

Second, civil society organizations were present and actively involved in the London meeting, and have remained engaged since. Spaces for the articulation and coordination of civil society demands

have emerged, and participation has broadened over time. The human rights organizations and social movements initially present have been joined by regional and ethnic movements, the private sector, churches, and foundations. Rosende emphasized the importance of these new collective efforts for a country that is still in conflict, and characterized by very high levels of violence and polarization. The practice of working together can become a form of peace-building.

Third, the G24 itself was created as an informal, ad hoc arena for dialogue and consultation. Participating countries include four from Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico; Canada and the United States; all of the countries of the European Union, and the EU itself; and Switzerland and Norway. At the request of the participants, the UN serves as technical secretary. There is a rotating presidency of the group and a coordinating body made of up the past, present and next designated president of the G24. To date, Sweden, Switzerland, Brazil and Canada have exercised the presidency, with Spain next. Some working groups have also been established. Beyond facilitating dialogue and exchange of information, the G24 seeks to foster the coordination of cooperation programs and can also provide a space for political consensus-building, as circumstances permit.

The result of the London conference, then, was the creation of a process of dialogue leading to the construction of an international cooperation agenda for Colombia. The Colombian government takes the lead in proposing priorities, but in consultation with civil society and the donor community. To date, six thematic priority areas have been identified: rule of law, peace and reintegration of former combatants into society, development and peace programs, alternative development, humanitarian plan of action, and poverty. Rosende emphasized the importance of the process, as well as the substance. The first donors’ meeting post-London, which took

place in Cartagena in February 2005, was also characterized by a strong, consolidated civil society presence. The meeting provided a key opportunity for governments to consult with Colombia on the dialogue with paramilitary forces. The declaration emitted in Cartagena ratified the content of London, and included specific language on the need for truth, justice and reparations in negotiation processes.

By way of conclusion, Rosende identified some lessons and challenges. First, it is clear that donors' forums can serve to catalyze dialogue among the international community, governments, and civil society on the major issues they confront. Second, he strongly emphasized the importance of countries' joining forces to support cooperation programs of mutual interest, in order to increase the programs' impact and legitimacy. Coordinating efforts is fundamental in a politicized, conflictive and polarized environment. Third, he reiterated the importance of involving civil society in the design of cooperation programs, and highlighted the positive effect this can have on attenuating fragmentation. Finally, and by way of entrée to the next presentation by Javier Moncayo, Rosende noted the challenge of making sure that peace-building takes place not only at the diplomatic level, but reaches down to the ground and out to the territories of Colombia. International donor support directly to local and regional peace-building initiatives is one way to respond to this need.

Javier Moncayo, director of *Redprodepaz*, the Network of Programs of Development and Peace, began with a personal reflection that provided the context for the current debate over local and regional peace-building initiatives. If something has failed in Colombian politics, he argued, it is the tendency for everything to come from the top down. The way out of the

conflict today is to construct from the local up to the regional, then the national. A growing consensus on this approach reflects exhaustion with a war that has lasted nearly 50 years, and in one form or another touched most everyone's lives. As a result, a new, more collective leadership is emerging in Colombia that is proposing to construct the nation of the future beginning from the local.

Moncayo acknowledged that these efforts alarm some observers, who wonder if they will contribute to institutionalizing the country, or instead favor fragmentation and risk weakening the state. The concerns are evident in the polemical debate over the recent massacre near the peace community of San José de Apartado, in which some commentators have blamed the events on the community's refusal to allow entry to armed actors, including government security forces.⁹ But from Moncayo's perspective, the fundamental question is what kind of state is needed to guarantee that the rights of a community like San José de Apartado will be respected, beginning with the right to life.

He argued that the question takes on added significance because the armed actors have sought to use the issue of regional autonomy to legitimize their proposals. The guerrillas have spoken of regional autonomy as a way out of the internal armed conflict, and have insisted on the need for regional peace dialogues. The paramilitaries have also made regional development their *leitmotif*. Jorge 40, the paramilitary commander in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta region, speaks of regional autonomy and insists that the government must not involve itself in the destiny of the regions. To back up his position, he has two private armies, one a uniformed counterinsurgency force, and the other a civilian force that roams the municipalities stealing public resources and

The London Declaration recognized the existence of an internal armed conflict and the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law; highlighted the need to protect civil society leaders; committed signatory countries to implement the UNOHCHR recommendations; and called for strengthening efforts to bring about an end to the conflict.

⁹ In March 2005, eight members of the San José de Apartado peace community, including three minors, were assassinated. Witnesses to the discovery of the bodies and to events prior to the massacre claim that the authors were members of the Colombian armed forces. Colombian government officials have asserted that the FARC were responsible.

“My mother was 15 when she had to hide from bullets in the town where I was born. I have lived in the midst of violence during all these years . . . it is possible that my children, now in their adolescence, have much more war ahead . . .”
Javier Moncayo

extorting businessmen. He decides who the candidates for local and provincial elected office will be in at least three provinces, thereby advancing his plans.

Moncayo then turned to contrasting examples of regional peace-building processes led by civil society, allowing the examples to speak for themselves in terms of the nature of their impact on governance. One of these is located in the community of San Francisco, in the north of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. There, political leaders had taken ten years and spent USD \$200,000 to construct a water tank and three of five kilometers of a planned aqueduct that the community needed to supply itself with water. Two years ago the local politicians proposed that it would take another \$300,000 to complete the project. Instead, one of the programs in the *Redprodepaz* network, the ProSierra Foundation, proposed that the community build the remaining section itself. In three months residents were able to complete the project at a cost of \$25,000. The experience strengthened social organization, led to a proposal for a regional aqueduct, and allowed the community to force the armed groups to respect its territory.

In a second example, also in the Sierra, a group of small farmers decided to create a health association. The association has 20,000 affiliates, and played a key role in detecting a recent outbreak of yellow fever. The association has proposed that mayors from throughout the region participate in municipal working groups to discuss community priorities for the use of scarce public health funds, and has traveled to Bogota to negotiate a similar methodology for use by the national Ministry of Health.

A third example is drawn from Santa Rosa del Sur, in Sur de Bolivar, a region very affected by violence, corruption and drug trafficking. Five years ago all of the taxis were stolen property. But the last municipal elections prompted a high level of participation, and an active leader,

Delmar Burgos, was elected mayor. With the community's support, Burgos proposed to clean up the municipality. Today the taxis are legally owned, the port highway is completely paved, and the Santa Rosa hospital is one of the best equipped in the region. The mayor combined community backing with a strategy of engaging national government and international agencies. When officials have raised doubts about the security situation, Burgos has responded that he has 11,000 unarmed escorts, the inhabitants of the municipality, to guarantee his security. The mayor is also the director of an association of municipalities in Sur de Bolivar. A couple of years ago another association led by paramilitaries was organized to oppose the setting aside of territory for a peace dialogue with the ELN guerrilla group. Burgos has worked systematically to attract support away from the paramilitaries, in favor of the municipal association. His work is serving to teach other mayors in the region that the best political work is done within the law.

Observers of the development and peace initiatives have also questioned whether the programs and communities are able to confront the illegal armed actors. In this regard, Moncayo cited the example of the Consejo Regional de Cauca (CRIC), another member of the *Redprodepaz* network. CRIC played a key role in negotiating the safe return of Arquimedes Vitonás, the mayor of Toribío, when he was taken hostage by the FARC in September 2004.

In general, the development and peace programs, which have a legal basis in the 1991 constitution, serve as a catalyst to bring communities together and facilitate collective action on behalf of common goals. *Redprodepaz* brings together 17 such programs located in major conflict zones and covering 29 percent of Colombia's municipalities, with a total population of 230,000. The cost of the network's programs is approximately USD \$30 million per year, a figure that compares very favorably with other major aid initiatives. The

participating communities have developed an evaluation instrument to help ensure the effectiveness and transparency of the programs.

The fundamental point, concluded Moncayo, is that peace cannot be constructed by talking only with those who have taken up arms.

In discussion, Rosende underlined the growing importance of the development and peace programs. For the UN, these programs are fundamental because they are creating or assuring the conditions for democratic institutionality in the regions, which is fundamental for Colombia given historic difficulties in consolidating the central state. Two things are key: first, to support the extension of state institutions throughout the national territory, especially those that guarantee human rights and protect the civilian population. Second, strengthening civil society and the communities is also fundamentally important. In this sense, the development and peace programs are a basic tool, and different actors in the international community have begun to see them as key counterparts. The EU, UN, Sweden, Spain and Holland are approaching the programs in this way.

The paramilitary dialogue

The next two presentations shifted the panel's attention from international and domestic approaches to diplomacy and development, to domestic and international concerns regarding the ongoing dialogue between the Uribe government and illegal paramilitary forces. Rep. Luis Fernando Velasco, a member of Colombia's Liberal party from Cauca, presented the debate over the legal framework for the demobilization process. Rep. Velasco supported Mr. Uribe's election, but was also a member of a coalition of legislators who presented an alternative to the government's "peace and justice" bill.

Velasco began by briefly describing three sectors of the paramilitary movement. According to his analysis, one small sector of the paramilitaries is made up of small farmers and peasants who tired of the "excesses" of the guerrillas—that is to say, atrocious crimes committed against the civilian population to which the state did not respond—and decided to arm and defend themselves. A second sector is made up of major drug traffickers who decided it was cheaper to create their own protection forces than to continue paying taxes to the guerrillas. This sector has grown over time. The third sector, as large as the second, is made up of drug traffickers who realized it would be advantageous to participate in the Santa Fe de Ralito process in order to obtain the political status that accompanies negotiation, and to protect themselves from extradition to the United States, an outcome they fear. Velasco characterized this sector as the heirs to Pablo Escobar, people who have used great violence, whose crimes weigh on the conscience, and who are also engaged in illegal activities to finance the internal armed conflict.

Velasco emphasized that Colombians have made the decision to negotiate with these actors, and that the society knows with whom they are negotiating. But negotiation requires that the paramilitary phenomenon be confronted fully. The phenomenon is more than its rural armed expression; at this point the paramilitaries are seeking to defend their illegal activities, including drug trafficking and the stealing of gasoline, by taking control of municipal and some provincial governments and public services, which in turn allows the laundering of illegal earnings. There are cases in which paramilitaries control the local clinics known as ARS,¹⁰ as well as lotteries and cable television franchises. All of these are economic activities that involve managing large amounts of cash, and so permit money laundering. The resulting economic power of the paramilitaries in turn allows the consolidation of political power locally and regionally, with national consequences.

Moncayo gave examples of regional peace-building processes led by civil society that create the conditions necessary for strong democratic institutions.

¹⁰ "Administradores de régimen subsidiado de la salud," literally administrators of the subsidized health regime.

“... if we have to swallow the frog, at least let’s do it well... the minimum that we can ask is that [the paramilitaries] help us find the truth, the real truth...”
– Colombian Congressman Luis Fernando Velasco

The most recent municipal and provincial elections illustrate the phenomenon. In far too many towns, only one candidate ran for mayor. In some provinces, only one candidate ran for governor. Others interested in running were called and cordially told not to run, and those who persisted were assassinated. After the elections, paramilitary commander Salvatore Mancuso said that his forces controlled 35 percent of the Colombian congress.

Velasco described in detail the paramilitary phenomenon in order to make clear that the very nature of Colombian democracy is at stake in the current negotiations, and in the struggle over an appropriate legal framework. Without questioning the good faith of the government, Velasco emphasized the very significant differences that exist between the government and an opposing coalition of legislators, led by Sen. Rafael Pardo, regarding the objectives of the negotiations. In his view, the negotiations should lead to an agreement at the level of the state, not just an accord with the current government, if the outcome is to be sustainable. But to date, the government’s conception of the process, which is limited to disarming the rural sectors of the paramilitary movement, has prevailed. Other groups in society—social organizations, the political opposition, even some sectors of Uribe’s supporters—agree that disarmament is important and necessary. But they also believe that the paramilitary phenomenon should be deactivated. Arms are only one aspect of the expression of paramilitary power, Velasco points out. If the paramilitaries are allowed to consolidate their great economic power, like a powerful mafia within Colombian democracy, that democracy will be weakened.

Velasco and his colleagues propose, first, that members of the paramilitary forces be required to collaborate fully with judicial authorities by identifying themselves and providing full confessions of their crimes. The government has argued that a confession requirement would be

unconstitutional because no one can be required to incriminate himself. But Velasco responded that full cooperation can be a requirement in exchange for special treatment in the form of reduced penalties, which is exactly what the government is proposing to offer. Full confession is necessary in order to individualize responsibility for specific human rights crimes, and that in turn is necessary in order to be able to provide reparations to victims of those crimes. For Velasco and other legislators, the issue is not whether or not there should be flexibility regarding sentencing, but what the state should receive in exchange. The opposition’s position is that the state must be provided with the information needed to completely deactivate the paramilitary phenomenon.

A second key issue in the legislative debate is the government’s proposal to define paramilitarism as a political crime. In Colombia, as in many other countries, political crimes are not subject to extradition. In addition, Colombia’s jurisprudence provides that all crimes “connected” to political crimes are also considered political crimes. The “connectivity” means that a paramilitary who committed a crime such as drug trafficking would not be subject to extradition for that crime. Velasco pointed out the significance of this issue for the United States, in light of the many paramilitary leaders engaged in negotiations with the Uribe government who are also subject to U.S. extradition requests. At the time of the conference, the government’s effort to make paramilitarism a political crime had been defeated by a vote in the Colombian Senate. But the Minister of Interior had informed members of the Congress that the government was looking for ways around the defeat.

Velasco drew his comments to a close by suggesting two possible scenarios. In the first, the negotiation will be done well, the paramilitary phenomenon will be deactivated, reparations will be possible, and illegal assets, including many millions of dollars being held in financial

institutions outside of Colombia, will become available to finance a serious land reform process and alternative development. Part of the funds could also be shared with the countries in which they are found for use in the fight against drug trafficking and addiction. Under this scenario, the negotiations process could be a great opportunity.

In the second scenario, if the negotiation is not done well, the result could be the consolidation of a “Mafioso” democracy, especially in coastal regions. If a mafia-like power controls the ports, through economic and political power, Velasco predicted that it would be relatively easy to corrupt the security forces to obtain protection for illegal commerce. International shipping of illegal drugs would become easier. Internally, legal businesses would be forced to compete with well-financed criminal organizations that would no longer maintain rural paramilitary structures, but rather security “offices” like those already denounced by the mayors of Bogota and Medellin, complete with hired assassins on stand-by. What is at stake here is the very conception of democracy.

What is needed, Velasco concluded, is not to end the negotiation process with the paramilitaries, but to insist on three basic elements. First, the agreement must be a national accord. The president should convene the entire country to participate in the debate. Second, the declared cease fire must be respected, and those who have been kidnapped by the paramilitaries must be released. Third, the international community should continue to support the Colombian state in recovering the monopoly on arms. But the social and economic dimensions of the conflict cannot be neglected. Alongside the combat helicopters, there should also be resources for local projects that bring other means to bear to defeat those who rely on violence.

Susana Villarán, member of the Inter-American Commission on Human

Rights (IACHR) and rapporteur for Colombia, complemented Rep. Velasco’s remarks with a presentation on the norms and standards of the Inter-American human rights system as they apply to Colombia. Colombia is a priority for the Inter-American system, as seen in the 110 precautionary and provisional measures that have been issued by the Commission and the Court. The IACHR has issued three reports on the general human rights situation in Colombia, and the country also receives special attention in the Commission’s annual human rights report to the OAS General Assembly.

In February of 2004, the OAS Permanent Council charged the IACHR with advising the newly established Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia, known by its Spanish initials as MAPP/OEA. The mandate of the MAPP/OEA is to verify any cease fire and cessation of hostilities, demobilization, disarmament and reinsertion of illegal armed groups in Colombia. At this time the only such process underway is the negotiation between the Uribe government and the illegal paramilitary organizations. The IACHR has understood this charge as an integral part of its general mandate to promote and protect human rights in the Americas.

Last December the IACHR issued its first public report on the MAPP/OEA process.¹¹ Villarán prefaced her presentation on the report by emphasizing that the Commission is fully aware of the magnitude, duration and complexity of the Colombian conflict, that there are no easy solutions, and that the search for policies that will serve to deactivate the actors of the internal armed conflict is fundamental. The Commission is not among those labeled “idealists,”



Representative Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves of the Colombian Congress discusses the legal framework for the demobilization of armed actors.

¹¹ The report is available on the OAS web site, www.oas.org.



The father in this family was killed by paramilitaries during a massacre of eleven people in Cauca.

confronting the “realist,” but is well aware that political solutions are required. The key question, then, is whether states’ international obligations impede the current negotiation. The Commission has asked itself this

question, and believes the answer is no, because the negotiation must be oriented toward not only disarming paramilitarism, but putting an end to the phenomenon.

In its report on the MAPP/OEA, and in its most recent annual report, the IACHR lays out principles and norms directed at overcoming armed conflict and its consequences for the civilian population. Based on the American Convention on Human Rights and obligatory by virtue of the ratification of the Convention by sovereign states, these principles were the focus of Villarán’s remarks.

According to the standards of the Inter-American system, there exists, first, a right to know the truth about crimes under international law perpetrated during the conflict. This is a fundamental issue; the victims of the armed conflict cannot be invisible. There must be effective mechanisms to ensure that the civilian population—which includes indigenous peoples, afro-descendent communities, children, and displaced women who remain at the mercy of armed actors who have used and continue to use violence—is not forgotten. Victims have a right to truth, and this right cannot be renounced, as the Commission explains in its report. Not only in Colombia, but as established in prior cases before the Inter-American Commission and Court, a society in its entirety has the right to the truth about the conduct of those involved in committing grave violations of human rights or international humanitarian law, to understand the conditions that made

possible the commission of the crimes, and to identify the legal and other factors that contributed to impunity.

Second, there is a right to justice and judicial clarification of the crimes committed during the conflict. According to international common law and treaties, states have a strict obligation to investigate these crimes, and to prosecute and sanction those responsible. Under international law, these crimes have no statute of limitations and are not subject to amnesty; the state can be held accountable for a failure to apply due process.

Any negotiation process must be oriented toward preventing the repetition of crimes, and guaranteeing that the phenomenon being deactivated will not reappear. This is a fundamental issue present in Inter-American law and in international human rights law. States have the obligation to combat impunity because impunity fosters the chronic repetition of human rights violations. In this sense, the Commission and the Court have established that, while amnesties and pardons for taking up arms against the state may be useful in efforts to achieve peace, amnesties or other legislative measures that interfere with the investigation and prosecution of crimes under international law are inconsistent with the Convention because they impede access to justice and render ineffective the state’s obligation to guarantee due process.

Finally, the right of victims to reparations is one of the pillars of the rule of law. How can the condition of equality under the law that makes possible recognition of victims’ citizenship status and the recuperation of trust in state institutions be reestablished? Reparation measures, which may be collective or individual, seek to remedy the damage suffered by the victim, including the sensation of ongoing violations, and are fundamental for achieving peace.

Villarán reiterated that the guarantee of no repetition requires the adoption of measures that will prevent new violations of human rights. This is the standard against which

a negotiation process must be continually evaluated. Such measures include the dissolution of armed parastatal groups; the exercise of effective control over the armed forces by civilian authorities; reserving the use of military tribunals for service-related crimes only; strengthening judicial independence; and providing protection for justice officials.

The IACHR report concludes by recommending the adoption of a comprehensive legal framework that establishes clear conditions for the demobilization of illegal armed groups in accordance with the Colombian state's international obligations. The framework must take account of the situation of the 4,828 persons who have already benefited from individual and collective demobilization processes that, from the Commission's perspective, are inadequate because they will result in impunity. In addition, genuine mechanisms of participation should be established, in secure conditions, for the victims of the conflict, to ensure their access to truth, justice and reparations.

In discussion, Velasco called for clarification on the role of the OAS, which many Colombians view as not complying with its verification mandate. Villarán emphasized the independence of the IACHR with respect to the OAS, and with respect to the MAPP/OEA. She noted that a second IACHR report on the MAPP/OEA process is planned for the end of the year, after a legal framework for the demobilization is expected to be in place. The report will examine that framework in light of the norms and standards that have been laid out here. In addition, the members or staff of the IACHR will travel to Colombia four times during 2005.

A member of the audience asked whether Colombia was being held to a higher standard than other countries, in particular Central America in the 1990s. In response, Rosende noted a number of experiences in other countries that establish clear precedents, including Guatemala, El

Salvador and South Africa on the right to truth; Guatemala on reparations; and on the right to justice, Sierra Leone, where guerrilla commanders are being prosecuted and punished, and Rwanda. He also emphasized that today the international context has changed because of the Rome Treaty and the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

In response to a question about accountability for the guerrilla movements, Velasco emphasized that those responsible for crimes against humanity, whoever they are, must be held accountable, or the state will be held responsible. Massacres committed by the paramilitaries must be treated the same way as massacres by the guerrillas. For example, the recent attack by the FARC against the civilian population of Toribío is not a political crime; the FARC will have to be held accountable for it. Negotiations with the guerrillas and the paramilitaries will be different, and should be, because the origins of the phenomena are different. But it is absolutely clear that grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by either side cannot be pardoned or amnestied.

Panel 3: Comparisons and lessons

The purpose of the third panel was to bring comparative experiences to bear on the discussion of the Colombian conflict, both from other countries and from other times in Colombian history. The presentations drew attention back to the critical importance of dynamics within Colombia, while emphasizing that there are relevant lessons from other times and places that should inform efforts by the international community to shape that internal dynamic.

Daniel García-Peña, director of *Planeta Paz* and former peace commissioner under President Ernesto Samper, began by noting that Colombia is no longer in the international spotlight in the way that it was a few years ago. Only weeks before the conference took place, U.S. military

Any negotiation process must be oriented toward preventing the repetition of crimes, and guaranteeing that the phenomenon being deactivated will not reappear.

U.S. aid to Colombia has not gone down, but new priorities mean that Colombia no longer has the attention of U.S. officials as before.

personnel were arrested smuggling cocaine. A few years ago that would have been headline news, but today, surprisingly, it is not. The extradition of Simón Trinidad, the first political insurgent extradited to the United States, has gone relatively unnoticed in the new climate. While Colombia is still on the radar screens of some U.S. agencies, it no longer has their attention as before.

Much of the change has to do with 9/11, and the resulting shift in U.S. priorities. For many years Colombia was the third largest recipient of U.S. aid. Now it has fallen to fifth, while Iraq and Afghanistan have joined Israel and Egypt as recipients of greater amounts of aid. If legislation currently pending is approved by Congress, Jordan and Pakistan will receive more as well, and Colombia will fall to 7th place. It's not that Colombia's aid has gone down; the numbers are basically the same. But new priorities in the world mean that Colombia no longer has the privileged situation that it may have had in the past.

But the change also has to do with what has happened in Colombia. The peace process under Pastrana, which had elevated hopes for human rights, democracy and peace and made Colombia an attractive issue for the international community, has ended. Not only has the military conflict per se not spilled over the borders as some believed it would, but U.S. Amb. William Wood often talks about Colombia as an island of stability and a success story, in comparison with Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia. Wood says that Colombia is a solution that should be exported elsewhere.

When one adds to the mix that Europe also has new priorities, it is fair to say that Colombia has a different place on the agenda of the international community. Europe today is not willing to fight with the United States over Colombia. On the contrary, after the differences over the Iraq war and other issues, Europe seems to be looking for ways to mend fences with the U.S. Although Europe continues to express solidarity, and to talk about human

rights and democracy, the fact is that the Europeans have taken a lower profile. As a result of events like the 11th of March in Spain, the issue of terrorism, the growth of the EU, and the Tsunami in Indonesia, Europeans are focused more on their own problems and situation.

It is also important to understand how President Uribe has affected the international stance of Colombia. Many of those who oppose Uribe have been so obsessed with him as an individual that they have failed to understand the profound effects he has had on Colombia and on its relations with the world. Uribe's position has shifted. He came into office with some exaggerated expectations of the world community and of the United Nations. He is a true believer in his policies, and he had a very simplistic view of the world community, and of the UN in particular. He believed that in the fight of good against evil, the United Nations was always on the side of the good, so he also really believed that he could bring the UN to support his efforts. Today he is disillusioned with the UN, and almost disdainful. The removal of James LeMoyné as special envoy indicates an Uribe who has relegated the UN and the international community to a secondary role.

Uribe's change is also due to pragmatic thinking. The Europeans did not come through with much money compared to the Americans, and the Americans don't create as many problems, so Uribe has concluded that he doesn't need the Europeans and is better off in a definitive alliance with the United States. For example, in the process from London to Cartagena, there was a change. The Cartagena declaration does not talk about an internal armed conflict, nor about a humanitarian crisis. These changes reflect the fact that the U.S. was much more active in defending the Colombian position in Cartagena than it had been in London.

The FARC's loss of prestige has also helped Uribe. If one compares how the FARC were viewed just five years ago in

Europe and the world, and even in the U.S., there is a growing sense that the FARC no longer have the kind of support or legitimacy as an international player that they had in the past.

All of these factors lead García-Peña to be quite pessimistic as to the possibilities of a negotiated settlement in the near future. After the re-election of President Bush, there seems to be little leeway for changing U.S. policy. Many expected that the end of Plan Colombia would generate a whole new debate on whether or not to continue aid. But the aid request submitted by President Bush continues the amounts and distribution of the existing aid package, and there does not seem to be much of a debate in the U.S. Congress. This suggests U.S. policy will continue as is for awhile.

Instead, the possibilities for peace in Colombia, for the end of the long conflict, depend much more on the internal dynamics of the Colombian political process than on what may happen in the international arena. There are two issues which could change the internal dynamics and define the possibilities for the future, and the next few months will be very key.

The first issue is the impact of the paramilitary demobilization process—for all the reasons already mentioned and because of the tendency to lump together the guerrillas and the paramilitaries as if they were the same phenomenon. There is no question, as Velasco said, that a massacre committed by the counter-revolutionaries is to be equally condemned as a massacre committed in the name of the revolution. But it is also important to recognize that the FARC and the AUC are different phenomena, and the differences should not be forgotten. The negotiation at Santa Fe de Ralito will determine the possibilities toward the future. Velasco and others have raised the frustration with the MAPP/OEA process, which it was hoped would help correct some of the problems with inadequate verification. But so far there is not only the risk that the reputation of the OAS will be tarnished by its role, but

that the role of the international community in general will be also affected if it is perceived that the OAS, rather than playing a role of verification as an independent and neutral party, is an apologist on the side of the government and the AUC.

Second, there are very important developments that have to do with the internal dynamics of the Colombian political system. For some it may be hard to understand how, when Colombia is led by its most right-wing president in a long time, one would also see the rise of the democratic left. But in García-Peña's view, the most significant development toward peace has to do with the rise of that democratic left, as seen in the electoral victories of Lucho Garzón in Bogota and Angelino Garzón in the Valle de Cauca. This marks a qualitative shift in Colombian politics, and points toward a political solution to the armed conflict, rather than a negotiated settlement. Past thinking has been that peace would begin with a negotiation with the guerrillas. Today there are reasons to think that Colombia may be different from El Salvador and Guatemala, where the right wing negotiated peace with a left-wing insurgency. Perhaps through a profound change of the power structure, a reformist, leftist government can enact a reform agenda similar to what is occurring in Brazil with Lula, in Uruguay, and elsewhere in Latin America, and there will be a new formula. It is not that there will be a political solution without negotiations, but that negotiations will not come first, but as a consequence of political transformation.

In this context, it is important to look again at the role of the international community. Perhaps the U.S. and Europe have exhausted their possibilities of playing



U.S. Special Forces train the Colombian army.

García-Peña expressed pessimism in the short-term regarding a new stage of peace-building, but optimism in the mid- to long-term.

such a key role. Clearly they will continue to play a role, but there is a need to go beyond the dichotomy in which the U.S. funds the war and Europe funds the peace. García-Peña proposed that Latin America is a reserve for future possibilities of peace. In many ways, the region is as rich as the U.S. or Europe, not in terms of funds but in political leverage. Given the new realities, it is very significant that Lula has refused to call the FARC a terrorist organization. Although he has distanced himself from the FARC, he has left the door open for a possible role in the future. The Venezuelan situation is another factor. Consider again the Granda case. Granda wasn't even invited to the meeting of the Venezuelan Bolivarian Congress. People have lost sight of the fact that the FARC are much more Chavista than Chávez is a fan of the FARC. In short, Latin America could play a much more significant role in the future.

This does not mean that one can forget about the United States. The *Blueprint for a New Colombia Policy*¹² is the kind of effort that should prompt more thinking in the future. It is also necessary to engage more with the Republican party; one cannot sit back and wait for the Democrats to return to power. It was significant that Rep. Henry Hyde sent a letter to Uribe on the AUC process, not from a traditional human rights perspective, but from a conservative war on terror perspective. The message was that the AUC are a terrorist organization that must be dismantled. Their funding and networks must be attacked, much in the same way that the U.S. is going after Al Qaeda. There is a need to re-think the premise that Democrats want peace and Republicans want war, and work more on shared concerns that derive from a war on terror perspective.

Finally, it is important for the international community to help Colombia by exerting pressure on President Uribe to comply with his own commitments, as expressed in the London Declaration and elsewhere. In conclusion, García-Peña expressed

pessimism in the short-term regarding a new stage of peace-building, but optimism in the mid- to long-term.

Gustavo Gorriti, director of Peru's daily *La República*, spoke next, drawing on his country's experience confronting the insurgent group *Sendero Luminoso*. He began by stating explicitly that Colombia is confronting an internal war, that the situation is that of a guerrilla insurrection against a democratic government. One can debate the nuances on one side or the other, but the characterization is essentially correct. The topic, then, is one of counterinsurgency, and the objective is to understand to what extent a democratic government can adequately defend itself from a guerrilla insurgency or the violence that it generates, without losing its own nature.

His first premise is that a democracy has never been defeated by a guerrilla insurrection. Nevertheless, many democracies have been defeated, or abrogated, in the context of an internal war. How? Not by the insurgents, but by the counterinsurgents supposedly charged with defending democracy. Does this mean that internal defense, the more politically correct way to refer to counterinsurgency, is imminently self-destructive? No. Rather, the lesson is that identifying the correct strategy or best method for response is absolutely crucial, because the life of a democracy literally depends on it. While the lesson may appear obvious, it is not. The history of contemporary Latin America is a reminder of the devastating consequences of confronting a national security emergency in the wrong way. Now, in the classroom of today's fight against terrorism, the classic dilemmas of counterinsurgency are returning. It is necessary, especially in nations that do not cultivate historical or institutional memory, to return to these problems.

Gorriti described how he became enmeshed in the issue of counter-

¹² Available at www.lawg.org or www.wola.org.

insurgency. In the early 1980s, at the beginning of the *Sendero Luminoso* insurrection, the ravines around Ayacucho were producing a daily toll of corpses. He began to ask whether he was living in a democracy. It was a precarious democracy, preceded by military rule, but it had a constitution. Nevertheless, at the first signs of an insurrection, the result was a daily harvest of tortured and disappeared.

At the time, in interviews with military sources, Gorriti frequently received the standard response: you don't understand. Things appear simple for civilians, he was told, but those charged with security know the enemy, and know by doctrine what must be done. Actions that individuals would not take as Christians or as moral persons must be taken under certain circumstances. The analogy was a surgeon confronted with the need to amputate in order to save the patient's life, even though, at the end, little of that life remains.

Gorriti went on to argue that what Peru then lived through, and what has been experienced in one or another form in many parts of Latin America, occurred in the context of a weak democracy. Perversely, the regions where the insurgency was growing were the regions under military control, which in turn also grew, in such a way that little by little Peruvian democracy was eaten up by a cancer of internal regional military dictatorships that metastasized throughout the organism—until finally in 1992, with Fujimori and Montesinos, the democratic experience ended and authoritarian rule returned.

It is important to note that although the war essentially ended in 1992 with the capture of Abimael Guzmán, this had nothing to do with the measures promulgated by Fujimori and Montesinos. They were losing the war; they were absolutely spooked, and they had nothing else in hand to try. It was a small, well trained unit, that was formed in Peru but later received CIA support, that eventually won the war with just one accidental shot that wounded no one.

But this is not what happened elsewhere. In Latin America, once the 30-year wave of guerrilla insurrections began in the 60s, the precarious democracies that sought to implement developmentalist models were in almost all cases abrogated by military dictatorships nourished by the necessity of counterinsurgency. Latin America during the 1970s was completely covered by military governments that not only believed law and democracy were obstacles to the emergency measures the situation demanded, but followed a doctrine that imparted an almost religious overtone to the war against communism they saw themselves as leading in the third world. The only exception was the Betancourt government in Venezuela.

The United States, Gorriti argued, with its fundamentally inorganic and instrumentalist vision of counterinsurgency, collaborated fully with this national security doctrine, profoundly opposed to democracy. From its collaboration on Operation Condor, to subcontracting Argentine counterinsurgents at the beginning of the *contra* war against the Sandinistas, the U.S. elevated the instrumental over the defense of the central values that counterinsurgency had supposedly been designed to protect.

It is worthwhile to remember this history today, in the context of the war against terrorism, when tactics of the past, like extraordinary rendition, are returning, and when many of those involved in the fight against terrorism are indicating by their actions that they see democracy as an obstacle.

An historical perspective, nevertheless, may mislead. There are perhaps 130 years of experience of confrontation between governments and terrorist threats, and the results are clear. Both democracies and dictatorships have been targeted, and in almost all cases, the democracies were better able to confront the threat, in the long run, in a much more positive and efficient fashion in the long run. On the other hand, some authoritarian governments triumphed and others were defeated.

“A democracy has never been defeated by a guerrilla insurrection. Nevertheless, many democracies have been defeated or abrogated, not by the insurgents, but by the counterinsurgents supposedly charged with defending democracy.”
– Gustavo Gorriti



A meeting of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP). Space in which to operate for this civil society organization and others has been threatened by the conflict and the government's response.

With regard to how to confront guerrilla insurrections, there are certain principles that governments should recognize. One is that the objective of the war is not to destroy the enemy, but to

establish or reestablish the active presence of the state throughout the territory. A government must establish a unified state, and always act in accordance with the law. Functioning in accordance with the law is a small price to pay for the immense legitimacy that results.

In short, Gorriti concluded, democratic legality properly understood is not an obstacle, but an advantage. If the military is interested in the topic of counterinsurgency, civilians should be even more so. Militaries manage counterinsurgency, but it is civilian lives that are lost.

Morris Panter spoke from the perspective of a former U.S. prosecutor with experience in bilateral investigations with Colombian prosecutors and police. His first comment was that the picture Rep. Velasco painted of the consolidation of the power of organized crime throughout the ports and along the coasts of Colombia was a very scary image. That led to the question of the relationship between crime and human rights concerns, or more specifically, between human rights policy and aggressive, concerted U.S.-driven law enforcement. Panter argued that ten years ago, most people would have said that those two things do not go together. But today, increasingly, people are starting to appreciate throughout U.S. law enforcement and in the human rights community how compatible human rights and law enforcement goals are.

Panter went on to say that while Plan Colombia is and should be an important

issue for debate, there is also a need for a clear and coherent understanding of the potential that U.S. justice policy offers the human rights movement, and the benefits it has already begun to provide. Justice cooperation builds upon U.S. and Colombian policies to combat drugs, money-laundering and corruption. These are policies that are in many ways unrelated to human rights, except that if one does a Venn diagram of the intersection of leading violators of human rights with leading money launderers, drug traffickers and generally really bad folks in Colombia, there is an unmistakable overlap. A justice policy approach can begin to address one of the major underlying problems as a country transitions from a political conflict that was oriented around left-right divisions, to a political conflict that has the potential to allow organized crime to become institutionalized or embedded in the system in a way that would be hard to reverse.

In thinking about possible strategies, it is important to recognize that the U.S. Justice Department has a role within U.S. policy, but it does not have its own foreign policy. Often its goals are subordinated to larger political goals. Nevertheless, even if one believes that U.S. justice policy over the last few years has not been a model for the region, there is still a deep and long tradition of outstanding adherence to basic principles of justice principles that provide a lot of benefit. The question is how the two countries can collaborate to deal with some of the worst actors of the conflict.

To that end, Panter outlined some initial steps. First, within human rights organizations, there should be a discipline around building strategic cases. The worst offenders should be identified and aligned with concerns that transcend politically motivated discussions; for example, the traffickers who have bought their way into the demobilization process. Panter recalled Gorriti's argument: one capture, that of Guzmán, changed the dynamic of the Peruvian conflict. Bringing a few very bad actors to justice can have a major impact.

Second, international human rights groups should consider bringing cases directly. In Latin American legal systems, people other than direct victims can have standing to bring cases.

Third, human rights groups should ask how the work being done by other agencies in-country lines up with foreign policy goals. In any foreign country, the embassy is the primary point of contact; everyone reports to the ambassador. At the same time, an agency like DEA does its own polygraphs and background checks of the people it works with. Because of the Leahy amendment, contacts like the DEA's cannot have a background of human rights violations.

More generally, there is a need to push the Colombia debate toward the issue of rule of law in a multilateral and bilateral context. There is consensus in the U.S. and in Colombia that organized crime is bad, and these actors should be in jail. Extradition has offered an opportunity for collaboration; it is a tool that provides a safety valve for consolidating democracy, and gives those concerned about rule of law another card to play. Expanding extradition beyond drug trafficking could have its greatest weight as an element of an integral response to actors involved in organized crime. The threatened consolidation of political power by organized crime provides an opportunity to use new tools to combat these actors.

The final presentation of the panel, by James Jones, a former UN employee and now consultant whose clients have included the UN and USAID, focused on prospects for alternative development in Colombia, drawing on lessons from counter-drug efforts throughout the Andean region. He began with a reminder that the Andes is a region of widespread poverty and marked inequality, and that Colombia is the 9th most unequal country in the world. Two-thirds of Colombians live on less than the \$3 per day poverty line. In rural areas, 85 percent are poor, and the rural population, by new OECD definitions of

“rural,” is about 50 percent of the country. Colombia is an electoral democracy, but democracy also depends on well-being.

Jones turned to the many contradictions that plague alternative development (AD) programs. AD is an orphan child lying in a grey area between drug control and development, unclaimed by either. Development takes time and patience. Favoring short-term counter-narcotics objectives over development leads to sloppy development and many mistakes. In the rush for measurable drug control achievements, for example, the decision-making process of the peasant household—which ought to be an important focus of development efforts—gets lost. Human rights, democracy, participation—all part of nation-building—get left aside.

The law enforcement aspect can also be contradictory. Are peasants who grow illegal crops treated as criminals or as small farmers? Jones compared the perspectives of the U.S. versus Europe. When Europeans look at the drug problem, the first thing they see is poverty, and they tend not to condition their aid. The first thing the U.S. sees, by contrast, is that a law has been broken, and aid is conditioned on eradication of the drug crops. The problem with the U.S. perspective is that it is less likely to resolve the problem over the long term. A development approach stands a much better chance of resolving the problem. The U.S. increasingly takes the position that forced eradication, before farmers have a sustainable alternative in place, is necessary before development can occur. Much experience shows that to be false. Forced eradication of impoverished farmers has human-rights implications, and also compromises democracy and participation, which is important to democracy. If the first manifestation of the State, as in Colombia, takes the form



JESS HUNTER

A Colombian farmer points to his corn crop, destroyed by aerial fumigation intended to kill coca plantings.

If the first manifestation of the State, as in Colombia, takes the form of armed helicopters and crop dusters, state legitimacy and democracy are compromised.

of armed helicopters and crop dusters, state legitimacy and democracy are compromised.

A further problem is that alternative development projects tend to get shunted to specialized agencies, which make them inherently short-term. Development does not get mainstreamed or folded into major development agencies such as ministries of agriculture, transportation, health, and education.

Returning specifically to Colombia, Jones noted that it is somewhat of a special case; the question always arises of how to do alternative development in the midst of all the violence. One way to answer the question is to look back at 1998, when President Pastrana came into office, and wedded drug control to the peace process. He proposed undertaking alternative development in areas controlled by the FARC. In exchange for FARC help in reducing drug crops, the State would develop FARC-controlled rural zones. Today, such a proposal seems unthinkable. But the fact that the peace laboratories have been able to go into conflict zones, build local interest, foster participation—all elements of good, sound development practice—shows that some progress is possible. Their experience suggests that development activities can help overcome violence, that the relationship between achieving security and fostering development is more interactive and less linear than is often assumed.

Has alternative development, where it has been tried, been successful? Jones argued that there have been pockets of success throughout the Andes. In Colombia, the kind of work described by Javier Moncayo is an example. But if one looks at the magnitude of the problem, the success is relatively small. The UN estimates that about 23 percent of farmers have received some sort of development help, not necessarily sustainable alternatives, but some sort of help. That proportion is very low, and means that the success is more potential than actual. But in Jones'

view, that potential should be pursued. The solution to Colombia's problems, and America's problems, does not lie in guns and glyphosate.

In discussion, García-Peña reinforced Jones' characterization of the state of the Colombian economy, arguing that without a doubt, levels of poverty and inequality have grown. Another step backwards is the government's insistence that there is no armed conflict, or even a social and political conflict. On this point the country has regressed at least twenty years, if one compares Uribe's statements with past presidents. The hopeful advance, emphasized by Panner, Gorriti and Jones, is the widespread consensus throughout Latin America and across the political spectrum in favor of democracy. The consensus is not just at the conceptual level, but is operational; it provides a platform for engagement among a wide variety of protagonists, and gives the international community great leverage. Yet within that democratic framework, the other great problems, including the challenges of development, remain to be resolved.

LONDON DECLARATION

All Government representatives present expressed their full support for the democratically elected Colombian Government and for all efforts to develop the fully functioning institutions of a democratic state throughout its territory, based on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and the welfare and safety of all citizens, and to reform the country's institutions. They expressed their support for the Colombian Government in its fight against conflict-related violence and illegal drug production and trafficking, underlining the need in so doing to respect the rule of law, human rights and, when applicable, international humanitarian law.

They welcomed President Uribe's commitment to seek a negotiated solution to the internal conflict in Colombia including through direct engagement with those illegal armed groups prepared to negotiate a peace agreement. They underlined the importance of the contribution of the UN. They offered their full continuing support to the good offices of the UN Secretary-General, and thanked the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Colombia for his contribution.

They expressed their willingness to provide practical help to the Colombian Government and the UN in peace efforts. They called upon all the illegal armed groups to agree to a ceasefire and to enter a serious negotiating process to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. They condemned all violent acts against the civilian population and elected representatives and called for the release of kidnap victims, and the halting of narcotics trafficking.

They expressed deep concern about the humanitarian crisis in Colombia, particularly the plight of internally displaced persons, as well as the grave human rights and international humanitarian law situation. They voiced their strong support for the work undertaken by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia. They noted with satisfaction the Colombian Government's pledge to implement the recommendations made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. They urged the Colombian Government to implement these recommendations promptly and to take effective action against impunity and collusion especially with paramilitary groups.

They welcomed the efforts of President Uribe to reform Colombian institutions in order to develop a fully functioning democratic state throughout its territory, based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, the safety and welfare of its citizens, social and economic reform and sustainable economic development. They emphasized the importance of such measures, especially in rural areas that have borne the brunt of the conflict, in helping to achieve a peaceful solution. They noted the significant role which the private sector could play in meeting some of these challenges.

They welcomed the Colombian Government's statement that they recognized and supported the role of civil society and Non Governmental Organizations as important stakeholders in carrying out reform, implementing development programs and defending human rights and moving towards a negotiated settlement of the internal armed conflict. They further welcomed and underlined the importance of the Colombian Government's pledge to protect civil society leaders, including of trade unions, who have suffered threats against themselves and their families.

Finally, they agreed to review and refocus their cooperation programs with particular emphasis on contributing to the strengthening of state institutions, the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis, the protection of human rights, environmental activities and the development of alternatives to drug production. Having taken careful note of the Colombian Government's priorities in these areas, they agreed to consider how to make their cooperation programs more effective in the light of the current situation in Colombia, with a view to a donors' co-ordination conference to be organized by the Inter-American Development Bank at a date convenient to the Colombian Government and the donor community.

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Conference Speakers

Diana Ávila Paulette is Executive Director of Project Counselling Service (PCS), an international consortium of European and Canadian cooperation agencies focused on humanitarian assistance, development, and advocacy in conflict and post-conflict situations. With PCS since 1992, Ms. Avila has many years of experience working to support and protect Latin American displaced and refugee populations and other groups affected by political violence. She holds an MA in sociology from the University of Essex in Colchester, England.

Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo, is Vice President of the *Polo Democrático* political movement; director of *Planeta Paz*, a popular peace organization; and a political analyst and professor of political science at the National University of Colombia. He has been closely involved with peace processes in Colombia for the last 15 years, serving as High Commissioner for Peace during the government of Ernesto Samper (1995-1998), advisor to the High Commissioner (1994-1995), and advisor to the president of the Senate for peace issues (1992). He was a resident scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and visiting faculty member at American University in 1998-1999.

Gustavo Gorriti, co-Director of the major Peruvian daily *La República*, is highly regarded for his groundbreaking investigative journalism on drug-related corruption in Peru and Panama and for his in-depth work on Peru's Shining Path guerrillas and the government's counterinsurgency response. For his reporting in exile during the Fujimori administration, he earned the International Press Freedom Award in 1998 from the Committee

to Protect Journalists and the King of Spain Journalistic Prize in 1997.

James C. Jones is a specialist on international development issues, including the environment, health, agriculture, and rural development, with 15 years of experience in Latin America. From 1997 to 1999, he served as Latin America Regional Advisor in Alternative Development to the United Nations International Drug Control Program. In that capacity, he worked closely with small farmers growing coca and opium poppy in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, and with national agencies using rural development for drug control. He recently completed a Latin America regional report and a major global report for UN Office on Drugs and Crime assessing the use of Alternative Development (or "Sustainable Livelihoods") as a drug-control tool.

Javier Moncayo, a physician and public health professional, currently serves as the coordinator of the National Network of Regional Development and Peace Programs (Redprodepaz), which includes 17 programs located throughout Colombia. The programs seek to foster development and improve governance from the ground up, using a participatory, multi-sectoral methodology. Three of the programs have received major funding from the European Union, and the UNDP has supported the Network to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices.

Morris Panner is a former U.S. Federal Prosecutor who focused on Organized Crime and Terrorism cases, particularly in Latin America. Mr. Panner served in the U.S. Department of Justice from 1994 to 2000, including positions as Principal Deputy Chief

of the Narcotics Section of the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, DC and Resident Legal Advisor in the US Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia. He is currently CEO of OpenAir, a private software company, and serves as a consultant to Harvard Law School on drug strategy as well as intelligence reform in Peru and other Latin American nations. Mr. Panner lived in Guatemala from 1988 to 1990 where he directed the Guatemala Office of the Harvard Center for Criminal Justice. He was named a German Marshall Fellow in 2003.

Socorro Ramírez is professor at the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations at the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*. She holds a doctorate in political science, specializing in international relations and analysis of contemporary political, economic and international problems. Ms. Ramírez has accepted multiple visiting professorships in Colombia and Venezuela, sits on the board of CRIES, the Coordinator of Economic and Social Research of the Caribbean, is a member of the Presidential Commission on Border Issues and Colombia-Venezuela Integration (COPIAF), and coordinates the Colombia-Venezuela Academic Group. Her numerous publications include the recent book, *Intervención en conflictos internos: El caso colombiano 1994-2003*.

Alfredo Rangel Suárez is Director of the *Fundación Seguridad y Democracia* (Security and Democracy Foundation), a prominent Colombian think-tank focusing on defense issues, and is a columnist for the Bogotá daily *El Tiempo*. He has been an external advisor to the Colombian Ministry of Defense, advisor to the president on national security, and consultant to the Inter-American Development

Bank, the United Nations, and the Colombian National Department of Planning. He is the author of three books and dozens of articles and essays on the armed conflict and peace processes in Colombia.

Raúl Rosende currently serves as Advisor to the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme in Colombia. His responsibilities include designing and implementing a strategy for conflict reduction and promotion of integrated development in war zones. He coordinated the donors' conferences for Colombia in London and in Cartagena; serves as the UNDP liaison with governments and donors on conflict prevention and recovery; and provides strategic analysis and policy advice on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) issues. Prior to his arrival in Colombia, he staffed UN and OAS missions in Afghanistan, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Ana María Sanjuán is the Director of the Center for Peace and Human Rights at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. She has served as a consultant to the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. Ms. Sanjuán has focused her research on issues of justice, security, human rights and democracy. One of her most recent publications is "*La violencia: apuntes para su delimitación y estudio*" in the volume *Fin de la Violencia: Tema del Siglo XXI*, published by the Universidad Central de Venezuela. Her analysis explores the historical roots of Venezuela's social and political polarization and considers the longer term prospects for national reconciliation.

Rep. Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves, an attorney and member of the Liberal

Party, has represented the province of Cauca in the Colombian Chamber of Deputies since 1998. He is a co-sponsor with Sen. Rafael Pardo and other legislators of a pending bill to establish a legal framework for the demobilization of paramilitary and other illegal armed groups. He was a delegate to past peace processes with the M-19 and Quintín Lame guerrilla groups, and has authored legislation to facilitate a humanitarian accord between the Colombian state and insurgent groups.

Conference Moderators & Panel Chairs

Virginia M. Bouvier joined the United States Institute of Peace in January 2003 as program officer for the Jennings Randolph Senior Fellowship Program. In addition to authoring and editing a number of books, she has written journal articles, reports, and book reviews on aspects of U.S.-Latin American relations, U.S. foreign policy, Colombian peace initiatives, human rights, gender, and political humor. Formerly, she was an Assistant Professor of Latin American literature and culture at the University of Maryland, and a Senior Associate at the Washington Office on Latin America. Bouvier has also served as a consultant for the World Bank, Levi Strauss Foundation, Levi Strauss & Co., the C.S. Fund, and the Women's Leadership Conference of the Americas.

Marc Chernick teaches in the Department of Government and the Center for Latin American Studies of Georgetown University. He previously taught and directed the Latin American Studies programs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and at Columbia University. He has written widely on drug-trafficking, political violence, and negotiated settlement to internal armed conflicts and has

Susana Villarán is currently the vice president of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights of the Organization of American States, and the rapporteur for Colombia, Guatemala and Nicaragua. She has served as Peru's National Ombudsman for Police, as a member of the governmental Committee to Restructure and Modernize the National Police, and as Minister for Women. She is the former executive secretary of the National Coordination for Human Rights of Peru.

recently completed a book on peace negotiations and the armed conflict in Colombia (2005). He is also editor and co-author of another study for the United Nations Development Program on Conflict Prevention and Early Warning in Latin America, focusing on the case of Colombia (2005). Currently he is working with a team of international scholars on a cross-regional research project on insurgent groups and paths to settlement of internal armed conflicts sponsored by the Norwegian Government and the Social Science Research Council contributing research on the FARC guerrillas of Colombia and the Shining Path of Peru.

Louis W. Goodman is Dean and Professor of International Relations at American University's School of International Service, positions he has held since 1986. Previously Dr. Goodman served on the faculty of Yale University's Department of Sociology and as Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Programs of the Social Science Research Council and The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The author of numerous books and articles, Dr. Goodman's current research focuses on democracy building and civilian control of the armed forces in Latin America.

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