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NATIONAL REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS
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**NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE
COMMITMENTS CONTAINED IN THE DECLARATIONS AND PLANS OF ACTION OF
QUEBEC CITY AND MAR DEL PLATA AND IN THE DECLARATION OF NUEVO LEÓN**

April 2007 – April 2008

INTRODUCTION

Colombia, pursuant to its commitment to following up on and implementing the mandates and commitments of the Summits Process, hereby submits its National Report for the period from April 2007 to April 2008, setting out the country's progress under the mandates of the Summit of Quebec City, the Special Summit of Nuevo León, and the Summit of Mar del Plata.

Of particular importance is the progress made in tackling poverty, ensuring access to education, improving the security situation, protecting human rights, strengthening democracy, and other areas. These efforts are in response to the policies implemented under the 2002–06 National Development Plan, "Toward a Community State," and in the 2006–10 National Development Plan, "Toward a Community State: Development for All," in pursuit of the policy of democratic security and in compliance with the mandates of the Summits of the Americas process.

We note the introduction of new policies that will be essential in consolidating economic growth, securing sustainable development, and improving human rights conditions for the entire population.

These include, for example, the 2007–10 Strategy for International Cooperation, to increase the cooperation the country receives and to improve its quality and impact; the consolidation of the strategy "JUNTOS: Social Protection Network for Overcoming Extreme Poverty," and the fruits it has borne in fighting poverty; the devising of the 2007–19 National Development Plan for Science, Technology, and Innovation, in which the "Vision Colombia 2019 – II Centenary Project" is crystallized; the Democratic Security Consolidation Policy (PCSD), which seeks to consolidate control over the nation's territory and strengthen the rule of law throughout the country; the introduction of provisions to prevent and punish criminal actions that have a particular impact on civic coexistence and security; the National Action Plan for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, and the related process of building a national consensus; the 2008–19 National Plan for Information and Communications Technologies (PNTIC), the aim of which is, by the end of that period, that all Colombians will be obtaining information and communicating by making efficient and productive use of ICTs to improve social inclusion and increase competitiveness; the adoption of the National Public Health Plan, to direct agencies' actions and undertakings at the local level, in pursuit of public health priorities; and the 2007–17 National Plan for Children and Adolescents.

Growth and Development

Development Financing

One of the strategic objectives of Colombia's 2007–10 International Cooperation Agenda is to increase the cooperation the country receives and to improve the quality and impact of that assistance. In that context, Colombia adhered to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness on November 13, 2007, as a fundamental step toward improving the effectiveness of the international cooperation that it receives. Subsequently, at the Third International Conference on Colombia, held on December 1, 2007, the international community expressed its support of the Colombian government's decision to adhere to the

Declaration and agreed to participate actively in the different processes and mechanisms to be pursued in its development in the country.

The 2007–10 Strategy for International Cooperation, presented at the Third International Conference on Colombia, represents Colombia’s proposal for identifying the basic guidelines that are to shape the international cooperation that the country receives. It emerged from a broad process of consultation and tripartite dialogue that brought together the efforts of the government, the international community, and various leading players from Colombian civil society. This strategy is structured around three priority areas: the Millennium Development Goals; tackling the global problems of drugs and environmental protection; and reconciliation and governance.

In 2007, the annual total of official development aid received by Colombia rose by 10.41%, to US\$394.4 million in 2007 from US\$357.2 million in 2006. Between January and November 2007, 322 cooperation projects approved by various donors were registered, involving a total amount of US\$215.5 million. 98% of this funding, divided among 308 projects, is geared toward supporting the Cooperation Strategy. Of the US\$210.1 million earmarked to support the Strategy, 71% is targeted at the “Reconciliation and Governance” priority area, 26% at tackling the global problems of drugs and environmental protection, and the remaining 3% at the Millennium Development Goals.

During 2007, significant achievements were made in cooperation efforts with domestic and foreign private enterprises. As a member of the organizing team of the Social Action Pavilion at the Responsible Colombia Fair, a high level of outreach toward official and nonofficial international cooperation agencies was attained, and they were informed about the *JUNTOS* Social Protection Network for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and about the importance of ensuring that all sectors of society participate in that strategy.

One of the main achievements was the introduction of the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR), regarding which an alliance with the United Nations Global Compact was forged. Representatives also participated in important discussion panels on CSR, such as the one organized by the Ministry of Social Protection (seeking to establish ties with private companies in the health sector on high-impact projects and the *JUNTOS* network). In addition, meetings of the Congress of the Republic addressing the topic of promoting CSR through legislation were attended.

Strategic alliances were forged with 40 private companies and business foundations interested in participating in the *JUNTOS* network. Additionally, participation in a Gamekeeper Families productive project was secured from Unilever in the amount of US\$20,000, together with the possible support of the company Avantel for several such projects (new phase in which families are not only adopted, but supported in their projects), which is planned to crystallize in 2008.

Finally, matching funds were given to four projects run by foreign private companies through which international corporation resources in excess of US\$1,000,000 were obtained and public-private partnerships were established with Germany’s GTZ, the Smirfit Kappa Cartón de Colombia business foundation, and Social Action.

Fighting poverty, inequality, and exclusion

The 2006–10 National Development Plan emphasizes the reduction of extreme poverty through the strategy “*JUNTOS*: Social Protection Network for Overcoming Extreme Poverty,” which is set out in document 102 of the Economic and Social Policy Council (CONPES) and Article 31 of the Plan’s Law.

This strategy proposes comprehensive and coordinated intervention by different state bodies and levels, to improve the living conditions of families facing poverty. The guiding principle is to focus on and provide

preferential access to social programs for 1.5 million of the country's poorest families (including displaced populations), with social promoters providing assistance within a framework of joint responsibility with the families, enabling them to attain a series of basic achievements to help them escape from the poverty trap. The specific objectives are strengthening the families' human capital, providing access to income-generating mechanisms to improve their living conditions, and capacity building to enable them to manage their own development.

The aim of this policy is not only to involve national agencies and local governments in the strategy's implementation, but also to ensure community participation in its deployment and social oversight. It also seeks to build the capacities of extremely poor and displaced sectors of the population to generate within them the conditions necessary for their development, which will obviate the need for state assistance.

The pilot phase is currently underway in 37 municipalities in 12 of the country's departments, and as of April 4, 2008, a total of 62,203 families (56,919 from SISBÉN I and 5,284 displaced families, all associated with Families in Action) have enrolled in *JUNTOS*. Of these families, 33,652 have already completed the baseline.

Giving the adjustments needed to the national and territorial provision of services in order to resolve these family's needs, it was decided to conduct a two-phase family enrolment process: the first, to take place in 2008, is expected to enroll 740,000 families in the strategy, and the second, in 2009, is expected to enroll 760,000 families (100% of the planned target).

To implement the 2008 expansion of *JUNTOS*, 17 regional forums were held in 12 cities around the country between January 14 and February 21, 2008. The purpose of these forums was to raise the awareness of mayors and governors regarding the strategy, its objectives and components, its implementation, and the role played in it by municipalities.

The target is the enrolment of 1.5 million families in the *JUNTOS* network by the end of 2009, together with a reduction in extreme poverty by 2010 to the level of 8% – a goal for 2010 that is below the country's commitment for 2015 of 8.8%.

Millennium Development Goals

An additional article was added to the 2006–10 National Development Plan regarding the need to include the Millennium Development Goals in local development plans. The MDG targets for 2010 were also included, in accordance with CONPES social document 91. Thus, through that policy document, the Colombian government formalized the country's commitments and strategies for attaining the MDGs. In this way, social investment accounting for 56% of the country's investment resources will be channeled into those groups and territories with the greatest deficiencies at the subnational level. The country is making consistent progress along the path laid out for attaining those goals by 2015 and, in some cases, the Millennium Goals will be reached as early as 2010. It should be noted, however, that because of internal symmetries, some regions of the country are at a below average level in their pursuit of the MDGs; international community assistance will therefore be essential in enabling the country to fully comply with the MDGs.

In that context, the National Planning Department (DNP) is working on the design and operation of the *JUNTOS* network for overcoming extreme poverty; the design and development of its network includes the basic MDG elements for overcoming poverty and reducing inequalities among the population. In addition, the MDG Follow-up and Evaluation Report for 2007 was produced.

Economic Growth

Between 2002 and 2007, Colombia reported an average rate of economic growth of 4.9%, and this was a factor that helped reduce poverty for two main reasons:

- Income inequality fell, as a result of improved household incomes, particularly among the poorest sectors; in other words, the country progressed toward better income distribution.
- Major progress in social policy effectively geared toward the poor.

Economic and Social Policies

The *JUNTOS* network for overcoming extreme poverty is the tool used to coordinate and integrate social policy actions by state agencies at different levels and to improve the living conditions of poor families. It has made progress in nine basic areas, including education, health, and employment.

Equality of Opportunities

The 2006–10 National Development Plan states that social policy must ensure the people of Colombia equal opportunities of access to and quality in a basic set of social services, allowing all of them to earn enough to ensure a decent living. One basic strategy in pursuit of this goal is to further adapt the focusing processes required by some social programs. The policy holds that comprehensive, priority attention for the sectors of the population with the worst living conditions must be temporary, until those groups are able to enter the formal insurance market through their own means. The basic premise is that to achieve this, it is necessary to evolve from simply providing these groups with assistance, as passive subjects, toward building their capacities as active subjects of their own development and creating opportunities for their insertion into formal mechanisms for managing their risks and vulnerabilities.

Fighting Poverty and Decent Work

Economic growth has been accompanied by reductions in the unemployment and poverty rates. In 2002 the economy grew by 1.93%, compared to 7.52% in 2007. The monthly unemployment rate has fallen from 15.6% in December 2002 to 11.2% in March 2008. Income distribution has improved. The Gini coefficient changed from 0.58 in 2002 to 0.54 in 2006. The poverty rate stood at 57% in 2002, compared to 45% in 2006. Over the same period, extreme poverty fell from 21.6% to 12%.

Similarly, understanding that the job creation is an essential element in reducing poverty and overcoming inequalities, and given the gradual increase in workers' incomes, the result is that decent work has increased in the country. The indicators of this are job creation, reduced poverty and inequality, increased worker earnings, and social dialogue.

Additionally, regulation mechanisms have been introduced for the oversight of labor institutions that avoid their obligations under the Substantive Labor Code, such as associated work cooperatives. We point to Bill 144 of 2007, which is currently before Congress, and Circular 01 of January 2, 2008, which addresses the commitments and responsibilities of the legal representatives and financial administrators of national and territorial public sector bodies, both of which serve to guarantee a strict compliance with the law in contracting with temporary service companies and associated work cooperatives.

Employment Policies

Colombia has pursued policies for employment and the labor market that have led to a reduction in the unemployment rate. The country's economic growth (7.52% in 2007), its democratic security policy, and increased investment flows, on the employment policy side, together with the labor market reforms introduced by Law 789 of 2002, have fueled the positive evolution of employment.

Intersectoral Coordination of Employment and Poverty Reduction Policies

The *JUNTOS* Network for overcoming extreme poverty is the first attempt at coordinating and integrating the social policy actions of the various state agencies at different levels that work to reduce poverty and promote equality. Similarly, by strengthening the Social Protection System, Colombia seeks to consolidate an institutional framework that will guarantee communication among the different bodies responsible for social policies, with the aim of coordinating the actions needed to protect the population from dangers and general vulnerabilities.

The Local Business Management Initiative Program (ILE), developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare and described in the Labor and Employment chapter, is one of the steps that have been taken in the labor and poverty-reduction areas.

Building the Business Capacity and Technical Skills of SMEs

The SENA has introduced “entrepreneurship” as a crosscutting component in its training processes and programs. Also, through the *Emprender* Fund, it has enhanced business management, promoting the incorporation of companies and job creation.

This fund was created by the national government to finance business projects involving apprentices, university interns (in the final year of their degree courses), or professionals who received their first degrees within the previous two years. It is an important tool for creating companies based on productive projects that make use of the knowledge acquired by entrepreneurs during their learning processes.

The fund facilitates access to capital by providing the beneficiaries with the resources needed for the launch of new productive units and by providing funding worth up to 100% of the business plan, provided the amount does not exceed 224 times the current legal minimum monthly wage (the minimum monthly legal wage for 2008 is \$461,500 Colombian pesos, equal to US\$257 at an exchange rate of 1800:1).

In turn, COLCIENCIAS has a program called “Promoting Investment in Technology-Based Companies” (FINBATEC), supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), and the SENA. This program is responsible for promoting “investment in technology and the development of SMEs with a high technological content”; building local professional capacities for venture capital, thereby raising the confidence of local and foreign institutional investors and attracting venture capital into Colombia; creating a network of agencies for promoting the project and training its members in topics related to venture capital; and strengthening the operational knowledge of COLCIENCIAS, by training its officials in evaluating projects that have commercial potential.

During 2007, work took place on identifying and structuring instruments to disseminate information about the venture capital industry. Actions were also adopted to strengthen fund management capacities as an institutional strengthening mechanism for technology investment, and a network of agencies to promote the project in Colombia was created.

At the same time, COLCIENCIAS’ National Electronics, Telecommunications, and Computer Science Program allocated resources worth US\$300,000 as support for projects intended to develop information and communications technology (ICT) applications for groups of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) belonging to productive chains.

Improving Working Conditions

Unemployment in Colombia has continued to fall drastically, from a rate of 15.6% in December 2002 to 11.2% in March 2008. This reduction of 4.4 percentage points represents 815,000 fewer unemployed people.

One of the main strategies set out in the National Development Plan is to continue constructing an economic, social, and institutional environment that ensures optimal use is made of the workforce as the chief engine behind economic growth and equality.

The national government has also identified the need to create conditions for ensuring high levels of competitiveness and productivity. It therefore plans to create conditions for the development of productive infrastructure by encouraging, *inter alia*, an intermodal system to help optimize the use of current infrastructure, reducing the time and cost spent moving the population toward urban areas, collection points, and foreign trade flows.

At the same time, the country's technological shortcomings will be reduced, by means of increased interactions between companies and the education sector, by providing support for innovation and development initiatives in both the public and private sectors, and by encouraging the identification of new markets for products and services through a vigorously active policy of economic integration with the rest of the world.

In addition, micro-level policies will be pursued, in conjunction with regulatory and institutional changes, such as in the design and launch of the Social Protection System and its components, the consolidation of the National Job Training System, the Opportunities Bank, and instruments and institutional mechanisms to allow improved coordination of public policies in general; that will invest those policies a greater impact on the poor segments of the population and thereby ensure that the benefits of increased wealth generation are more equally available to them.

It is therefore hoped that the unemployment rate will stand at an annual average of 8.8% by 2010. The success of the income generation policy demands an awareness of the enormous heterogeneity of the target population: differences between rural and urban areas, between geographical regions, between large and small businesses and microenterprises, and among sectors of the population.

This complexity therefore requires joint, coordinated policy action on two main fronts. The first is to generate widespread conditions in the economic, institutional, and sectoral arenas to boost the creation of wealth in the country. The second is to encourage the conditions and develop instruments so that the benefits of increased economic growth can reach the poorest segments of the population, by building their capacity for generating income.

Support Programs for Job Creation and Unemployment Protection

Colombia is currently pursuing a set of programs and strategies to protect vulnerable groups and individuals from the threats of unemployment and low income, such as unemployed workers at levels I and II of the SISBÉN (those with the lowest incomes), unemployed heads of families, unemployed youth, workers with lower qualifications, the disabled, those seeking reincorporation into the working population, displaced persons, etc.

1. Unemployment Subsidy Program

The unemployment subsidy program was created by Law 789 of 2002 as a mechanism to protect workers from critical events caused by economic cycles, by providing those who lose their jobs with a temporary economic subsidy. This subsidy is paid on one single occasion and is equal to 1.5 times the current legal

minimum monthly wage (\$692,250 in 2008), delivered in six equal monthly payments, and comprising coupons for food supplies, health services, or education. As stipulated by the law, under no circumstances may money be given to the recipients of the unemployment subsidy.

Two groups of workers are entitled to this subsidy: unemployed workers previously affiliated to a Family Compensation Fund (for a least one year in the three years prior to the subsidy request); and unemployed workers not affiliated to a Family Compensation Fund (CCF).

Between the start of program execution in October 2003 and December 2007, a total of 351,844 subsidies were awarded throughout the country. The unemployment subsidy method preferred by beneficiaries is food coupons, which are selected in 97.7% of all cases; only 1.63% prefer health coupons, while 0.64% choose education coupons.

2. Microcredit Program

This is a strategy that seeks to promote the creation of additional jobs by microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), by supporting them with credit resources and the incentive of not having to repay parts thereof in exchange for hiring unemployed breadwinners.

CCFs must allocate a part of the resources from the Fund for the Promotion of Employment and Protection from Unemployment (FONEDE), which provides MSMEs with loans to encourage the creation of new jobs.

CCFs also award a nonreimbursement benefit on a portion of those credits, equal to 100% of the health, pensions, and professional insurance levies charged over a hiring period of four months, provided that the employer demonstrates that the employee was kept in employment for a second period of equal length to that of the subsidy.

Between October 2003 and December 2007, 3,317 microcredits worth a total of 35 billion pesos were extended in response to 3,600 requests received at different CCFs around the country's departments.

3. Training Program for Reincorporation into the Workforce

This program provides training or retraining for unemployed workers receiving the unemployment subsidy, in order to increase their possibilities of re-entering the job market. Family Compensation Funds (CCFs) plan and conduct education and training courses for unemployed beneficiaries, in order to strengthen their skills in a trade or profession so they can secure jobs or enter self-employment, in any of three general areas: arts and skills; training entrepreneurs; and support in finding and obtaining a job.

74,228 courses have been held, benefiting 263,827 unemployed people under the "previously affiliated with a CCF" system. The total cost of these courses over the program's five years of operations is \$107 billion.

4. *Emprender* Fund

This fund's goal is to support and encourage associations of students or recent graduates from the SENA and from state-recognized institutes of education in the development of business initiatives, assisting them in applying their knowledge to create new sources of income and employment.

The *Emprender* Fund was created as a special account allocated to the SENA, to be managed by that agency and to finance business initiatives led and developed by apprentices, associations of apprentices, university interns, or graduates from state-recognized institutions.

The program assigns resources as nonreimbursable seed capital. To receive assistance from the fund, entrepreneurs submit duly structured business plans, for which they can request technical assistance from the SENA or from Entrepreneurship Units.

The *Emprender* Fund provides grants worth up to 100% of the business plan's cost, provided the amount does not exceed 224 times the current legal minimum monthly wage (smmlv): in 2008, \$103 billion. Between 2006 and 2007, a total of 861 new companies were created, with a fulfillment rate of 51.45%, which created 1,407 new jobs (32.7% fulfillment).

At the same time, the investment rate rose from 15.7% in 2002 to 27.8% in 2007, of which 21% is private investment, with direct foreign investment totaling US\$8,560 million. Colombia is thus committed to seeing this economic growth translate into well-being for the population, particularly its most vulnerable sectors.

Information and Communications Technologies

By means of public invitations, over this year COLCIENCIAS' National Electronics, Telecommunications, and Computer Science Program funded 28 projects with an approximate amount of US\$3.3 million. One of those invitations was to support research, technological development, and innovation projects that would make use of the infrastructure and services of the National Academic Advanced Technology Network (RENATA), with the aim of promoting that tool in strengthening the collaborative and cooperative capacities of institutes of higher education, research centers, and universities.

Another of the initiatives was to support projects for the development of information and communications technology (ICT) applications for groups of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) belonging to productive chains, in order to create innovations in products, services, or business processes that would improve those companies' productivity and competitiveness. The initiative seeks to assist the technological development of the Colombian productive sector, by funding projects involving technological innovations, adoptions, and transfers, with emphasis on the implementation of ICTs by Colombian SMEs, and to encourage the forging of alliances between the productive sector, universities, and technological development centers, in order to help resolve problems or overcome technological shortcomings that have been fully identified within the productive sector.

At the same time, since ICTs are one of the most promising sectors for the country, improving competitiveness requires the use of software quality models that will enable it to participate in increasingly demanding international markets. As a result, during 2007 an invitation was issued for supporting the national capacity for software quality. The aims of this include strengthening the national software sector and related services by creating the Colombian Software Quality Network, training human talent and awarding specialized SEI certifications, expanding the number of companies with CMMI ratings, training human resources in this specific area, and developing national and/or regional projects involving the implementation of the CMMI model, adapted to the needs of SMEs.

At the same time, the use of information and communications technologies facilitates flows and exchanges of information between state agencies and allows the construction of a new model for interactions with the state, which can change citizens' perceptions of the single state.

As a part of the Online Government Strategy, a Government Intranet comprising two major components has been developed: the first of these, called Technological Infrastructure, offers a solution based on networks, data centers, and contact centers; the second component, called the Interoperability Platform,

comprises a set of standards and policies and a group of computer-based solutions group together in a transactional core.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Innovation, and Science Teaching Quality

The 2006–10 National Development Plan establishes guidelines for the medium-term in the areas of science, technology, and innovation (STI), for the members of the National Science, Technology, and Innovation System (SNCTI). The STI goals in the current plan are: (1) to increase the creation of knowledge, (2) to promote innovation and productive development, (3) to encourage Colombian society to embrace STI, (4) to increase and strengthen human STI capacities, (5) to consolidate the institutionality of the National Science, Technology, and Innovation System, (6) to consolidate the infrastructure and information systems for STI, (7) to promote regional integration, and (8) to consolidate the international STI profile.

COLCIENCIAS and the National Planning Department devised the 2007–19 National Development Plan for Science, Technology, and Innovation, which crystallizes the goals of the “Vision Colombia 2019 – II Centenary Project” in this area. The document describes the mission of the National Science, Technology, and Innovation System (SNCTI) in the following terms: “Produce, disseminate, and use knowledge to further the country’s productive and social transformation in order to guarantee higher levels of competitiveness and sustainable human development.”

In addition, a discussion document, titled “Colombia Constructs and Sows the Future: National Development Policy for Research and Innovation,” was prepared. It analyzes the current situation and sets the policy objectives and strategies that the country should undertake and strengthen to make progress toward its aim of producing, disseminating, using, and incorporating knowledge to further the country’s productive and social transformation, as described in the STI 2019 Vision.

Finally, in July 2007, a bill was presented to Congress that would amend Law 29 of 1990 on Science and Technology and establish a legal framework for the development of the knowledge-based society in Colombia. This new law will give COLCIENCIAS greater powers to influence the country’s political and social decisions and ensure it a constant supply of resources through different funding mechanisms.

Creation of Business Incubators

During 2007, COLCIENCIAS funded 39 projects, currently in implementation, to support the creation of innovative technology-based companies. Funding for eight projects is planned in pursuit of this program during 2008, although other business plans are also being studied. Another study was conducted in 2007, which will serve to support the institutional strengthening of technology-based corporate incubators awarded through public invitations during 2008.

In the area of support from multilateral agencies, the Biofuel Research, Development, and Innovation Plan was designed. This enabled a cooperation agreement to be entered into with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Korean Fund for Technology and Innovation Knowledge Exchange. The IDB is also supporting the “Promoting Investment in Technology-Based Companies Program” (FINBATEC), which seeks to encourage investment in technology and development by high-tech SMEs.

Comprehensive Attention Program for Displaced Populations

In its efforts to attend comprehensively to its displaced population groups, Colombia has said that it must ensure displaced persons the effective enjoyment of their rights, and that the best way to achieve that is through the three attention phases provided for in Decree 250 of 2005.

- **Prevention and Protection**

The policy of attention for displaced population groups over the period 2002–06 has allowed the country to reduce its total number of new registrations of displaced persons every year, falling from 391,347 individuals on the Sole Displaced Population Register (RUPD) in the year 2002 to 202,718 in 2007.

This downward trend was the result of the launch of the National Development Plan, crystallizing the goal of providing democratic security by guaranteeing the presence of security forces in all Colombia's municipalities. Progress has been made in increasing the territory controlled by the state's legitimate armed forces, by implementing security and defense measures for all citizens and in all municipalities.

Efforts have also been made to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law, with the establishment of strategies to both prevent and mitigate the effects of violence on the civilian population, which is the main cause behind internal displacements. Each and every person registered in the RUPD who is facing extraordinary or extreme risks and who requests protection receives the benefit of those measures; no leaders of displaced population groups who have requested protection have suffered attacks on their persons, and only 0.26% of the protection program's beneficiaries have suffered attacks on the lives.

- **Emergency Humanitarian Attention**

Major progress has been made in the coordination of the agencies of the National System for the Comprehensive Attention of Displaced Populations (SNAIPD) responsible for ensuring displaced population groups the effective enjoyment of their rights to dignity, to physical, psychological, and moral integrity, to the family and family rights, and to minimum subsistence. Of all the displaced families registered with the RUPD, 70% have received humanitarian attention.

Notable elements include the implementation of psychosocial assistance, life plans, and job guidance projects, enabling intervention to take place not only vis-à-vis individuals, but also at the family and community levels, and seeking to re-establish individuals' emotional balance, social networks, and ability to adapt to a new context that is sometimes very different from the one they previously knew. Thus, 100,197 people are currently receiving government psychosocial support, either directly or through operators.

The programs' comprehensive nature enables families to play a leading role in their own recovery, by creating the conditions for them to overcome their difficult situations and to assume autonomous responsibility for the course of their lives.

- **Economic and Social Stabilization**

The most significant progress has been made in protecting the basic right to health. As of 2007, 918,200 displaced persons had been enrolled in the General Health Social Security System (SGSSS).

In the field of education, the resources allocated by the Ministry of Education for attending to the displaced population have increased significantly since 2003, rising from 120,651 displaced students in 2004 to 213,726 in 2007.

Following Judgment T-025 of 2004, there was a significant increase in the budget allocated for housing subsidies, benefiting a total of 82,655 households from 2004 to date. In conjunction with the above, since March 2003, 18,225 subsidies have been awarded to displaced populations by means of other processes, including the regular fund and the territorial effort competition.

As of 2007, Social Action had enrolled 249,401 displaced families in the Families in Action program, providing them with bimonthly foodstuffs and education subsidies; in addition, 47% of all displaced children and young people are covered by nutritional or child-care programs.

- **Registration and Classification**

Whereas in 2002 the RUPD contained 781,516 registrations, it had 1,589,510 in 2004 and 2,363,825 in 2007.

- **Budget and Resource Allocation**

Social Action has channeled financial, human, and technical resources from international donors: for example, the cooperation agreement reached with USAID to address the needs of the displaced population through the IOM-PADF consortium, which will allocate funds totaling US\$116 million over the period 2006–10. This money will be spent on health projects, income creation, and housing in the top 169 municipalities where displaced people are located.

Food Security Network Program (RESA)

This program has promoted 259 foodstuff production projects for domestic consumption. A total of \$165,835 million has been invested in food security projects in 1,033 municipalities throughout all the country's departments, benefiting 573,200 families (2,849,908 individuals).

The evaluation of the RESA program's impact indicates that it strengthens and enriches the domestic consumption patterns that traditionally characterize rural households, builds capacities in the fields of nutrition and health, and helps to bolster pre-existing social networks.

In general, RESA has helped ensure a permanent flow of good quality foodstuffs, thereby mitigating the risks of malnutrition and hunger. At the same time, the money saved by producing foodstuffs leads to an increase in income and, in turn, can be seen as a method of creating productive family employment.

Families in Action Program

This is a restricted subsidy program targeting SISBÉN Level I and displaced families with children aged under 18 years. It provides direct monetary support in exchange for meeting commitments, together with assistance for family health and education. The program's coverage is national, benefiting more than 1,500,000 vulnerable and displaced families, who are being enrolled into the *JUNTOS* network.

As of February 29, 2008, the Families in Action program had registered 1,743,802 families (248,546 displaced; 1,510,474 SISBÉN I; 5,517 indigenous) in 1,093 municipalities throughout the country; it was assisting 3,295,559 children belonging to SISBÉN Level I and 464,110 displaced minors.

Clear progress has been made with the implementation of the Families in Action program; important results have been attained in improving school attendance, child nutrition, inoculation coverage, and the care and control of child growth and development.

Peace and Development Program

This program works to support vulnerable, poor, and displaced population segments in rural and urban areas of regions affected by violence, reducing their risk of exposure to the conflict and mitigating the negative impact of its possible effects. Comprehensiveness has been insured in both actions and initiatives aimed at the target population by working for its acceptance and proper incorporation into the context where stabilization of both groups is to take place; projects for food security, social and cultural management, job and income creation, and improved living conditions have been made priorities.

At present, 46,842 families benefit from 439 projects in 142 municipalities belonging to eight of the country's departments, with a total investment of close to \$30,000,000 million.

Evaluations of the Peace and Development and Peace Laboratories programs indicate an increase in the monthly incomes of beneficiary households, increased individual conflict management capacities, and greater participation in bodies such as social action committees, associations, and watchdog bodies.

Attention Program for Victims of Violence

This program provides two forms of assistance:

- Economic support for the families of terrorism victims: Assistance is awarded in the amount of 40 smmlv (at the applicable value for the year in which the incident takes place) to persons who are permanently disabled or who have family members killed in terrorist acts. Between 2003 and February 2008, a total of \$432,598 million was spent.
- Emergency humanitarian assistance for terrorist acts: Humanitarian assistance and economic support for members of the civilian population affected by violent actions whose property is damaged or destroyed. This consists of assistance in the amount of two times the smmlv in force in the year in which the incident occurs; it also facilitates loans through subsidized solidarity credits extended to persons engaged in commerce or industry. Between 2003 and February 2008, a total of \$20,757 million was spent.

Since the first period of the current government, 60,908 families have benefited from these two forms of support, for a total amount of \$443,588 million.

Finally, Decree 1290, on individual redress through administrative channels for the victims of outlawed organized armed groups, was enacted. Its purpose is to provide comprehensive attention for such persons by regulating the way the state can offer redress through administrative reconciliation channels, which offer advantages such as the speed with which redress and attention are given.

- Relocation of Bojayá: In 2003 the government began immediate work for the comprehensive recovery of the municipality of Bojayá following the attack it suffered on May 2, 2002, when FARC guerrillas threw a gas cylinder while engaged in combat with the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.

Later, Social Action led the Bojayá relocation process to protect the inhabitants from the risks and consequences of the constant flooding of the Río Atrato. The relocation is now known as Nueva Bellavista; the resettlement was handed over on October 13, 2007, with a total investment of close to US\$17 million. The work implied not only relocating the town, but also launching a series of social projects supported by programs such as the Food Security Network, Income Creation, donations, Families in Action, etc. Additionally, the *JUNTOS* interinstitutional strategy for overcoming extreme poverty is to be carried out, with Bojayá as one of the pilot municipalities.

Infrastructure Program

This is another mechanism for benefiting the vulnerable segments of the country's population. Over the period 2006–07, through the Reconstructing Municipalities strategy, 24 works projects with a total investment of \$3,882 million were contracted. Over the same period, through the Works for Peace strategy, 80 infrastructure projects were contracted, covering electrification, roadworks on the tertiary network, basic sanitation, and basic social infrastructure, with an investment of \$10,140 million and benefiting communities in 29 departments and 44 municipalities.

Alternative Development

- **Presidential Program Against Illicit Crops (PCI)**

The PCI implements the voluntary manual eradication and forced manual eradication strategies. The voluntary manual eradication strategy is carried out by the Gamekeeper Families Program (PFGB) and the Productive Projects Program (PPP), which encourage a return to legality and offer new rural development options to improve the living standards of beneficiary communities.

In turn, the forced manual eradication strategy, pursued by the Mobile Eradication Group (GME), is a compliment to the activities of the alternative development programs (PFGB and PPP): it controls the entry of illicit crops into rural economic areas and natural reserves and parks, and it conducts strategic interventions in areas where aerial spraying and alternative development are not viable.

In 2007 a total of 219,949 hectares of illicit crops were eradicated, 2% more than in 2006. Of the 219,950 ha eradicated, manual eradication accounted for 66,816, with aerial spraying accounting for 153,134. Of the total area eradicated, 99.8% was used for coca cultivation, with poppy and marijuana plantations accounting for only 0.2%; in spite of this, however, there has been a notable reduction in poppy cultivation in the country.

Since 2002, the PFGB has kept an area of almost 2.3 million hectares free of illicit crops, while conserving 282,588 ha of woodland and restoring another 53,477. This achievement involved enrolling more than 88,488 families with an estimated investment of \$452,700 million. In addition, 111 social organizations have been created and strengthened, experiences have been exchanged regarding the use of land for farming, 102 municipal governments and 19 departmental governments have been involved, and savings among the beneficiaries in the amount of \$45,200 million have been accrued for the implementation of productive projects.

The chief aim of the PPP is to establish self-sustainable and profitable productive projects and thereby benefit the vulnerable population affected by, or at risk of being affected by, illicit crops; it also benefits rural, Afro-Colombian, indigenous, displaced, and demobilized populations. Through agreements reached with the UNODC, the National Federation of Coffee Producers, PADF, MIDAS, and ADAM, almost 87,000 ha have been planted with legal crops and 63,279 families have benefited from 689 productive projects that promote good agricultural practices and entrepreneurial social development.

- **CICAD Efforts**

In order to comply with the mandate of the Summit of the Americas, the Secretariat of CICAD assessed the possibility of participating in alternative development projects and concluded that it would concentrate on identifying specific activities to boost the initiatives taken by other agencies and countries in the area with a view to replicating their best practices.

At the 42nd Regular Session of CICAD, held in Colombia, the commissioners received basic information to help them understand the alternative development problem; they also evaluated the region's experiences, and several delegations presented their own particular experiences.

The 43rd Regular Session of CICAD adopted the terms of reference and work plan for the Group of Experts in Alternative Development, which will meet in Lima, Peru, during the second half of 2008. It is important to reinforce the commitment of the Quebec City Summit toward facilitating market access by the products of the alternative development programs being carried out in those countries committed to replacing illicit crops.

Security

Democratic Security Consolidation Policy (PCSD)

The successful implementation of the Democratic Security Policy between 2002 and 2006 created a new security context in the country, characterized chiefly by the establishment of an unprecedented level of territorial control by the security forces, the elimination of paramilitary activity as a national phenomenon, and a substantial reduction in general crime rates across the country.

The illegal organizations that were threatening the security of Colombian citizens were fiercely attacked and weakened. However, in order to avoid their extinction, groups such as the FARC, the ELN, the new criminal gangs created by paramilitary demobilizations, drug trafficking organizations, and organized crime groups adopted new tactics and strategies to guarantee their survival and remain a threat to the security of the state and population.

Given this new strategic context, the Ministry of National Defense (MDN) designed the Democratic Security Consolidation Policy (PCSD) which will be implemented in accordance with the following principles: (i) ensuring security and peace, (ii) acting with legality, (iii) maintaining a permanent presence, (iv) promoting security as a guarantor of justice, (v) promoting security as a generator of economic growth and social profitability, (vi) remaining flexible and adaptable, (vii) ensuring coordination amongst forces, (viii) coordinating with other state agencies.

Based on these implementation principles, the PCSD sets five strategic objectives:

- I. Consolidating territorial control and strengthening the rule of law throughout the nation.
- II. Protecting the population, by maintaining the strategic initiative against all threats to citizens' security.
- III. Dramatically raising the costs of drug trafficking activities in Colombia.
- IV. Maintaining legitimate, modern, and effective security forces that enjoy the trust and support of the population.
- V. Maintaining the downward trend in all crime rates in the country's urban areas.

Fight Against Terrorism and Drug Trafficking

The official strategy for countering the illicit drugs trade is based on combating illegal groups, reducing demand for psychotropic substances, weakening the economic structure of the drugs trade, and pursuing the interdiction of illegal drugs (supply reduction, destruction of infrastructure, arrests, detection of trafficking, and seizures).

At the international level and within a framework of joint responsibility, a comprehensive and balanced fight against the global drugs problem and related crimes, and the promotion of international cooperation at the bilateral, regional, multilateral, and biregional levels.

The security forces achieved important results thanks to a change in their doctrine or focus that gave preference to joint operations between the armed forces and the National Police and, most particularly, thanks to the strengthening of intelligence, which enabled them to penetrate inside terrorist groups and criminal organizations.

The result was the breakdown of the terrorist organizations: leaders fell; 5,483 members of the FARC, ELN, and criminal gangs were captured; 2,703 were killed; and 3,025 members of those groups were

demobilized. The main indicator of the success of the antiterrorism effort is the recovery of territorial control and the dismantling of the structures that previously sought control of those regions.

The FARC's funding has also been affected, since they are losing their role as a link between cocaine production and trafficking thanks to the presence of the security forces in strategic areas. In addition, during 2007, Colombia destroyed 3,123 drug-processing laboratories – 2,875 for the production of cocaine paste and base, 9% for cocaine hydrochloride, and the remaining 2% for potassium permanganate and heroin – representing losses of between 1 and 3 million dollars for that terrorist organization.

At the same time, between January and December 2007, the Colombian authorities seized 131 ton of cocaine hydrochloride, 175 tons of marijuana, and 584 kg of heroin.

In addition, kidnapping – another major source of funding – has been drastically reduced, and the cells dedicated to that criminal activity are systematically being brought to justice. In 2007, the number of kidnappings fell by 24% compared to 2006, falling from 687 to 521.

Through the country's eradication efforts, during 2007 a total of 219,949 ha of illicit crops were eradicated, 2% more than in 2006. Of the 219,950 hectares eradicated, manual eradication accounted for 66,816 ha, with aerial spraying accounting for 153,134 ha. There was also a 54% increase in the hectares of coca plantations that were manually eradicated (66,396). This increase was the result of a shift in government policy to tackle changes in the operating methods of coca growers: in response to the spraying policy, growers now plant smaller areas that are located far from the spraying bases and are frequently within the confines of natural parks.

This policy is also in line with the two main focuses of UN Security Council Resolution 1373: fighting the funding of terrorism, and denying them all active or passive protection, including preventing terrorists or terrorist groups from traveling through the nation's territory. Colombia is in full compliance with this resolution. It has also repeatedly made requests for other states parties to strictly observe its provisions.

Specifically, and in line with that resolution, Colombia enacted Law 1121 of December 29, 2006, "Adopting provisions for the prevention, detection, investigation, and punishment of the funding of terrorism," which is enforced in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion by a series of national agencies.

Security and Transparency Needs

Given the challenges that the PCSD set the security forces, for the period 2007–10 the MDN will have a budget of \$57.9 billion, of which \$50.3 billion will come from resources already approved in the Medium Term Spending Framework (MGMP) and the remaining \$7.54 billion will be government-approved special resources.

- **MGMP 2007–10 Investment Plan:** 63.75% of the investment budget will be used to strengthen the ground and air capabilities of the security forces; 14.88% will be used to strengthen the naval and river-going capabilities of the Navy; and the remaining 21.36% will be channeled into projects for strengthening intelligence, command and control, boosting human development, strengthening logistics, improving physical infrastructure, and strengthening research and development.
- **2007–10 Investment Plan, funded with additional resources from the state budget:** Of the budget total, \$3.67 billion (48.35%) will be invested in mobility, intelligence, and the maintenance of strategic capacities; 6.61% of the funds will be used to strengthen weaponry, materiel, and operating infrastructure; 37.33% is for the activation and operation of troops over the coming four years; and

the remaining 7.71% will be used to cover the operating costs of new equipment, comprehensive action, and other sectoral programs.

- **Financial Process for Resource Execution:** Given the magnitude of the effort to be made and the need for all its processes to be externally transparent, a proposal has been made for the creation of an Ethics and Transparency Commission, to be defined by the Minister of Defense National and to be responsible, over a period of four years, for the permanent monitoring of the resources allocated to the defense and security sectors, for generating early warnings, and for suggesting corrective measures when necessary.

Additional efforts will be made to ensure the involvement of the state's oversight agencies and of civil society organizations to assist in ensuring the transparency of the process.

In compliance with Resolution 62/13, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 5, 2007, on "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures," Colombia submitted information on its military spending in the 2007 financial year to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. Similarly, in compliance with Resolution 61/77, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 6, 2006, and dealing with transparency in armaments, Colombia will be submitting information on a matter to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs within the prescribed deadline.

Drug Trafficking, Related Crimes, and Money Laundering

Regulatory Developments

Law 1165 of 2007 was enacted, approving the "Cooperation Agreement for the Prevention, Control, and Suppression of Money Laundering Derived from Any Illicit Activity between Colombia and Peru," signed in 2004.

Similarly, Law 1179 of 2007 approved the "Additional Protocol to the Agreement for Legal Cooperation in Criminal Matters between Colombia and Spain, of May 1997," signed in 2005.

At the same time, understanding the need to prevent and combat the manufacturing and illicit trafficking of firearms and seeking to sanction such actions with punishments in line with their seriousness, Law 1142 of 2007 was enacted. This statute increases to prison terms of four and eight years, respectively, the minimum and maximum punishments for the crime of manufacturing, trafficking in, and carrying firearms and ammunition, and it prohibits the use of house arrest instead of preventive custody for the crimes of manufacturing, trafficking in, and carrying firearms or ammunition for personal use when concurrent with the crime of conspiracy or when the accused has previous convictions for the same offences, for manufacturing, trafficking in, and carrying weapons and ammunition restricted to the armed forces, and for the crime of manufacturing, importing, trafficking in, possessing, and using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

Promoting Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation

As a part of its bilateral cooperation efforts, Colombia has held Mixed Drugs Commissions with Brazil (2007 and 2008) and with Peru (2007), and these have dealt with cooperation strategies addressing all aspects of the global drugs problem.

Within the framework of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and led by Colombia, follow-up on cooperation commitments and programs was carried out; the Andean Alternative Development Committee (CADA) and the Executive Committee of the Andean Drugs Strategy were convened; and

cooperation within the framework of joint responsibility with the EU under both the EU-ALC and EU-CAN mechanisms was reviewed.

Within the CICAD framework, Colombia cooperates with the region's countries, particularly through the Group of Experts on Money Laundering, on topics relating to asset management and the law governing forfeiture of ownership; in addition, Colombia coordinates the hemispheric training program in the area of controlling traffic in illicit drugs and the chemicals used in their extraction and refining. In January 2008, the first seminar workshop on the proper handling and disposal of seized chemicals was held in the city of Buga (Colombia); the second workshop will be held in Panama City in April 2008, with the participation of Colombian experts.

Colombia also continues to support the illicit drug and chemical control programs of various National Coordination Agencies in the hemisphere. During 2007 support was given to Panama's CONAPRED and to Mexico's Federal Preventive Police (PFP) and Federal Investigations Agency (AFI) on technical matters related to controlled substances. Work is also underway on a training program for the proper handling of chemicals, preliminary analyses, and criminalistic testing, intended for government officials from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with the support of that country's National Antidrug Organization. Work is also underway with the Ministry of Justice and Police of the Republic of Suriname on training in the control of illegal drugs and chemicals for that country's oversight officials. In 2008, training events are planned with Jamaica and Haiti, as is an exchange of experiences and case studies with Brazil.

In March 2007, Colombia participated at the Summit on Drugs, Security, and Cooperation, which set the framework for close collaboration among countries in tackling the global drugs problem. Between July 30 and August 1, 2008, Colombia will conduct follow-up on this process, by means of an expanded summit with all the countries of Central America and the Caribbean, plus Mexico and Venezuela, which will seek to define a Plan of Action for addressing the global drugs problem in the Caribbean Basin in a coordinated fashion and within the framework of joint responsibility.

At the same time, progress was made with the bilateral negotiation of draft agreements for legal cooperation on criminal matters with Switzerland and the Russian Federation.

In the area of mutual legal assistance between the CIFTA states parties, Colombia has been dealing with the legal assistance requests submitted to it by other members and it has similarly asked the other states for their cooperation.

In the fight against related offenses, particularly noteworthy is the evaluation that Colombia is undergoing in the areas of money laundering and the funding of terrorism by GAFISUD as part of its mutual evaluation program.

Control of Precursor Chemicals

This is a project led by the Senior Presidential Council for Competitiveness and Productivity that began in October 2007. With the participation of various state agencies, this project seeks to streamline the different processes required for a Certificate of No Drug Trafficking Reports to be issued. In addition to improving and amending the procedures currently in force for issuing such permits, it will involve channels of communication and methods for participation that will allow more effective controls over the possible diversion of chemicals from legitimate industries to illegal ends.

Another project was submitted to the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism seeking the implementation of a prior authorization mechanism for exports of controlled chemicals; this will enable

development of the prenotification process for those transactions, as required by Article 12 of the 1988 United Nations Vienna Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Work is currently underway toward the development of the regulatory draft that will support the execution of the mechanism, together with the technical activities necessary for its practical implementation through the Foreign Trade Single Window (VUCE).

Colombia is still the country with the highest volume of seizures of chemicals used in illegal drug production: the 2006 totals were 4,016,000 kg of solids and 7,695,957 liters of liquid 2006, unprecedented figures in the country's history.

Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation

Through the Drug Use and Impact Prevention Policy, the country is pursuing a series of prevention, treatment, and research actions within the framework of multilateral cooperation.

In the research area, it receives technical assistance from CICAD/OAS for studies into drug use and, in 2004, it adopted CICAD's SIDUC methodology for studies of this kind. At present, under the leadership of the Drugs Observatory of Colombia, the DNE and the Ministry of Social Welfare are conducting a study among the general population in coordination with UNODC and CICAD.

In addition, since 2007, Colombia has been a part of the Subregional Drug Information and Research System, along with Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Argentina; a group that promotes the development and strengthening of drug-use research methods.

With the support of UNODC and Spain's National Drugs Plan, the Decentralization and Territorial Strengthening Project is underway, which assists the work of the country's Departmental Drug Prevention Committees by promoting various projects and strategies.

In the field of prevention, CICAD is supporting implementation of a program targeting school students based on the guidelines formulated by that agency; it is also assisting the development of the Workplace Consumption Prevention Program based on the Chilean model, which is also supported by Chile's CONACE.

Additionally, at the 42nd meeting of CICAD held in November 2007 in the city of Santa Marta, Colombia assumed the chair of the Commission for a one-year period. The policy of offering training to other countries continued, and this will take place during 2008 (Haiti, Suriname, Venezuela, etc).

Also worthy of note is the Joint Responsibility Campaign, led by the office of the Vice President of the Republic of Colombia, which seeks to raise the awareness of the world's users of cocaine hydrochloride regarding the collateral damage that their habit causes, particularly within Colombia, where violence, terrorism, and corruption are funded by this evil business.

Exchanges of Information – Drugs Observatory of Colombia (ODC)

In order to strengthen the ODC, over the past year a series of contacts were made with the national observatories of the CAN member countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru) to exchange information on various areas within the framework of the CAN–EU–LA meeting. Contact was also made with the European Drugs Observatory to obtain support and advice regarding a series of demand reduction studies.

By strengthening the ODC, Colombia more efficiently discharges its commitments with the national and international communities, and with multilateral agencies and embassies, by providing objective, reliable, continuous, updated, and comparable information on the drugs problem and related offences.

Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism – MEM

In March 2007, the preparatory meeting of the MEM's Intergovernmental Working Group (Pre-GTI) was held, which reviewed the entire MEM process to be followed during the Fifth Round of Evaluation (2007–08). At that meeting, Colombia proposed changes to the indicators for all the Questionnaire topics. During 2008, the CICAD's MEM Unit will gather together all the proposals from the Pre-GTI meeting and will prepare the documents and indicators for approval in early 2009 at the Meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group.

At the 42nd regular session of CICAD, 34 national reports were assessed and approved, and these will be submitted to the OAS General Assembly in June 2008. MEM is progressing toward the second phase of the fourth round of drug control evaluation.

It fell to the 43rd meeting of CICAD, held in Washington in May 2008, to approve the Hemispheric Report, which offers a diagnosis of the region's efforts in combating the global drugs problem. This document will allow national antidrug policies to be directed with a continental perspective, and will strengthen the regional strategy for national and multilateral cooperation toward solving this common problem.

Estimate of the Social, Human, and Economic Costs of the Drugs Problem in the Americas

The National Narcotics Board (DNE), together with other government agencies, continued with the drafting of the proposal on determining the social, human, and economic costs of enforcing the Illegal Drug Supply Reduction Strategy.

Similarly, during 2007, the DNE and the National Planning Department worked together on quantifying the direct costs of the Colombian state's antidrug efforts.

Extradition Mechanism

During 2007, a total of 275 extradition requests for drug trafficking and money laundering were received; of these, four were denied and 218 – an unprecedented number in the country's history – were approved. Noteworthy among the requests approved were 207 extraditions to the United States (199 Colombians, two Venezuelans, one Dominican, one U.S. citizen, one Ecuadorian, one Guatemalan, one Mexican, and one Cuban).

Combating Illicit Trafficking in Firearms

Colombia ratified the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA) on February 5, 2003, which then came into force in March 2003. Similarly, within the framework of the Andean Community, on June 25, 2003, Colombia adopted Decision 552 of the Andean Council of Foreign Ministers.

For the effective enforcement of these documents, by means of Decree 4508, issued on December 19, 2006, Colombia created the National Coordination Committee for the Prevention, Combat, and Eradication of Illegal Trafficking in All Aspects of Small and Light Weapons. The membership of this committee is broad, since Colombia tackles the problem of illegal arms trafficking from a comprehensive and crosscutting perspective.

The functions of the TIA Committee include designing a National Action Plan to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate Illicit Trafficking in All Aspects of Small and Light Weapons, and guiding policies, research, and monitoring related to the proliferation, control, and trafficking of small and light firearms. It is also planned that this committee will unify the databases existing in the country that deal with weapons of this

kind, particularly as regards internal exchanges of information between the different authorities in order to consolidate the illicit weapon information that exists; exchanges of experiences with representatives of civil society in order to consolidate strategies to prevent illegal arms trafficking; improving the oversight over legal weapons to ensure they do not enter the illegal market; and guiding citizen disarmament programs to make them sustainable over time and to contribute to a culture of peace.

Through this committee, Colombia has been receiving international cooperation from the United Nations Office Against Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under the aegis of a project called “Prevention of and combat against the manufacturing and illegal trafficking of firearms and ammunition as a tool to prevent crime and promote a culture of peace in Colombia.”

Under this agreement, given the priority assigned to it by the TIA Committee, three courses were held during 2007. By March 2008, another course had been held. The topics covered by these courses includes areas such as: human security; applicable legal instruments; investigation and intelligence; movements of firearms, munitions, and explosives; identification of firearms; and custody.

The purpose of these courses is to develop human capital: in other words, to build to the capacities of government agency officials, at both the central and decentralized levels, who are either directly or indirectly involved with the illegal trading and trafficking of firearms, in order to improve the state’s response to those two phenomena.

In addition, Colombia has a regulatory framework that oversees production, exports, imports, and transshipments; in addition, the country criminalizes the importing, trafficking, manufacture, transportation, storage, distribution, sale, supply, repair, or carrying of personal defense firearms, of those restricted to the security forces, and of ammunition or explosives, by means of Articles 365 and 366 of Law 599 of 2000 (the Criminal Code). This legal framework was amended by Articles 38 and 55 of Law 1142 of 2007, which stiffened the penalties applicable to such offenses.

Multidimensional Threats to Security

Under the aegis of CICTE/OAS, the following initiatives are being developed: security of critical structure, and security at large-scale events.

Justice and the Rule of Law

Fight against Corruption

By means of Law 1150 of 2007, Colombia amended Law 80 of 1993, the General Statute for Public Administration Hiring and Contracting with Public Resources, in order to bolster efficiency and transparency. This law’s major modifications include the following: modification of the principle of objective selection, and dissemination and notification of contracting operations.

Based on these guiding principles, the following methods for the selection of state contractors were established: public bidding, abbreviated selection, merit-based competition, and direct contracting. They also provide for the possibility of public contracting through electronic channels, which enables the use of electronic media for substantiating proceedings, issuing administrative deeds, documents, contracts, and, in general, all undertakings arising from precontractual and contractual activity.

The new regime also regulates the distribution of risk in state contracts, together with objective selection based on precise criteria in order to identify the most reasonable offer for the corresponding entity.

Colombia has paid attention to its commitments acquired as a state party to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, as well as to the recommendations formulated by that Mechanism's Committee of Experts, in the design and development of a series of actions relating to transparency and the fight against corruption. In turn, the Inter-American Program of Cooperation to Prevent Corruption states that OAS member states are to continue with their technical analyses of the Convention's implementation and with following up on the implementation of the recommendations.

In this context, Colombia was analyzed in the second round of the Mechanism of Experts of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (MESICIC) during December 2007; for this, it had previously prepared and submitted its response to the questionnaire designed by the Committee of Experts, a process that involved 16 agencies of the executive branch at the national level, together with oversight and research agencies and the legislature.

During the regular meetings of the Committee of Experts held in June and December 2007, Colombia submitted its National Progress Reports, briefly setting out the measures it had adopted toward implementing the Inter-American Convention.

United Nations Convention against Corruption and Andean Anticorruption Plan

Colombia has put its name forward to participate in the second phase of the project designed by the United Nations Office Against Drugs and Crime in support of, on a provisional and volunteer basis, an examination mechanism to test possible methods for verifying the enforcement of that Convention.

At the same time, Colombia is among the Andean Community states that approved the Andean Plan to Fight Corruption and it will host the second meeting of its Executive Committee, which is expected to approve the Plan of Action for the 2008–09 period.

Civil Society Participation in the Fight against Corruption

To strengthen citizen participation in efforts to prevent corruption, Colombia has developed a series of proposals aimed at interconnecting the state and civil society and at opening up forums to enable the citizenry to participate in the social oversight of the public arena.

Thus, agencies such as the Administrative Public Function Department, the Office of the Comptroller General of the Nation, and the Presidential Anticorruption Program have designed various instruments for promoting social oversight and accountability. These include:

- National Plan for the Formation of Social Oversight of Public Administration, created pursuant to the mandate set out in Article 35 of Law 489 of 1998, which is the largest state institutional alliance for fostering citizen oversight in the country's different regions.
- Agreement between the Attorney General, Comptroller General, and Prosecutor General: The oversight and investigation agencies signed an agreement to set up, in the regions, committees to follow up on resources distributed by the central government and the General System of Participations, and to educate the citizenry regarding those issues.
- Legality Curriculum Project: This project is designed for ninth-grade students and is intended to instill in them an understanding of the importance of Legality Culture to society.
- Articulated Audits: An instrument designed by the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic, to follow up on improvement plans by means of agreements with society.

- Visible Audits: An instrument to follow-up on and monitor works projects and services in such vital areas to the community as education, health, subsidized housing, drinking water, basic sanitation, and the environment.

In pursuit of policies that involve the private sector in efforts to combat corruption, the Colombian state, through the Presidential Program for Modernization, Efficiency, Transparency, and Anticorruption, continues to promote “Self-regulation Agreements,” in which the private sector jointly decides on policies to discourage and curtail corrupt practices and also defines mechanisms and instruments for following up on and assessing those agreements.

Criminal Gangs and Related Issues

The enactment of Law 1142 of 2007 partially amended the previous rules and adopted measures for preventing and repressing criminal acts that have a particular impact on social coexistence and security.

The provisions provide tools for effectively combating punishable acts that affect social coexistence and security and for strengthening the citizens’ confidence in the administration of justice. In order to combat impunity, it was deemed necessary for individuals who commit crimes against public security and order to be incarcerated; to respond, with their own property, for the damage inflicted on their victims; and, if convicted, to serve their full sentences. To ensure coherence, some adjustments were made to Law 906 of 2004 to optimize the Accusatory System so that, in addition to the swift and effective resolution of cases, crime can be fought.

The law provides punishments for the offenses of inflicting personal harm, crimes against property in amounts of less than 150 times the minimum wage, acts of domestic violence, and offenses affecting the control of guarantees.

Also enacted was Law 1153 of 2007, which stipulates how minor criminal cases are to be dealt with. Its notable elements include:

- It introduces an expedited procedure for misdemeanors involving less than 10 times the minimum legal monthly wage (\$4.6 million), with the personal participation of the affected parties; this will ensure prompt justice is served in minor crimes with a great social impact and will enable the guilty to be brought to justice and the victims to be offered an immediate response; and,
- It strengthens alternative conflict resolution methods and enables non-custodial sentences to be imposed, such as unpaid community service or the imposition of fines to repair the damages suffered by the victim. These punishments are in line with the social harm caused by the offence and their purpose is essentially that of social rehabilitation and redress.
- As regards attacks on the person, it sets out the provisions governing misdemeanors involving willful bodily harm that leave the victim incapacitated for less than 30 days and leave no after-effects.
- It includes misdemeanors involving the consumption of narcotics or addictive substances in the presence of minors and the consumption of those substances in educational establishments, adjacent locations, and the homes of minors. Such actions are punishable by periods of unpaid community service and fines.
- Under this proposal, other actions – such as violations of religious freedom, false self-incrimination, and failures in professional duty – are classified as misdemeanors and are punishable by between one and 10 times the current legal minimum monthly wage. In political and criminal terms, given their low level of seriousness, it was decided that these actions should not be considered crimes or prosecuted by means of the procedure set out in Law 906 of 2004.

Democracy and Civil Society

Improving Citizen Participation in Public Life

Colombia, through its Connectivity Agenda Program, is pursuing its E-Government Strategy, with the aim of building a state that is more efficient, more transparent, more and participatory, and that provides its citizens and companies with better services by taking advantage of information and communications technologies. This will lead to a more competitive productive sector, a modern public administration, and the community that is better informed and has better instruments for participation. Three lines of action have been established for the implementation of the E-Government Strategy – better services, state transparency and citizen participation, and state efficiency – and these are to be pursued within the three branches of government (executive, legislature, and judiciary) and at the three territorial levels (national, departmental, and municipal).

At various forums attended by several countries – such as the Puebla Panama Plan, RedGEALC, eLAC, etc. – and at different conferences, Colombia has shared not only its approach to the topic of electronic government, but also its specific experiences with implementation.

Active Democracy Project

Colombia is a part of the Active Democracy Project, a two-phase initiative initially known as Citizen Participation in the Summits of the Americas and then, in its second phase, as the Strategy for Civil Society Follow-up of the Plan of Action of Quebec City and Mar del Plata.

At the hemispheric level, this project is coordinated by the PARTICIPA Corporation of Chile, in alliance with Canada's FOCAL and Venezuela's INVESP; in Colombia, the second phase is overseen by the PRESENCIA Foundation.

The project seeks to inform public opinion in general and civil society organizations about the nature of the Summits of the Americas process, the commitments that the region's governments acquire at those meetings, and how they relate to the countries' development and the everyday life of their citizens. It also seeks to influence, in a responsible and civic fashion, compliance with the commitments acquired by the governments and their degree of implementation.

This project, backed by resources allocated by the Special Multilateral Fund of CIDI (FEMCIDI), is being carried out in a total of 24 countries around North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean. It seeks to expand and strengthen the hemispheric network of civil society organizations, and to provide them with more and better tools and information for influencing improvements in the implementation of and compliance with the mandates of the Summits of the Americas in the fields of access to information, freedom of expression, local governments and decentralization, and strengthening civil society participation.

To follow up on these topics, Chile's PARTICIPA Corporation has coordinated the preparation of a specific methodology to be applied by the working groups in each country, which will then produce national reports containing specific practical recommendations for the governments and establish an Government Compliance Index (GCI), which will then serve as the benchmark for the hemispheric report on the project. In addition, each national team has been called on to forge national alliances between civil society organizations and government, in order to make further progress with implementing the Summit mandates. The national reports will be collated in a general report for submission to the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

Based on this methodology, the PRESENCIA Foundation has defined a timetable that includes holding a series of forums with the participation of different players from civil society, and it hopes to deliver the national report in April 2008.

Work and Employment

Building the Capacities of Labor Ministries and Generating Information on Labor Markets

The projects being pursued by the Ministry of Social Welfare (MPS) in the areas of policies, information, labor rights, and social dialogue in the job market over the 2006–10 period include the following investment projects: “Technical assistance for the promotion of decent work,” “Technical assistance for businesses and micro productive units of vulnerable women workers in Colombia,” “Design of productivity systems and promotion of basic workplace rights for vulnerable working populations, through prevention, focusing, and monitoring at the national level: Bogotá,” “Technical assistance and characterization of labor markets,” “Dissemination and promotion of basic workplace rights in Colombia,” “Technical assistance for modernizing and optimizing the inspection, oversight, and control system, with dissemination of labor regulations, targeting employers and workers in the formal, informal, and vulnerable sectors,” “Technical assistance for the creation and launch of employment observatories at the national level,” “Eradication of the worst forms of child labor and transformation of the cultural patterns that legitimize it,” and “Prevention of child labor and protection of young workers at the national level.”

Similarly, the MPS is working to strengthen the Labor Market Observatories (OML), a strategy for generating information, studies, and analyses about job markets and for consolidating them as points of support for formulating of job creation policies. This strategy entails:

- Technically supporting and strengthening the OMLs that are operating in the cities of Bucaramanga, Manizales, Pereira, Ibagué, Armenia, and Santa Marta. Launching OMLs in the remaining nine metropolitan identified by the Integrated Household Survey, namely: Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Montería, Villavicencio, Pasto, and Cúcuta; additionally, establishing an OML in Quibdó. Creating an information system with the OMLs’ component modules (demographics, job market, education and training, economy, labor laws, employment programs, temporary service companies, public and private employment agencies).

Balanced Pay

According to the regulations governing public employment, pay depends on the position held and not on gender. Thus, full earnings equality between the genders exists in the sector. At the same time, programs and projects are in place to increase the income of the most vulnerable women. Examples of this are the projects “Implementation of job creation programs for poor women at the national level” and “Technical assistance for businesses and micro productive units of vulnerable women workers in Colombia.”

Reducing the Level of Unregistered Work

In the country’s 13 metropolitan areas, the informal employment rate has fallen from 61.3% in 2002 to 56.6% in 2007. At the same time, the number of individuals enrolled in the health system increased from 2,161,320 in 2002 to 7,746,692 in 2007.

Membership of Family Compensation Funds (CCFs) has also increased significantly, from 1,916,908 in 2002 to 5,340,618 in 2007. This is evidence of the progressive formalization of employment.

Colombia's labor inspection, oversight, and control system has been modernized, with the appointment of 207 new officers. Using the Integrated Social Security Contribution Sheet (PILA), contributors are assisted in making combined payments into social security and other contribution schemes, by means of electronic fund transfers. The PILA was regulated by means of Decree 1670 of 2007.

Gradual Formalization of Employment

In Colombia, formal employment is defined by the DANE in terms of company size rather than by employees' working conditions. Company size, however, appears to bear a close correlation with workers' insurance status and with the companies' compliance with regulations.

The current targets are intended to cover the working population's insurance needs and to guarantee them decent working conditions. The National Planning Department is helping redefine the indicators for employment informality and job quality and, additionally, it will evaluate the incentives system under the current Protection System in order to take the steps necessary to bring about the gradual incorporation of those sectors of the population currently not protected.

In this context, the domestic service sector has required specific actions to successfully enroll individuals who work, on an independent or salaried basis, in that industry into the Social Protection System, to regulate their social protection, and to ensure them access to all the benefits provided by law.

Social Protection Systems

In 2007, the health system covered 95% of workers in the formal sector and 78% in the informal sector; the figures are increasing toward compliance with the universal coverage targets. Membership of Professional Risk Administrators totaled almost 6 million in 2007. Similarly, there has been a major increase in the number of workers enrolled in Family Compensation Funds, reaching almost 5 million in 2007.

Pension coverage has increased among both formal and informal workers. The latter group, however, reports very low coverage rates, meaning that a large proportion of workers are not covered by social security pensions. In 2007, according to the Household Survey, 79.3% of formal workers were affiliated to the pension scheme, while at the same time only 14.7% of informal workers were affiliated.

To address this need for expanded pension coverage, strategies have been designed that entail the implementation of mechanisms to promote insurance for workers and for companies.

The DNP, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit, is working on a strategy to implement Periodic Economic Benefit (BEP) mechanisms for the population without coverage. These BEPs would seek to compensate the working population not affiliated to the Social Protection System's pension schemes, to benefit those workers who do not meet the requirements for receiving a minimum pension upon retirement, and to guarantee, with the exceptions provided for in law, that no pension is worth less than the current legal minimum monthly wage.

1. Active Labor Market Policies

1.1 Local Business Management Initiatives Program (ILE)

Designed by the MPS with technical cooperation assistance from the government of Spain, this program's chief aim is the creation of productive and stable jobs by promoting, encouraging, and supporting

initiatives that generate productive employment and creating companies that produce goods and/or services that make use of resources currently unused or underutilized in a given locality. It entails a joint effort by the community and the authorities.

In order to continue with the ILE program in 2007, Operational Support Plan (POA) technical documents for the program were prepared in each of the six territories where the first phase of the program had been concluded. During 2008, the second phase will be completed in those territories, while the first phase will be implemented in the department of Chocó and in new municipalities in the department of Tolima.

Along with the implementation of the ILE program's second phase, a program support strategy was developed by designing a funding proposal for ILE business projects. The result of this effort was the document "Strategies for Funding Local Business Management Initiatives (ILE)," which will be presented to the various public authorities and private and social agencies in the six territories where the first and second phases of the ILE Program were launched.

1.2 Associated Work Cooperatives

In the area of solidary economics, the National Registry of Associated Work Pre-Cooperatives and Cooperatives was established, based on the compensations, labor and benefits, and social security regimes registered, deposited, and approved at the regional offices of Ministry of Social Welfare (MPS); in 2007, this gave a total of 737 cooperatives and 35 pre-cooperatives, with 15,143 members and 2,403 employees.

In 2006, Decree 4588 enacted regulations to govern the organization and operation of Associated Work Pre-Cooperatives and Cooperatives; these regulations ratified the simultaneous control mechanism and empowered the MPS to conduct supervision and inspection through its Special Labor Inspection, Oversight, and Control Unit and its offices throughout the country.

1.3 Inclusion of the Employment Variable in the 2006–10 National Development Plan

Employment variables are included through the inclusion of the job creation strategies promoted by the MPS in the new 2006–10 National Development Plan, together with the Regional Employment Observatories program, the Local Job Promotion Initiatives (ILEs), and the Regional Employment Pacts. Their subsequent development, in Law 1151 of 2007, provides instructions and tools for the implementation of these actions.

2. Fighting Discrimination

2.1 Youth Unemployment

The goals of the Youth in Action and Rural Youth programs are directly related to this. These programs are designed to cater for young people, the segment of the population most affected by unemployment. They target of the poorest sectors of the youth population, since one of the requirements for participation is classification at levels 1 and 2 of the Benefits System (SISBÉN) – those with the lowest levels of economic resources.

Similarly, agreements have been forged with the productive sector to involve students in training for various productive activities and thereby facilitate their incorporation into the job market; this assists young people in securing their first jobs and in acquiring experience and training.

During 2008, a study will be conducted to review and update the conditions under which they enter the labor market, the informal economy, and odd-jobbing, together with the productive and income-earning activities where the most vulnerable young workers, aged between 15 and 26, are employed. The aim is to identify how support can be given to entrepreneurship, employability, and development of single-person

productive initiatives for young vulnerable workers, and how to provide that segment of the population with alternative possibilities.

2.2 Disabled People

In pursuit of the commitments set out in the 2003–06 National Development Plan, “Toward a Community State,” and in the 2006–10 Development Plan, the country is implementing the 2007–10 National Disability Framework Plan, continuing with the public policy for disabilities launched in the past. Within national agencies, sectoral and intersectoral actions are being pursued to restore, uphold, and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the United Nations Standard Rules.

The objectives of the Disability Framework Plan for this four-year period (2006–10) are the following:

- Transforming perceptions of disabilities and consolidating the public policy construction process.
- Harmonizing actions, institutionalizing the plan in national and territorial agencies, and ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their right to education and to the development of skills, with emphasis on children.

Based on the National Disability Framework Plan, Colombia has been drawing up a national action plan to provide comprehensive, crosscutting responses to the chief needs of persons with disabilities in the aspiration of establishing state policies based on an integrated outlook that will enable structural solutions for managing disabilities to be identified within a framework of civic rights and duties, decentralization, and community participation.

Notable government actions during this period to crystallize the rights of the country’s disabled people and to make progress with the planning and social participation mechanisms include the following:

2.2.1 Health and Social Security

According to consolidated 2008 figures from the DANE’s Single Register, the health coverage rate among disabled people is 69.7%; in other words, approximately 30.3% of the disabled population are not covered by the system, and the situation is even more critical in certain regions.

To ensure Colombia’s disabled people access to health services and social security and coverage, the National Health and Social Security Council (CNSSSS) has included, in the Obligatory Individual Attention Plans of both the subsidized and contributing regimes, actions to promote health, prevent disease, and regain health, particularly rehabilitation services and the provision of technical aids for the disabled, on a nondiscriminatory basis.

2.2.2 Community Based Rehabilitation (RBC)

The “Strategy for the Rehabilitation, Equality of Opportunities, Reduction of Poverty, and Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities” (RBC) is a strategy executed in and by the community, and is intended to interconnect the responsibilities of all those government sectors involved in attending to disabilities. Through this strategy, the Ministry of Social Welfare has given technical support to all the territorial agencies, and the strategy has been validated through national meetings held every two years and through the interconnected technical assistance provided by different government agencies at the national level.

2.2.3 Education

The Ministry of National Education, together with the departmental and municipal education secretariats and institutes of education, are responsible for ensuring that disabled people's right to education is a reality. Through the policy of integrating disabled people into the country's formal education system, the aim is to create an inclusive education system that respects and appreciates the differences between people and provides them with equal opportunities for human and social development. In those cases in which such integration is not possible, the state must also guaranteed access to special education programs of the same quality throughout the person's life.

2.2.4 Integration into Employment

In the business sector, Colombia has promoted regional and local incentives for the hiring of people with disabilities, and it has encouraged the creation of productive projects for disabled people and their families.

The SENA offers people with disabilities opportunities for training, entrepreneurship, and labor intermediation, with the aim of improving their standards of living and employability. In addition, in line with the strategic plan, strategies have been created so that increasing numbers of people with disabilities can enjoy access to the services it provides, by creating synergies and alliances with such national agencies as the National Institute for the Blind (INCI), National Institute for the Deaf (INSOR), the offices of the President and Vice President of the Republic, foundations, associations of blind and deaf people, etc.

2.2.5 Job Skill Certification for Individuals with Learning Disabilities

A total of 230 young people with slight learning disabilities received certifications in the areas of customer service, baking, surface sanitization, and food handling.

In the area of professional training, in conjunction with the Best Buddies – ALKOSTO Foundation, a pilot training program, called warehouse and storeroom assistants, is to be carried out; other vocational workshops for these segments of the population have been designed in conjunction with the PROACTIVA Foundation.

Other efforts in pursuit of disabled people's integration into the workforce include the organization of awareness workshops and introduction of programs by Comprehensive Labor Action for the Disabled, with Disabled Committees and with regional offices, in establishing commitments and action plans for the medium and long terms; during 2007 these activities took place in the departments of Antioquia, Tolima, Huila, Risaralda, Atlántico, Valle del Cauca, Boyacá, Magdalena, Sucre, and Arauca.

2.2.6 Accessibility

Given the evident need to guarantee persons with disabilities access to public spaces and the ability to circulate freely, thereby enabling them to enjoy different social goods and services under conditions of equality, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of the Environment, Housing, and Territorial Development have undertaken action programs to help ensure accessibility to the physical environment, traffic, and transport. Thus, regulations have been adopted to ensure accessibility in public spaces and transport.

2.2.7 National Consultative Committee on Disabilities

The National Consultative Committee for Disabled People is a permanent institutional advisory body to monitor and verify the implementation of policies, strategies, and programs intended to guarantee the

social integration of persons with disabilities. As a part of its activities, steps have been taken in the areas of employment, communications, health, and education.

2.2.9 Subsidies for Members of the Disabled Population

The national government provides subsidies that are available to persons with disabilities provided they meet the conditions set. These programs include:

- Social Protection Program for Senior Citizens, which allocates resources to the departments. These resources include economic subsidies, ranging from \$35,000 to \$75,000, which are handed over directly to extremely poor senior citizens or delivered indirectly through Elderly Welfare Centers; they also provide for complimentary social services in such areas as recreation, tourism, sport, and guided leisure.
- The programs carried out by the SENA seek to foster a culture of entrepreneurship to promote the growth and strengthening of businesses, innovation, technological development, and national competitiveness, to facilitate the adaptability and incorporation into the workforce of the unemployed, and to generate information about the job market, employment, and occupational structures. One of its programs is the “Emprender Fund.” This fund is attached to the SENA and serves to facilitate financial resources (seed capital) for the creation of companies by associations of apprentices, university interns, and recent graduates.

2.3 Ethnic Minorities

In order to abide by the international covenants and agreements that the country has signed as a United Nations member state, and to comply with the declarations issued by such bodies as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, Colombia was required to draft a document gathering together and analyzing the provisions that protect the rights and duties of ethnic groups in Colombia and enabling the adoption of clear actions for the systematic implementation and dissemination of effective policies for the social protection of those segments of the population. As a result, Colombia currently has a document setting out the rights and duties of its ethnic groups within the framework of social protection.

2.4 Women

Inclusion in the social security system depends essentially on employment in the formal labor market. The percentage of women in formal employment rose from 38.9% in 2001 to 41.3% in 2007.

To promote decent work in Colombia, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the government has launched a project called “Implementation of job-creation programs for poor women at the national level.” The project interconnects a set of tools organized around the principles of business and organizational empowerment and capitalization, and local economic development.

The Ministry of Social Welfare is also implementing the project “Technical assistance for businesses and micro productive units of vulnerable women workers in Colombia,” developed by the IOM. Its goal is to develop a pilot business strengthening and management project targeted at 400 women breadwinners and women with family- or single-person enterprises, productive projects, or gender-aware partnerships, averaging 35 per location and providing assistance and technical guidance in the formulation and strengthening of business plans, including the components, raw materials, or equipment needed; this will be put into practice in the departments of Antioquia (Medellín), Cesar (Pueblo Bello), Cundinamarca (Soacha and Tabio), Bogotá, Santander (Bucaramanga), Valle del Cauca (Calí, Palmira, and Buenaventura), Chocó (Quibdó), Quindío (Armenia), Risaralda (Pereira), Meta, and Bolívar.

3. Child Labor

With regard to children and adolescents who work in the informal or unregulated sectors or with their families, and to the worst forms of child labor as defined by ILO Convention 182, over the past decade Colombia has been implementing a state public policy to progressively prevent, discourage, and eradicate child labor and to protect young workers aged 15 and over.

The new Code for Children and Adolescents elaborates on the constitutional principle that establishes an obligatory nine years of basic education and identifies them as a responsibility of the State. This means that in the country, the natural place for a child aged under 15 is at school, irrespective of his or her conditions of origin, birth, ethnicity, or local culture; this is the regulatory principle that guides the public policy for preventing, discouraging, and progressively eradicating child labor and for protecting young workers.

Under the Code, the only circumstance in which a child aged under 15 can receive authorization from the Labor Inspector to “perform remunerated activities” is when those activities are related to artistic, cultural, recreational, or sporting undertakings, which in no case may take more than 14 hours a week (Article 35).

The Code also charges the agencies of the state with protecting children and adolescents from “economic exploitation by their parents or any other person with whom they live; their use in begging, sexual exploitation, smuggling, trafficking, and servitude; their recruitment and use by illegal armed groups; displacement; and the worst forms of child labor and any other such phenomenon that undermines their freedom, integrity, and positive development.”

3.1 Public Policy to Prevent, Discourage, and Eradicate Child Labor

The National Development Plan (PND) establishes a commitment regarding this problem and sets the goal of reducing the number of working children by a factor of 18 to 1 by 2010. This will require the progress and consolidation of a successful state policy for preventing and eradicating child labor through the coordinated action of different state agents and international cooperation bodies: Ministry of Social Welfare (MPS), ICBF, Ministry of Education, Attorney General, UNICEF, ILO, international cooperation, and the participation of the Ministry of Education in the Technical Secretariat of the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor.

The PND also requires the national government to ensure that local and regional governments include this topic in their territorial development plans, to which end a mechanism will be set up with the ICBF, the MPS, the departmental committees, the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation, and international cooperation agencies involved with the prevention and eradication of child labor. This effort now exists and is known as the “National Strategy for Protecting and Eradicating the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Protecting Young Workers.”

In addition, with the support of the Technical Secretariat of the Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor, the MPS will establish a mechanism for centralizing information about child labor and for providing the departments and municipalities with technical assistance in pursuit of the lines of action set out in the National Strategy.

3.2 2008–15 National Strategy for Protecting and Eradicating the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Protecting Young Workers: Policy Framework

This strategy, implemented as a national and collective process involving several technical and specialist teams from all the country’s regions and departments in 2007, sets out the path to be followed, from 2008

to 2015, in conjunction with the Millennium Development Goals, in pursuit of preventing and eradicating child labor and its worst manifestations.

The strategy embraces the main national targets for reducing child labor and its worst manifestations as set out in the Vision Colombia 2019 document and in the 2006–10 National Development Plan. The goal set in the first document is to reduce the participation of children and adolescents aged between 10 and 17 in the total economically active population (EAP) as follows: starting from a baseline of 6.7% in 2004, falling to 5% in 2010 and to 2.5% in 2019. The target set in the National Development Plan also aims to reduce their participation, but covers a broader age range (5 to 17 years) and seeks a reduction from a 7.2% baseline of child and adolescent EAP participation in 2005 to a level of 5.3% in 2010.

3.3 Programs pursued during 2007

To implement the National Strategy, four large-scale regional workshops were held, attended by 102 officials from the ICBF, the MPS, and municipal and departmental governments. The first three were funded by the MPS; the last one, by the ICBF. The steps taken to implement the Strategy were:

- Holding four large-scale regional workshops to draft the National Strategy document.
- Drafting of the National Strategy document and validating it at the national and regional levels.
- Conducting follow-up through the local Committees for the Eradication of Child Labor.

Participation at the II Medellín International Mining Show on September 20, 2007: This was the first time that the government addressed its child labor eradication policy at an international professional event. The presentation was prepared jointly by ANDI, SENA, and ICBF. ANDI expressed its interest in developing the child labor component within its corporate social responsibility program.

Workshop for strengthening local teams in the prevention and eradication child labor in mines: A workshop was held on November 19–22, 2007, to train public officials from the ICBF, the MPS, and municipal and department governments and members of NGOs involved in the eradication of child labor in the artisanal mining sector. This workshop was jointly organized with the ILO. It was attended by 36 officials from the ICBF, MPS, and Social Action, and by NGOs running ICBF programs in Boyacá, Bolívar, Antioquia, Caldas, Chocó, and Nariño.

Signing of the deed of commitments by elected mayors and governors: In November 2007 the deed of commitments was signed by the 1,099 elected mayors and 32 elected governors, in conjunction with the ICBF and the Ministry of Mines, agreeing to include the National Strategy's actions in their development plans, principally as regards mining activities. The ILO provided leaflets and CDs for distribution containing the National Strategy document, and DVDs for all the mayors and governors.

An agreement was also signed by the department of Boyacá and the ICBF Boyacá regional office for preventing and mitigating the risk factors of child labor by guaranteeing and restoring the rights of children, young people, and their families.

An interinstitutional cooperation agreement to provide comprehensive attention to mining municipalities was signed by the ICBF Boyacá regional office and the Boyacá energy company EBSA, S.A. E.S.P., in order to coordinate joint operation actions and contribute resources for implementing the strategy for preventing and mitigating the risk factors of child labor by guaranteeing and restoring the rights of children, young people, and their families in EBSA's Healthy Homes rural housing improvement program.

Dissemination of the 2007–15 National Strategy for Protecting and Eradicating the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Protecting Young Workers and its Inclusion in the Development Plans of Mining Municipalities

Dissemination and implementation of the 2007–15 National Strategy for Protecting and Eradicating the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Protecting Young Workers in the six priority departments. Strategy target: a reduction in child and adolescent (aged 5 to 17) participation in the economically active population from 7.2% in 2005 to 5.3% in 2010. Objective: focusing and ordering the actions of state and private agencies that work to prevent and eradicate the worst forms of child labor by admitting children and adolescents engaged in such activities or at risk from them to schooling, by providing them with services, by ensuring families access to social programs to keep their children and adolescents away from the worst forms of child labor, and by ensuring access to the benefits provided by social policy in general.

Special ICBF Programs for the Eradication of Child Labor in the Artisanal Mining Sector. The ICBF has the following programs and efforts targeted specifically at families with children and adolescents employed in artisanal mining in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Chocó, and Nariño. To date, they have benefited 20,020 recipients.

- The main characteristics of the children and adolescents, and of their families and communities, were identified.
- 1,080 play and learning workshops aimed at the school context, 1,188 play and learning workshops aimed at the family context, and 1,296 play and learning workshops aimed at the community context were organized, for a total of 3,564 activities in 12 departments.
- 40 attitudes that legitimize child labor were identified, relating to the cultural, social, economic, and educational conditions of the target population.
- Two methodological strategies were designed: school intervention model, and associating final grade students with project activities through obligatory social service.
- Support networks with a commitment toward reducing child labor were strengthened.
- Alliances were forged with regional agencies and nongovernmental bodies to benefit the children while at school and in the use of their free time.
- Methodological working strategies with the media were devised, allowing 50 alliances to be forged with broadcasters, local channels, and the local press, raising awareness amongst children, adolescents, teachers, families, and communities about the negative consequences of child labor.
- The beneficiaries of these activities included displaced segments of the population.
- The urban component assisted 1,476 children and adolescents, 369 teachers, 389 family members, and 425 members of the community, giving a total of 2,659 beneficiaries.
- The rural component assisted 1,424 children and adolescents, 206 teachers, 346 family members, and 364 members of the community, giving a total of 2,340 beneficiaries.
- In all, 3,644 children and adolescents, 776 teachers, 1,125 families, 1,194 community members were assisted and given a full understanding of the consequences and risks of child labor, for an overall total of 6,739 beneficiaries.
- The urban component identified 652 working children and adolescents, and 824 at risk of involvement.

- The rural component identified 395 working children and adolescents, and 1,029 at risk of involvement.
- The mining component identified 317 working children and adolescents, and 427 at risk of involvement.
- In total, 1,364 working children and adolescents and 2,280 at risk of involvement were identified.

4. Decent Work

In accordance with the provisions of the 2006–10 National Development Plan, the project “Technical assistance for the promotion of decent work,” coordinated by the MPS and implemented by the ILO, is underway. This project includes four subprojects under the tripartite agreement signed in 2006 by the national government, trade unions, and private sector organizations. The committed resources total \$7.6 billion, in the following areas:

- Assistance for strengthening social dialogue, fundamental rights at work, and labor inspection, oversight, and control in Colombia.
- Technical business training for 2,000 displaced youths located across the nation.
- Training to develop and strengthen capacities for the promotion of local economic development at the national level.
- Implementation of job creation programs for poor women at the national level.

At the same time, the Mini Productive and Social Chains Program seeks to organize the economic activities of small and medium-scale producers and business-owners, interconnecting the production, processing, service, and marketing phases and thereby promoting local economic development.

Mini productive chains have continued to grow in different regions of the country, with 329 current projects (including artisanal products, livestock, dairy, agribusiness, tailoring, recycling, etc.) benefiting more than 101,400 families in 28 of the country’s departments. The challenge for 2008 is to increase their connections with the *Juntos* network for overcoming extreme poverty.

5. Migrant Workers

An agreement was signed with the IOM to develop information and guidance strategies for migrant workers on basic issues to be kept in mind when migrating to other countries for work reasons, with the aim of protecting the rights of migrants, their families, and their communities of origin.

Over the past seven years and into the first quarter of 2008, Colombia issued 36,103 Proportionality Certificates (equivalence between the numbers of Colombians and of foreigners working in a company), 7,153 of them in 2007. Over this period, most foreign economic activity was concentrated in the commercial, community, and personal services industry and in the education sector.

Approximately 13% of the foreigners accounted for were U.S. citizens, followed, in descending order, by Venezuelans, Peruvians, and Mexicans. Similarly, the numbers of males outstrip the females, by a ratio of 77.8% to 22.2%.

Of all the foreigners employed by those companies in the Colombian labor market, more than 50% are professionals, technicians, and associated workers. Among the companies that requested proportionality certificates, foreign personnel in qualified, managerial, and trust positions accounted for a low proportion (0.5% of the total of such workers per year). It can therefore be concluded that foreign participation in the Colombian job market remains low.

6. Social Dialogue

Social dialogue in Colombia has specific forums for consensus building. The most important of these is the Permanent Commission for Consensus-Building on Labor and Wage Policies, which works to promote consensus building and social dialogue. This Commission, which has offices in each of the country's departments, is responsible for the annual minimum wage negotiations. Tripartite in nature, it nevertheless enables other institutions, such as the ILO, to participate; it also has several working subcommittees, including the Intersectoral Commission for Promoting the Formalization of Decent Work in the Public Sector.

As a part of the activities conducted for monitoring and following up on the institutional forums for social dialogue – 32 departmental subcommittees for consensus-building on labor and wage policies – the following are available:

- Technical and financial assistance for social dialogue forums intended for consensus-building about and implementation of a public policy for the creation of decent work.
- Training workshops for the members of the departmental subcommittees for consensus-building and for business-owners, workers, and the government in general, on international standards and treaties, social dialogue, conflict resolution, etc.

In conjunction with the trade unions, the joint external circular of December 26, 2007, was agreed on, which sets guidelines for the granting of union permits for public employees. Similarly, bipartite discussions are underway regarding a decree to govern collective bargaining in the public sector. Finally, circular 01 of January 2, 2008, sets guidelines regarding public-sector commitments and responsibilities toward strict compliance with the legal provisions governing public contracts with temporary service companies (ESTs) and associated work cooperatives (CTAs). All of the above are essential elements in social dialogue in the country.

One of the components of the project “Technical assistance for the promotion of decent work” developed by the ILO addresses the topic of labor rights: “Assistance for strengthening social dialogue, basic rights at work, and labor inspections, oversight, and control in Colombia.” Similarly, the Ministry of Social Welfare is carrying out the project “Dissemination and promotion of basic rights at work in Colombia.”

7. Free Trade Agreements and Labor Rights

The free trade agreements that Colombia has negotiated with the United States and Chile include chapters on labor; similarly, the free trade agreement currently being negotiated with Canada incorporates a cooperation agreement on labor matters. These are all intended to ensure the inclusion and observance of internationally recognized basic labor rights in the domestic laws of each country, and to avoid “social dumping” through the effective enforcement of the parties’ internal labor regulations.

The countries reaffirm their obligations as members of the ILO and the commitments they acquired under the ILO’s 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up process, and they agree to ensure that those labor principles and rights are recognized and protected by their corresponding domestic laws.

At the same time, the countries establish Contact Points within their labor ministries, to serve as liaisons between the parties and with society in order to correctly channel all matters arising in connection with the agreement and to resolve any related matters. Finally, the agreements include sections dealing with cooperation, which is a means for promoting the countries’ development as regards labor matters.

8. Job Training

Public Employment Service: This service is an important information tool for connecting unemployed workers with vacancies reported by business-owners. It was launched by the SENA in order to help reduce frictional unemployment, a type of unemployment that affects 617,000 workers (3% of the average national unemployment rate during the first half of 2003, which totaled 14.6%).

The service is free of charge and is provided by 75 Public Employment Service Centers around the country; while previously workers had to physically visit those Centers, the information is now available over the SENA web page, www.sena.edu.co, and at the address <http://colombianostrabajando.sena.edu.co>.

Between 2002 and 2007, the SENA's various programs trained a total of 5,153,188 apprentices. These figures reflect an average annual increase of 24.8% over the period. Additionally, these training processes incorporate the acquisition of skills in information and communications technologies, the management of on-site and distance learning methods, and access to new sources of knowledge as the basis for the SENA's modernization and strategic and operational management; this has enabled new training forums and methodologies to be developed.

9. Attention to Displaced Population Groups

Colombia has allocated increasing resources in an attempt to offer this sector of the population improved opportunities. Between 2002 and 2007, Social Action supported income generation projects targeting both individuals and associations. Between 2006 and 2007, these efforts benefited 164,036 recipients.

The Program for the Comprehensive Attention of the Displaced Population has also progressed with the training of human resources through job orientation activities that seek to improve the recipients' skills and thus facilitate their access to the job market or their development of a private profit-making productive activity.

In the job training area, between March 2004 and December 2007, the SENA provided job orientation activities for a total of 201,653 people.

Between August 2002 and December 2007, Colombia's displaced persons availed themselves of 388,188 training opportunities in productive endeavors, entrepreneurship, business management, and the formation of partnerships, improving their skills and qualifications and consequently increasing their levels of employability.

In addition, under the agreement between Social Action and the Batuta Foundation, displaced children receive psychosocial assistance through musical education. As of February 2008, 28,180 learning places are available at 134 Batuta centers in 69 municipalities in all of the country's departments, with a total investment of close to \$31 billion pesos.

Human Rights

Renewal of the Agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Under its resolved commitment to protect human rights, particularly those of its most vulnerable sectors, on September 9, 2007, Colombia renewed the agreement with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The main aspects of the agreement – its dimensions and advisory, observation, and cooperation activities – were not changed. Prior to the renewal, 15 state agencies and the Office of the High Commissioner conducted a reflection exercise in which they reviewed the work carried out by this UN agency over the

past ten years, with a view to bolstering its cooperation efforts and emphasizing greater institutional strengthening.

Integral Policy for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Forces

This policy describes the guidelines, sets the objectives, and establishes the programs in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law to be followed and implemented by the armed forces and, when relevant, by the National Police.

Through five lines of action (instruction, discipline, defense, attention, and cooperation), the Integral Policy seeks to adapt HR and IHL education and training to the needs of the strategic context; strengthen operational discipline by improving legal advisory services and institutional oversight; establish mechanisms to guarantee the right of defense of members of the security forces and effective defense of the state; guarantee specific forms of attention for special groups and strengthen direct ties between members of the security forces and the civilian population; and enhance cooperation with national and international organs and agencies, with other countries, and with civil society organizations for the implementation of the policy's strategies.

Progress in Protecting and Ensuring Human Rights in 2007

- A 30% reduction in the number of massacres: 37, compared to 26 cases in 2006.
- A 57% fall in the number of killings of trade unionists, from 60 in 2006 to 26 in 2007.
- An 11% reduction in killings of indigenous people, down from 45 in 2006 to 40 in 2007.
- Kidnappings fell by 24% over their 2006 level, from 687 to 521.
- The number of cases of alleged homicides of protected persons attributed to members of the security forces fell by 40%, from 230 cases in 2006 to 138 in 2007.
- A 23% reduction in forced displacements, from a total of 238,851 displaced persons to 184,343.
- Terrorist acts fell by 40%, from 646 in 2006 to 387 in 2007.
- Attacks on human settlements reported a 75% decrease, from four in 2006 to one in 2007.

Policy to Combat Impunity in Cases of Human Rights Violations and Breaches of International Humanitarian Law

This policy was adopted on November 22, 2005, by the Special Committee for Promotion and Monitoring (CEI) and on March 6, 2006, by the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (Conpes) by means of document 3411. The Conpes provided the resource support for investment and operations from the General Budget of the Nation (PGN) which, together with international cooperation funds (from the European Union and the Netherlands), were deemed necessary to fund the actions identified as indispensable for attaining the Policy's general goal and specific objectives.

During 2007 work continued along the following institutional and organizational development lines: resource management, particularly human resource development; attention for victims and witnesses; and specific operational conditions for investigations and punishments.

Some of the more notable achievements in this effort were the following:

In institutional development:

- Launch of the system for selecting and filling prosecutor career positions within the Office of the Prosecutor General (FGN).
- Definition and launch of the strategy to strengthen the working group of the Special Committee for Promotion and Monitoring as the interinstitutional coordination forum for investigating, prosecuting, and punishing HR and IHL violations.
- Design of the information system of the Presidential HR and IHL Program, which will implement the interoperability solution for information relating to human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law.
- In conjunction with the FGN and the Combating Impunity Project (PLCI), definition of organizational strengthening projects for the National Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Unit, funded by the PLCI.

In resource management:

- Design of a strategy to create specialized training modules with a direct relation to the investigation of HR and IHL violations.
- Definition management improvement methods necessary to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the FGN's investigations into HR/IHL violations.

In attending to victims and witnesses:

- Definition by the PLCI of ways to respond to concerns about the institutional structure and organization of the supply of victim assistance services.

In operational conditions for investigations and punishments:

- Launch of the virtual hearing mechanism by the Superior Council of the Judicature (CSJ).
- Adaptation of the virtual hearing project of the Penitentiaries and Prisons Institute (INPEC) to ensure technical and organizational alignment with the CSJ's mechanism.
- Launch and monitoring of strategies for pursuing cases of HR/IHL violations.

During 2007, the human resources of the Office of the Prosecutor General were strengthened with the appointment of 33 new officials, 18 of them auxiliary magistrates, to bolster the investigative capacity of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice responsible for investigations into public servants with constitutional immunity.

To address the situation of trade union members who have suffered attacks over recent years, the Colombian State continued to take action under the Tripartite Agreement signed along with the ILO in 2006, under which:

- The Sub-Unit of Prosecutors responsible for investigating those incidents was created.
- 13 prosecutors, 78 judicial police officers, 24 lawyers, and 13 prosecutors assistants were assigned to that sub-unit.
- Three backlog judges were assigned to deal exclusively with cases involving trade unionists, with along 14 support officials.
- By means of Decree No. 122 of January 18, 2008, the national government approved an increase of 389 in the staff of the National Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Unit, giving a

total of 101 specialized prosecutors, 110 investigators, seven sectional prosecutors, and other support personnel. Additionally, a budget of \$8,533,000,000 million was approved (60% up from the previous year).

- 44 judgments were handed down during 2007, and as of April 2008, a total of 103 judgments had been handed down since 2002, with 177 convictions and 117 individuals put in prison.

Preventing the Recruiting and Use of Children and Adolescents by Outlawed Organized Armed Groups, and Attention for, Monitoring of, and Assistance for Former Members of Such Groups

Legal Framework

Children and adolescents separated from outlawed organized armed groups, in addition to enjoying all the rights enshrined in Colombia's constitutional and legal regime, receive strengthened and specific legal protection in their capacity as victims of political violence, of the crime of illegal recruitment, and of the violation of their right of protection from one of the worst forms of child labor, as proscribed by international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international labor law, and United Nations agency decisions.

During the period in question, the following regulatory developments took place:

- **Decree 395 of 2007:** Partially amended Decree 128 of 2003 and provided that: “The benefits receivable under reintegration by persons demobilized, either individually or collectively, from outlawed organized armed groups following the enactment of Decree 128 of 2003, may be granted to any such person, in accordance with the criteria previously determined by the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Armed Persons and Groups, and they shall conclude when the social and economic reintegration process is concluded, which shall be determined according to the progress made by each person.”
- **Decree 4690 of 2007:** Created the Intersectoral Commission for Preventing the Recruitment and Use of Children and Adolescents by outlawed organized groups. The purpose of this commission is: “To promote the guaranteeing of and compliance with the rights of children, adolescents, and young people, and to design and execute policies for comprehensive protection and institutional, social, and family strengthening, in order to mitigate the risk factors that lead to the use and recruitment of those sectors of the population.”

The Intersectoral Commission is chaired by the office of the Vice President of the Republic; also represented on it are the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of National Education, the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, the High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration, the ICBF, and the Young Colombia Presidential Program.

The following development in jurisprudence from the High Courts is also particular worthy of note:

- **Judgment C-203/05**

Other relevant provisions:

- **Law 1098 of 2006, Children's and Adolescents' Code:** Established substantive and procedural provisions intended to guarantee children and adolescents the exercise of their rights and freedoms as enshrined in international human rights instruments, the Constitution, and domestic laws.
- **Law 599 of 2000, Criminal Code:** Article 162 provides: “Illicit recruitment: Any person who, on the occasion of and in prosecution of an armed conflict, recruits minors aged under 18 years or forces

them to participate, directly or indirectly, in the hostilities or in armed actions, shall be sentenced to a prison term of between 6 and 10 years.”

- **Law 1106 of 2006:** Rescheduled and amended a number of provisions in Law 782 of 2002; defined, as victims of political violence, minors who participate in hostilities; and ordered the ICBF to design and execute a special protection program to assist all minors who have participated in hostilities or who have been victims of political violence in the context of the internal armed conflict.
- **Decree 3043 of 2006:** Created the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Armed Persons and Groups and assigned it functions including: “To assist and advise the Colombian Family Welfare Institute in defining policies and strategies related to the prevention of recruitment of minor aged children into outlawed organized armed groups, their separation from such groups, and their reintegration into society. Also, to coordinate, monitor, and assess the actions of those state agencies that, in accordance with their competence, undertake activities or perform functions to facilitate the reintegration of minor aged children separated from conflict and of those adults who, either individually or collectively, voluntarily demobilize.”

Program to Prevent the Recruitment and Use of Children and Adolescents by Outlawed Organized Armed Groups, and to Provide Attention, Monitoring, and Assistance to Those Separated from Such Groups

This program pursues three lines of action: prevention, attention, and monitoring.

a. Prevention

The ICBF carries out **strategies to prevent the incorporation** of children and adolescents into outlawed organized armed groups, as a part of the doctrine of comprehensive protection with emphasis on the recognition and upholding of rights.

To achieve this, the ICBF has worked to identify common denominators in order to produce a general overview of the risk factors which will then help develop a prevention strategy, targeting in particular those departments and municipalities where this phenomenon is most commonly found. The Institute’s experience has enabled it to identify risk factors associated with recruitment, including: (1) the presence of illicit crops; (2) incoming royalties from mining activities; (3) presence of irregular armed groups; (4) domestic violence and mistreatment; and (5) low family socioeconomic levels.

After identifying the risk factors, progress has been made with focusing the programs and social services in those municipalities and departments with high recruiting levels, as indicated by the recruitment data of 3,544 minor-aged children who are currently receiving the benefits of the ICBF’s Specialized Attention Program.

Additionally, in conjunction with international cooperation agencies (UNICEF and IOM), the Institute is implementing prevention activities through support projects for communities in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Cesar, Córdoba, Chocó, Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Sucre, Santander, Cundinamarca, Putumayo, Meta, Valle, and Bogotá.

The ICBF also provides technical assistance for the operations of the municipal and departmental social policy councils, and for those of the interinstitutional and intersectoral prevention panels that are located in the departments of Meta and Antioquia. Work is currently underway on the setting up prevention panels in the departments of Bolívar, Sucre, and Casanare.

Some of the policies and plans through which these actions are implemented in various arenas include: “Facts and Rights” strategy, in conjunction with UNICEF, the Attorney General of the Nation, and the

Young Colombia Presidential Program; the “Make Peace” national policy for family coexistence; the National Policy for Sexual and Reproductive Health; the Youth Policy; the National Education Policy; the National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents; the National Plan for the Eradication of Child Labor; and others.

b. Attention

Since 1999, the ICBF has been carrying out a special program to protect children and adolescents separated from outlawed organized armed groups; it is based on collecting the agency’s experiences in attending to vulnerable minors, which enables it to design and implement a model in line with the characteristics of that target population.

During the period under study, the attention model has been strengthened in accordance with the changes that have taken place in the profile of the target population; it now involves four separate phases: identification and diagnosis; intervention; consolidation and monitoring; and assistance. Each of these phases entails actions aimed at restoring rights through institutional and socio-family mechanisms.

At the institutional level, care is provided by Temporary Homes, Specialized Attention Centers, Youth Houses, and the Institutions Network.

- **Temporary Homes:** Institutions that conduct identification processes, diagnose recipients’ psychoaffective and family situations, and appraise their abilities and health conditions: the first phase of the attention model. A period of approximately forty-five days is spent at these facilities.
- **Specialized Attention Centers:** The actions indicated by the diagnosis begin at these institution in the form of comprehensive, individual attention that uses psychosocial assistance processes, school enrolment, training, and use of time free: the second phase of the attention model. A period of approximately one year is spent at these facilities.
- **Youth Houses:** Places where young people can begin a period of their lives under principles of joint responsibility and autonomy, as a continuing part of their reincorporation into school and society: the third phase of the attention model. Upon conclusion, they can progress to the program of the High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration or return to their families, if security conditions permit. A period of approximately one year is spent at these facilities.
- **Network of Protection Institutions:** Specialized services where attention is given to children and adolescents with patterns of drug use or psychiatric problems.

Particular emphasis has been placed on strengthening and expanding the socio-family environment; and this task is one the main goals within the ICBF’s plan of action for this program, offering children and adolescents the possibility of furthering the restoration of their rights within a family. Thus, the Foster Homes and Guidance Homes attention mechanisms have been strengthened, along with the Regional Support Units strategy.

- **Foster Homes:** An attention model in which a family – selected and trained in accordance with ICBF technical criteria – voluntarily takes in a minor on a full-time basis; placement with a family provides such children and adolescents with a environment marked by affection and comprehensive attention that guarantees and restores their rights.
- **Guidance Homes:** Designed in response to changes in the profile of the target population, a pilot project is underway whereby attention is given to children and adolescents who are with their families or who have rejoined them, if the security conditions permit; in conjunction with them, a comprehensive family attention plan (PLATINFA) is carried out, and they receive temporary

economic support to assist in restoring their rights and facilitating their reincorporation in the family and social milieu.

As already stated, this mechanism is accompanied by the **Regional Support Units** strategy, each comprising two psychosocial professional who monitor the children's return to their families, enabling the reestablishment and repair of affectionate ties, helping restore their rights, and facilitating their reincorporation into their families and society, by connecting them with the service networks in place in the family's area of residence. Each support unit assists a maximum of 25 families; this is on account of their dispersion, most of them being located in remote and inaccessible rural areas.

c. **Monitoring and Assistance**

Once the adolescents are finished with the attention services, one of the following monitoring strategies is implemented:

- **Youth Reference and Opportunity Centers (CROJ):** Intended for those aged over 18, these are places for personal orientation and social reference for young people undergoing family reincorporation or living independent lives.
- **Support Units:** Intended to provide comprehensive, specialized attention for children and adolescents returned to their families, and for those families.

As a part of ensuring effective and permanent compliance with the rights of comprehensive health protection, education, rehabilitation, and public assistance, and of pursuing actions to bring about effective reincorporation into society, a series of steps have been taken with the assistance of different sectors and international cooperation agencies; thus, agreements and pacts have been reached with such bodies as the Ministry of Social Welfare, the National Council for Health Social Security, the National Education Ministry, the SENA, and the High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration, and international agencies including the IOM, UNICEF, the ILO, GTZ, and the European Union.

Between 1999 and March 31, 2008, the specialized program attended to 3,544 children and adolescents, according to figures from the ICBF Information System.

Actions taken under the National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents

The following actions are worthy of particular note:

- (a) **Research:** Alliances have been forged with local authorities, academia, and the private sector to study the characteristics of the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation, both at the national level and in a number of regions and cities where the situation has worsened.
 - In this area, eight local research projects or Children and Family Observatories were implemented, with technical and financial support from the ICBF. The studies were carried out in the municipality of Andes (Antioquia), Bogotá, Bahía Solano (Chocó), Cartagena (Bolívar; two studies), Santa Marta (Magdalena), Villavicencio (Meta), and Cartago (Valle del Cauca).
 - Coordinated by the DANE: (a) a preliminary mapping of research into the topic at the national level is underway, and (b) a “Questionnaire on behaviors and attitudes toward sexuality among children and adolescents at school” is being prepared. This instrument will be applied in six cities during this semester and is intended to identify the dimensions of the problem of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors, implement mechanisms, determine the risk factors affecting the target population, and identify the activities in which children and young people invest their free time.

- (b) **Information:** The ICBF is currently assessing the information system, including the topic of sexual exploitation, and is coordinating, with Microsoft and the National Police Cybercrime Group, to include an information system for “monitoring sex crimes involving children and adolescents” over the internet.

Regulatory Development and Enforcement

Regulatory action focuses on supporting and monitoring legislative proposals in the area of sexual exploitation, with a view to introducing elimination and prevention measures, strengthening Law 679 of 2001, and establishing the National Plan to Prevent and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents as law.

- Legislative bill 181/07 to “Amend Title IV of the Criminal Code, 599 of 2000.” The main issues are adapting the punishments applicable to sex crimes involving children and adolescents, punishing customers found on the scene, and punishing the possession of pornography.
- Lower house bill 109/07 “Adding to and strengthening Law 679 of 2001, to tackle exploitation, pornography, and sexual tourism involving minors.” The main focuses are: (a) self-regulation systems: self-regulation by accommodation services, airlines and travel agents, internet cafe services; updating codes of conduct by tourist service providers; awareness building strategies; (b) loss of parental rights and other control measures in cases involving the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents; (c) provisions regarding information; (d) page classification criteria and international cooperation actions; (e) funding rules.
- Bill 129/07, proposing “the adoption of the National Plan of Action Against Sexual Exploitation as a national law.”
- Passage of Law 1146 of 2007, issuing provisions for the prevention of sexual violence and for the comprehensive attention of children and adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse.

Attention, Reparation, and Redress

The following actions are worthy of particular note:

- Preparation of technical guidelines for attending to children and adolescents who have fallen victim to this scourge and for restoring their rights.
- Definition of technical guidelines that agencies must meet to ensure and restore the rights of children and adolescents.
- Implementation of a detention model to address the commercial sexual exploitation of minors called “Shelter and Development Program” in the cities of Bogotá and Medellín, intended to take in such children, generate conditions for their personal development, and support independent life projects.
- Design of an attention route for victims of sexual exploitation.
- Attention programs for children and adolescents.

During 2007, the ICBF carried out attention programs for minor-aged victims of sexual exploitation, with an annual investment of \$2,261 million, using the mechanisms of support intervention services, daycare facilities, and victim protection institutions. The 538 available spaces attended to 997 children and adolescents.

In 2008, the ICBF carried out attention programs for minor-aged victims of sexual exploitation, with an annual investment of \$1,588 million, using the following mechanisms: support intervention, with 185

places catering to a total of 370 users per year; daycare facilities with 99 places; and residential facilities with 217 places.

Creation of Specialized Attention Units for Attending to and Restoring the Rights of the Minor-Aged Victims of These Crimes

These units have been organized under an agreement with the Office of the Prosecutor General (FGN) to take integrated steps to combat these problems (sexual abuse and sexual exploitation); they have an interinstitutional team (FGN, ICBF, Legal Medicine, Office of the People's Defender, National Police, Health, Ombudsman) intended to avoid revictimization and provide comprehensive, timely, and effective attention to minor-aged victims of violence sexual from all the sectors involved.

The support of these units is in response to Arts. 18 and 205 of the Children's and Adolescents' Law, and ten such units are currently operating, in the cities of Medellín, Cali, Bucaramanga, Bogotá, Palmira, Cartago, Pasto, Quibdo, Cúcuta, and Popayán.

Prevention: The ICBF's programs and services at the national level include permanent awareness-raising campaigns on specific issues, such as prevention of and intervention in child pornography, child prostitution, and trafficking in minor-aged children. The following activities have been carried out:

- Awareness-raising regarding sexual tourism by means of workshops for the tourism and hotel sector in 17 cities, targeting 750 people, in order to raise the profile of the problem among the community in general and strengthen reporting mechanisms.
- Creation and strengthening of Social Networks for the Prevention of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in the cities of Barranquilla, Cajicá, Cartago, Calarcá, Chía, Chiquinquirá, Girardot, Leticia, Neiva, Palmira, Santa Marta, Villavicencio, and Zipaquirá.
- Training efforts with various groups: public employees, community workers, teachers, families, armed forces, tourism sector associations, and young people.
- Distribution of educational materials to support awareness of and training in the topic of sexual exploitation for public employees and community educational agents.

Institutional Strengthening

Public policy efforts have focused on actions such as promoting the principles of joint responsibility and participation, through the coordinated intervention of authorities and agencies from the justice, health, education, and protection sectors. These actions are carried out in coordination with the local authorities (municipal and departmental governments) in order to secure their political commitment toward the inclusion of strategies, programs, targets, and resources for the prevention and eradication of sexual abuse and exploitation in their departmental and municipal development plans.

We have made progress in positioning the topic of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors within the framework of the National Prevention and Eradication Committee, with the support of UNICEF and the ILO. Thus, important steps have been taken under the terms of Law 679 of 2001, Law 1098 (the Children's and Adolescents' Code), and other provisions in force:

- Definition and implementation of an Operational Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Technical panels covering a range of issues (legal matters, attention, follow-up and legal support, prevention within tourism, investigation, education) were organized and given technical support in order to address the different lines of action and enhance the skills of the various agencies in accordance with their duties.

- Strengthening and monitoring the local plans for the prevention and eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors in the cities of Arauca, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Calarcá, Cartagena, Cartago, Chiquinquirá, Girardot, Leticia, Medellín, Neiva, Palmira, Quibdó, Santa Marta, Villavicencio, Cajamarca, Flandes, Fusagasuga, Ibagué, Melgar, Chocó, Guajira, Amazonas, Cundinamarca, Guainía, and Vaupés.
- Awareness training was given to 21 new mayors to strengthen actions for preventing and tackling the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.
- Raising the awareness of governmental and nongovernmental agencies through activities such as the conference on “Preventing the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in the Tourism and Hotel Sector,” with technical contributions from the organization End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), which was attended by 32 delegates from different agencies who met with the aim of publicizing strategies to prevent to the commercial sexual exploitation of minors in hi-tech media and cyberspace.
- Preparation, publication, and distribution of educational materials, to support awareness-raising and training on the topic of sexual exploitation. The following have been distributed at the ICBF regional offices for their employees and other members of the National Family Welfare System: 4,108 books, 5,000 pamphlets, 1,000 posters, 250 ILO books, cards for teachers, and information CDs for taxi-drivers, hotel staff, and travel agents.

Autonomous participation of children and adolescents, in the holding of 50 fun events with 400 children and adolescents from schools and youth clubs, intended to enhance their ability to detect risk factors and begin ties with preventive programs.

Trafficking in Human Lives

Institutional actions are framed by the Interinstitutional Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, which was created by Law 985 of 2005. This committee involves the ministries of the Interior and Justice, Foreign Affairs, Social Protection and National Education, the office of the Prosecutor General, the National Police, the DAS, Interpol, the office of the People’s Defender, the ICBF, the office of the Attorney General, cooperation agencies such as UNODC, IOM, and ILO, and NGOs such as Fondelibertad.

Among this committee’s achievements, the ICBF has paid particular attention to: (i) technical assistance and formalities for the passage of Law 985/05; (ii) design and approval of the National Strategy Against Trafficking in Persons, and 2008 operational plan; (iii) production of the Manual of Comprehensive Attention for the Victims of Trafficking in Human Lives; (iv) binational meetings with consular, judicial, and administrative authorities from the corresponding countries, in Pasto (with Ecuador), Cúcuta (with Venezuela), and Capurganá (with Panama); (v) publication of the “Manual of Criminal Procedure and Comprehensive Protection of Minor-aged Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual or Labor Exploitation”; (vi) design of the Information System, with its launch planned for 2008; (vii) design of the Anti-Trafficking Operational Center, to begin operations in Bogotá this year and involving one ICBF Family Defender; (viii) inclusion of trafficking in persons as one of the “new” forms of rights violations enshrined in the Children’s and Adolescents’ Code.

In this context, during 2008 the ICBF has been organizing the training of 200 public employees from the ICBF, the prosecutor general’s office, and the police attached to the Units for the Attention of the Victims of Sexual Violence; these efforts have taken place in Neiva, Santa Marta, Bogotá, Medellín, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cúcuta, Quibdó, Popayán, and Tunja, with the support of UNODC. The aim is to

distribute the “Manual of Criminal Procedure and Comprehensive Protection of Minor-aged Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual or Labor Exploitation” and to publicize the topic through institutional media outlets such as TV and radio programs, and through Noti ICBF.

Youth Clubs and Children’s Clubs

For the past 12 years, under a preventive policy for children and adolescents and in accordance with their rights, the ICBF has been conducting the “Youth Clubs and Children’s Clubs” preventive program among this segment of the population. In accordance with the obligation of joint social responsibility, these are a part of the agreements and policies to which the municipal and departmental governments and all the country’s institutions have given their commitment.

For 2008, the plans provide for 6,937 units with 104,085 beneficiaries, broken down as follows: 3,494 children’s clubs (52,410 beneficiaries) and 2,804 youth clubs (42,090 beneficiaries). The program begins in April and is designed to operate over a period of nine months.

National Action Plan for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

The Colombian government, in compliance with its international human rights commitments and with the recommendations issued by international agencies, included in the guidelines of the 2002–06 National Development Plan, “Toward a Community State,” and ratified in the 2007–10 Development Plan, “Toward a Community State: Development for All,” has assumed the commitment of devising a statewide National Action Plan for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, taking into account the full range of human rights, ensuring gender awareness, and enjoying the broad support of civil society.

The National Action Plan is an indicative, strategic, and operational management instrument of the Colombian state, drawn up on the basis of consensus; it is intended to promote and protect human rights, to improve the conditions for their enjoyment, and to promote the observance of international humanitarian law. By establishing a long-term view, the National Action Plan will define strategies, actions, and responsibilities within the framework of the Constitution and the applicable international agreements.

Representatives of different social sectors participated for the first time at the meeting of the Coordination Agency of the National Action Plan for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law held on March 14 in the city of Bogotá. The Agency is a forum that brings together representatives of the government, the State, civil society, and social sectors in order to foster and ensure the conditions necessary for the National Action Plan’s consensus-building process. The Agency receives permanent assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the embassies of Sweden and Spain, G24, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which serves as its technical secretariat. At the meeting, the participating social sectors decided on the delegates they would assign to the various commissions and working committees that are preparing the nationwide consensus-building process.

Important tools for advancing this process were decided on within the Coordination Agency, such as the roadmap for regional consensus-building, the groundwork for the basic document for diagnosing the human rights and international humanitarian law situation, and the regulations to govern the Agency’s operations.

To develop the roadmap, the meeting of March 14 agreed to conduct information-gathering visits to all the country’s departments; these visits – involving representatives of the government, the state, human rights and peace groups, social sectors, and the international community – are to take place in May. Their purpose is to inform the different regional stakeholders about what the National Action Plan is, what its

criteria and the proposed roadmap are, and what progress and agreements have been attained to date, and, at the same time, to make progress with the establishment of the regional committees for consensus-building.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Secure Farm Income Program (AIS)

During 2007 the following activities took place:

- **Special Credit Line.** To encourage investments that will enhance the competitiveness of farms, agribusinesses, and projects to adopt more profitable crops, \$149 billion were made available to subsidize interest rates; this attracted credits worth a total of \$374 billion, for a total investment of \$521 billion.
- **Incentive for Rural Capitalization (ICR).** 22,820 ICR requests, worth a total of \$198 billion, were lodged. These resources are used to encourage investments for sector modernization in the amount of \$1,039.8 million, intended for land adaptations, agricultural machinery, primary transformation, production infrastructure, planting and maintaining late-yield crops, and cattle. Additionally, the AIS Program paid out \$16,350 million for the development of 2,046 projects, of which \$3,550 million were channeled into the development of 1,395 small-producer projects.
- Through a public call for bids for the funding of irrigation and draining systems, \$41,464 million were allocated to support the execution of 117 projects to construct and restore irrigation and draining districts in an area of 16,500 hectares, benefiting 7,000 families.
- **Incentive for Technical Assistance (IAT).** Awarded to small-scale farmers and their associations to cover up to 80% of the cost of technical assistance services required for their projects. \$715 million was awarded as technical assistance for agriculture, fish-farming, and forestry projects.

Research and Technological Development

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) has strengthened the resource allocation process through the Competitive Fund mechanism, organizing open calls for bids for research, innovation, and technological development projects intended to address the prioritized demands of productive chains and of the country's regions.

In 2007, future commitments worth \$104 billion were reached through these calls for bids; over the next four years, this will enable 257 projects worth \$244 billion to be carried out in sectors including exportable fruit and vegetables, forestry, rubber, cacao, livestock and dairy cattle, coffee, fresh flowers, bananas, plantains, shrimp farming, fish farming, biofuels, etc.

Strengthening the Sanitary and Phytosanitary System

The MADR continued with its efforts to strengthen and develop the National Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures System, with the aim of improving the sanitary standards of the country's agricultural output, preserving the environment, and improving the competitiveness of national products by obtaining international market sanitary acceptance for them. The following results were attained:

- To increase its national presence and provide its users with better services, the ICA was strengthened with infrastructure investments worth \$15,811 million; combining this amount with the resources from 2006 gives a total of \$45 billion. \$8 billion of this funding was used to construct a Level 3

Biosecure Laboratory, the first of its kind in the region, which will allow the handling of pathogens that are infectious to animals and that are being eradicated.

- Colombia's cattle inspection program has covered 73% of the nation's territory and has certified 75% of its cattle as free of foot-and-mouth disease; this represents 65% of all livestock farms and 17 million head of cattle.
- The milk analysis reference laboratory was established, to verify and certify the processes used by purchasing companies to make quality-based payments for the milk they buy from stockraisers. The MADR contributed close to \$800 million for its construction.
- New market access for Colombian fresh fruit was achieved through progress with the fruit-fly oversight and monitoring program; the results of this program show that significant progress has been made in controlling this pest, which is the main sanitary barrier to the marketing of fruit produce.
- Working in conjunction with the United States, risk evaluations were conducted for more than 20 products with export potential, and efforts to attain phytosanitary admissibility for five of these were given priority (lemon grass, celery, garden rocket, chard, and spinach).

Funding for Farming Activities

The farm credits extended by FINAGRO in 2007 reached a record figure of \$3.1 billion, up 29% over the 2006 level (\$2.4 billion) and 192% more than in 2002 (\$1 billion). 80% of the loans extended were for 138,597 small-scale farmers; in addition, 71% of the funds (\$2.2 billion) were invested in infrastructure, equipment, and machinery to support production and marketing in the farm sector.

The Incentive for Rural Capitalization (ICR) is an economic benefit extended to farmers who obtain loans, to assist them in carrying out investment projects that further the technological modernization of the farming sector. In 2007 incentives worth \$52,014 million were awarded, enabling the leveraging of investments totaling \$269,835 million. Of the total amount paid out under the ICR mechanism, \$14,269 million were extended to small-scale farmers, leveraging investments worth \$57,765 million.

Forestry Incentive Certificates (CIFs) are also being extended, to cover a part of the costs of establishing and maintaining new forestry plantations intended for commercial use or conservation. New plantations with native species receive 75% of the cost, while new plantations with introduced species receive 50%, as do maintenance efforts for any species. During 2007, \$20 billion was allocated to 112 projects covering 17,056 ha of new forestry plantations.

Promotion of Biofuel Production

Currently Colombia produces 1.1 million liters of ethanol per day, which absorbs an annual total of around 342,000 tons of raw sugar. Biodiesel produced from palm oil totals 170,000 liters a day. Three biodiesel plants using African palm will come on line in 2008, enabling the country to produce more than 900,000 liters per day.

In order to strengthen and promote cooperative ties, under the aegis of the Puebla–Panama Plan's Mesoamerican Biofuels Project, in September 2007 the MADR signed memoranda of understanding on biofuel technical cooperation with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The plants that are to be built in those three countries will use 100% Colombian technology and will have a capacity of 2,000 liters/day. Some \$7,000 million has been allocated to this undertaking.

Regulatory Developments

Law 1152, on Rural Development, was enacted in June 2007. Its aims include:

- To collate and update the provisions governing rural development in accordance with the new institutional framework.
- To establish mechanisms for rationalizing the use of large areas of nonproductive land, allowing the state to purchase them at their registered value.
- To distribute subsidies for land purchases by means of public calls for bids, awarding those subsidies in accordance with the demands of producers and ensuring the transparency of the land allocation mechanism.
- To incorporate more and better protection for displaced populations. In particular, this is the first law to break with the principle of *res judicata* in legal proceedings in which a displaced person's status as such was not recognized and his or her rights were violated.
- To establish a new mechanism for handing out land adaptation subsidies, on demand by means of public invitations.
- To eliminate unnecessary formalities so that illegally acquired land that has been seized under eminent domain can be used for agrarian reform.

Particularly worth noting is the broad and detailed process of social debate that surrounded this law, both prior to and during its passage through Congress of the Republic, involving representatives of campesino organizations, indigenous communities, and Afro-Colombian people, the National Commission for Reconciliation and Redress, farmers' associations, academics, the office of the People's Defender, and the office of the Delegated Attorney for Agrarian Matters.

Access to Land

In 2007, the land allocation program benefited 2,760 families, as 29,943 hectares were handed over, representing a total investment of \$46,676 million. As part of Colombia's commitment toward its displaced population, 64% of these lands were awarded to 1,897 families who had been displaced by violence; a further 28% went to campesinos, 5% to indigenous people, and 3% to demobilized fighters and Afro-descendant communities.

Under the terms of the new Rural Development Law, in March 2008 a call was issued for members of the campesino and displaced populations to submit projects for the Comprehensive Land Subsidy (acquisition of land and establishment of a productive project). The available resources total \$60 billion (distributed as \$40 billion for displaced families and \$20 billion for campesino families).

In addition, during 2007, title deeds were issued covering 61,059 ha of unused land and benefiting 2,277 families: 21,365 ha for 166 families from Afro-descendant communities, and 39,694 ha for 2,111 settlers.

Land Adaptation

During 2007, the Colombian Rural Development Institute (INCODER) handed out resources totaling \$147,074 million for the construction and repair of irrigation and drainage districts. Of this amount, \$113,665 million was invested in building two large irrigation projects (Ranchería and Triángulo del Tolima), covering 43,000 ha and benefiting 9,700 families. The remaining \$33,409 million were used for small- and medium-scale irrigation, covering 14,293 ha and benefiting 4,511 families.

Development of Investment Opportunities and Capitalization of the Assets of Rural Microenterprises

Promotion is given for access by rural microenterprise organizations to financial resources for the direct contracting of rural technical support services, through public calls for bids. Additionally, microcredit services are offered to the owners of rural microenterprises, through specialized financial institutions.

Between July and August 2007, joint funding worth \$3,323 million was given to 124 technical services projects, benefiting 3,494 families. Financial services provided 1,067 microcredits totaling \$2,098 million.

Strengthening Rural Companies

Support for Productive Partnerships Project: In 2007, incentives worth \$11,799 million were allocated for the design and execution of 40 productive partnerships, benefiting 2,689 families.

Rural Social Interest Housing Program: In 2007 subsidies totaling \$81,076 million were awarded, benefiting 12,499 families; of this amount, \$56,724 million (70%) was given to displaced families. These subsidies are efficiently multiplied by leveraging a total investment of \$114,107 million in rural social interest housing projects.

Farm Sector Strategic Information and Communication Network (AGRONET)

The Ministry of Agriculture continued with the development of the Farm Sector Strategic Information and Communication Network (AGRONET), which can be accessed over the internet at www.agronet.gov.co. To strengthen and operationalize this network, in 2007 and 2008 the MADR signed a technical cooperation agreement with the IICA office in Colombia.

Environment

Environmental Agreements

Conservation of Biodiversity

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); Washington, March 3, 1973

Activities have taken place in the areas of conservation and sustainable use, in order to create the conditions for the implementation of national protection and management plans for the conservation of habitats and natural populations of species threatened by use, exploitation, illegal trafficking, and international trade.

Amendments were also made to Annexes I and II of the Convention, and the Institute of Natural Sciences of the National University of Colombia was designated to serve as the CITES Scientific Authority in Colombia.

The Plants Committee will meet from April 15 to 18, 2008, and the 23rd meeting of the Animals Committee will take place on April 21 to 24; these events will continue to work on the basis of the results of COP 14 and COP 15.

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

Following the decision of the 8th Conference to begin negotiations for an international regime for access to genetic resources, work continued on the negotiation document that was discussed at the fifth meeting of the Special Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing, held in the city of Montreal, Canada, in October 2007. Colombia consolidated a national position vis-à-vis those negotiations and participated actively at the sixth meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, in January 2008, when Colombia assumed clear leadership amongst the Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries, thanks to a delegation comprising the main agencies with competence in this area.

As regards the topics to be addressed by the fifth meeting of the Special Working Group on Article 8(j) and its related provisions, there have been informal exchanges with the organizations representing traditional communities, which will also attend the WG8J5 meeting under the provisions of the Special Fund for the Participation of Local Communities created by the Convention Secretariat.

Colombia also participated in the discussions and meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) held in Paris in July 2007 and in Rome in February 2008.

Work is underway on the National Biodiversity Inventory and on including the Biodiversity Information System as an integral part of the Environmental Information System for Colombia; on implementing the National Program for Continental and Marine Bioprospecting; on implementing the National Agenda for Research, Development and Technology Transfers for New Added-Value Products; on declaring new protected areas; on strengthening the National Biocommerce Observatory (OBIO); on the biodiversity conservation programs in the plains and mountainous woodlands ecosystems of the Colombian Macizo; and on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the northeastern Andean region.

Over the past year, progress has been made in laying the conceptual and technical bases for consolidating the National System of Protected Areas and for promoting Civil Society National Reserves.

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Montreal, January 29, 2000

Colombia conducted an Assessment of Environmental Risks and Information System Management in support of the Environmental Evaluation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), a joint effort with the National Commission for the Understanding and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) of Mexico, which was held on August 27–31, 2007, in Mexico City, Mexico.

Work continued on preparing Colombia's position vis-à-vis the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress under the Protocol of Cartagena (BS/WG-L&R), which is jointly chaired by Colombia and the Netherlands and which held its fourth meeting in Montreal, Canada, in October 2007.

Colombia also hosted the fifth meeting of the Working Group in Cartagena in March 2008, which was attended by around 260 delegates from more than 100 countries.

Additionally, Colombia has also developed its national regulatory framework for the biosafety of genetically modified organisms; the national biosafety agencies also carried out the GEF Project "Capacity building to implement the Protocol of Cartagena in Colombia" (2004–07), the goals of which were to: (a) build the national biosafety capacity needed to strengthen the legislative framework and operating mechanisms for biosafety management in Colombia; (b) build the capacity for a risk assessment and monitoring system; (c) establish a system of biosafety databases and an international mechanism for information exchanges to set up centers of excellence and a network for biosafety research, risk assessment, and monitoring.

In connection with the Protocol, the project "Capacity building in communication and education on the topic of biosafety in Colombia" was carried out, funded by GTZ resources. Its aims are to take actions to raise awareness and educate the public and civil society, with emphasis on consumers, communicators, and the educational community regarding biotechnology and biosafety issues, in accordance with the Protocol of Cartagena.

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat; Ramsar, February 2, 1971

The Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT) attended the Regional Workshop for Latin American decision-makers on "The impact of decisions on wetlands and their migratory species," held in Panama City on August 25–29. In addition, the Laguna del Otún and Chingaza wetlands complex was listed as a Ramsar site.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; Paris, June 17, 1994

Work has focused on awareness raising and on intersectoral efforts to prevent and mitigate land degradation processes; the creation of economic incentives to prevent unsustainable land use; and including desertification issues in Territorial Ordering Plans and in the Action Plans of Autonomous Regional Corporations.

The country attended the 5th Forum of the Inter-Regional Cooperation Platform between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean for the implementation of the Convention, which was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on June 18–21, 2007.

Colombia also hosted the launch of the network of Regional Thematic Program TPN5 on traditional knowledge, technologies, and practices against desertification and drought mitigation in Latin America

and the Caribbean; this event took place in Bogotá on May 23–25, 2007, and was attended by delegates from 10 of the region's countries.

Implementation of Sustainable Forestry Management

International Tropical Timber Agreement and International Tropical Timber Convention; Geneva, January 26, 1994.

The rationale was drafted for the proposed legislation that is to be placed before the Congress of the Republic for adopting the International Tropical Timber Organization's successor convention (ITTO Convention). The 43rd meeting of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) and the corresponding meetings of its committees adopted the Corantioquia Draft, "Sustainable Forestry Zoning for the productive areas in the north and northeast of the department of Antioquia," and renewed the projects in Chocó and Guaviare.

CORNARE project PD 54/99 Rev.2-OIMT, "Alternative financing model for the sustainable management of the forests of San Nicolás, Colombia," was audited, and discussions were held about establishing a Convention on Sustainable Forest Management.

Implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements on Hazardous Substances

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

The MAVDT began work on a draft standard to establish a prior notification procedure for imports of the waste products listed in Annex IX of the Basel Convention (deemed in principle not to be hazardous, unless they contain Annex I substances in sufficient amounts as to make them dangerous).

For electrical and electronic waste, strategies were agreed on with the mobile telephony sector to launch a pilot project to collect post-consumer waste, batteries, and handsets at the end of their useful lives. Under the leadership of the MAVDT, a working panel was established with the computer equipment subsector with a view toward formalizing an agreement to develop a national strategy for the environmentally appropriate and sustainable management of post-consumer waste derived from the use of computer subsector products in Colombia.

In addition, through the Computers for Education program, the MAVDT and the Ministry of Communications agreed to combine their efforts to develop a "Pilot study for the environmentally rational gathering, separating, restoring, and recycling of unused computers, as a part of the South American electrical and electronic waste inventory project." This project receives financial support from the South American Regional Center of the Basel Convention, based in Argentina, and from Colombia's Computers for Education program.

Finally, the MAVDT attended the Let's Recycle Electronic Components Workshop Project, held on October 24–26, 2007, in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, which enabled exchanges of information related to Convention implementation.

Climate Change

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (New York, May 9, 1990) and its Kyoto Protocol (December 11, 1997)

In pursuit of the Protocol, a portfolio of projects related to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and deforestation has been created within MAVDT. The aim is to bolster the availability of CDM projects in the country through support and guidance for project designers, by disseminating information on

funding sources, by strengthening the Ministry's ability to provide services, and by participating in international negotiations.

At the 13th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 13) and the Third Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 3), held in Bali, Indonesia, on December 3–14, 2007, one of the most important achievements for Colombia was the launch of the Adaptation Fund and the inclusion of subnational projects as an option within avoided deforestation activities. At this conference, Colombia presented a side event at which it showed an original video on adaptation experiences in Colombia and on the implications and negative impact of climate change in the country.

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna, Austria, March 22, 1985) and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer as amended at London, Copenhagen, Montreal, and Beijing

Current work under the Convention and the Protocol is also directed toward establishing a benchmark for hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) consumption based on average consumption in 2009 and 2010, as soon as information on imports of these substances can be retrieved from the DIAN, with a view to freezing them as of 2013.

At the Conference of Parties to the Montreal Protocol, held in September 2007, the Ozone Technical Unit of the MAVDT received an award recognizing its efforts in implementing the Montreal Protocol in the country. According to that Unit, in 2007 an 85% reduction in chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) consumption was attained.

As part of the strategy of the National Environmental Education Policy, during 2007 encouragement was given for the implementation of joint projects to educate and raise the awareness of children and young people in the city of Bogotá regarding the protection of the ozone layer, climate change, and air quality.

Levels of Environmental Protection

In March 2008, policy document CONPES 3510 was adopted, which sets policy guidelines for promoting the sustainable production of biofuels in Colombia. This policy is part of the strategy to prevent air pollution by promoting cleaner fuel sources.

The MAVDT works to promote the consolidation of the National Intersectoral Technical Commission for the Prevention and Control of Air Pollution, and it coordinates the design, implementation, follow-up, assessment, and adjustment of the relevant national policies, strategies, and instruments.

Under the coordination of the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), the national protocols for monitoring air quality and fixed and mobile emissions are prepared, validated, and adjusted; in addition, five pilot studies to assess the impact of air pollution on health are also being conducted.

Disaster Management

Policies and Initiatives for Preventing, Mitigating, and Addressing the Consequences of Natural Disasters

In the implementation of policies to improve our ability to prevent, mitigate, and address the consequences of natural disasters, work has been ongoing on development plans at the national, departmental, and municipal levels.

National Capacity-Building

Through the Program to Reduce the State's Fiscal Vulnerability to Natural Disasters, technical advice was given to 106 municipalities regarding the inclusion of risk prevention and mitigation in land zoning processes, a project that has been ongoing until the current year. In addition, efforts have been underway to strengthen the monitoring and oversight systems, by updating the instruments of the national hydroclimatology, seismology, and vulcanology systems.

Strengthening Cooperation with Civil Society and the International System

The Directorate for Disaster Prevention and Attention is carrying out a local emergency plan training program intended to strengthen institutions, regional and local committees, and communities located in high-risk areas, in coordination with the Humanitarian Affairs Coordinating Office (OCHA) and Action against Hunger.

Strengthening Hemispheric Cooperation

As the coordinating agency of the National System for Disaster Prevention and Attention and in order to strengthen hemispheric cooperation and build national capacities, the Directorate for Disaster Prevention and Attention carried out the following activities:

- Support for the event “Cost-Benefit Analysis: Proving that intervening in reducing vulnerability in the Americas is a better option,” which was held on December 11–12, 2007, under the mandates issued by the OAS General Assembly and the policy guidelines of the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) and the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CSH).
- On April 10–11, 2008, it organized the First Meeting of Regional Initiatives for Disaster Prevention and Attention, “A Continent United by Risk Management,” with the goal of informing about the work taking place in this field and of promoting joint strategies to combine efforts in pursuit of knowledge and teamwork for reducing risks in the region's countries.
- It continues to work on the Andean Strategy under the PREDECAN-CAPRADE project (pursuant to POA 2007–08, adopted in Medellín on September 25, 2007); this strategy facilitates integration and technical cooperation among the four member countries of the Andean Community.
- It is assisting the development of the Mesoamerican Risk Prevention Atlas initiative, in connection with which Colombia has attended two meetings convened by the Puebla–Panama Plan, at which it offered its experience in order to assist the process. Particularly noteworthy is the participation of the Geographical Information Research and Development Center (CIAF) of the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute, which contributes its expertise in the fields of spatial data infrastructures, geographical standards, and geospatial developments.

In addition, work on consolidating the Geographical Information System of the National System for Disaster Prevention and Attention (SIGPAD) has been ongoing through the system's agencies and at the

regional level; work on the final phase, entailing creating the management and citizenship models, is currently concluding.

Reducing Vulnerability

In 1997, Colombia enacted Law 400, establishing criteria and minimum requirements for the design, construction, and technical oversight of new buildings, and of those necessary for community recovery following earthquakes, that might be subject to seismic stress and other forces of nature or use, to ensure that they are capable of resisting, to increase their resistance to the effects of such forces, to minimize the risk of loss of human life, and to defend, to the extent that is possible, private and state property.

Tampere Convention

The instrument of adhesion to the Tampere Convention is currently being processed so that, once it is signed, it can be sent to the United Nations General Secretariat, in its capacity as Convention depositary. It will come into effect 30 days following the deposit of the instrument.

Trade

Support for WTO Negotiations

As an active member of the WTO and in line with the goals of its trade policy, Colombia participates constructively in ongoing multilateral negotiations, convinced of the complimentary role played by bilateral and regional free trade strategies. The Doha Round offers a great opportunity to strengthen the multilateral trading system and to show that it offers opportunities to all nations.

Colombia believes that a balanced result in the Doha Round negotiations will translate into improved access for its main export products (agricultural and industrial goods), the establishment of Mode 4 in service provision, as a concrete expression of real benefits in trade and development. Similarly, the Round will benefit developing countries if market liberalization is assured, together with the elimination of concealed barriers to trade that obstruct the improved access conditions achieved by reducing tariffs, and if the domestic conditions required to attract major investment flows are consolidated.

Furthering Regional Integration

Colombia has developed a free trade strategy based on bilateral treaties, a policy that it pursues actively. In April of this year, Congress passed the Free Trade Agreement with Chile, negotiations for which concluded in late 2006.

In August 2007, the Colombia – Northern Triangle FTA was signed, and it is expected to come into force early next year. Negotiations also began with Canada in July 2007 with a view to an FTA, and these are expected to conclude around mid-year.

Colombia has also sought closer relations with the CARICOM nations, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic, geared toward improved trade and investment relations; and, in the middle of last year, negotiations began for an Association Agreement between the Andean Community and the European Union.

Civil Society Participation

At the start of the negotiations toward reaching a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Colombia developed and implemented an information and participation model for civil society in trade talks, which it has continued to use for its agreements with Chile and Central America, and for the ongoing

negotiations with Canada, the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the European Union.

This information and participation model covers several components, including the publication in electronic media of the progress in the negotiations, the presentation of topic reports before and after the rounds for interested sectors of civil society, assistance for the side negotiations, and the opening of specific forums for ethnic groups and minorities, and the organizing of extensive debates and public presentations at the regional level, intended to reach the different levels of civil society.

Strengthening the Participation of MSMEs

In Colombia there are some 1,400,000 MSMEs, which account for around 80% of all jobs in the country and for more than 50% of its industrial output.

The country has a comprehensive support policy for MSMEs, in line with the mandates of the Summits of the Americas, the aims of which are to:

- Eliminate restrictions on access to funding.
- Strengthen nonfinancial support instruments (Fomipyme).
- Establish conditions for innovation and technological development, by promoting and encouraging applied research and technological development, in order to improve the competitiveness of productive sectors.
- Improve the competitive position of MSMEs on national and international markets.
- Incorporate MSMEs into the strategy for competitive internationalization.
- Consolidate the MSME sector as a source for creating wealth and quality employment.

Infrastructure

Telecommunications

By means of Decree No. 2870 of 2007, Colombia adopted measures to facilitate the convergence of telecommunications services and networks. The aim of this decree is to establish a regulatory framework that will allow convergence in public telecommunications services and in state telecommunications networks; to ensure all the country's inhabitants have access to networks and services and can use them; and to promote competition between different telecommunications service providers.

The regulations include specific obligations for operators with a dominant position in the relevant market, including the obligation of offering and permitting disaggregated access to network elements, to submarine cable landing points, and to subscriber loops, in accordance with the technical and economic conditions determined by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (CRT).

Infrastructure Modernization

During 2007, the Compartel Program contracted with telecommunications operators for the expansion of the telecommunications infrastructure, in both rural and urban areas, to provide connectivity for the country's public institutions and productive sectors.

Thus, the Broadband Connectivity Program has reached the following totals of public institutions: 9,239 institutes of education; 1,032 city halls; 752 hospitals; 116 libraries; 83 municipal councils; 78 centers belonging to the ICBF (Colombian Family Welfare Institute); 57 Provincial Agribusiness Management Centers (CPGAs); 49 military bases; 15 Emergency and Security Centers (SIES); and two prisons.

Telecommunications Training

Under the aegis of the Executive Committee of CITEL, the Ministry of Communications (MINCOM) has supported the entire strategy developed by CITEL's General Coordination Office for Human Resource Development, which, during 2007, pursuant to resolution COM/CITEL RES. 204 (XVIII-06), offered scholarships for 26 courses: 17 on-line and nine on-site.

The 2007 Program for Professional Development Scholarships of the OAS Department of Human Development offered 196 scholarships for one on-site course and ten on-line courses, for a total of 307 scholarships distributed among 27 countries: a 26% increase over the 2006 figure.

ICT: Competitiveness and Productivity

Colombia has adopted a National ICT Plan for 2008–19 (PNTIC), the aim of which is to ensure, by the end of that period, that all Colombian are informed and communicate through the efficient and productive use of ICTs to improve social inclusion and increase competitiveness.

This plan set out a series of policies, actions, and projects, organized along eight principal axes: four crosscutting and four vertical. The crosscutting axes cover issues and programs with an impact on different sectors and groups within society. The vertical axes cover programs to encourage greater ownership and use of ICTs in the priority sectors identified by the Plan. The crosscutting axes are: (1) community, (2) regulatory framework, (3) research, development, and innovation, and (4) e-government. The four vertical axes are: (1) education, (2) health, (3) justice, and (4) business competitiveness.

The Plan emphasizes three basic aspects to be addressed in the short term on account of their potential effect for the mass adoption of ICTs within society: improving access to infrastructure, assisting the mass adoption of ICTs by SMEs, and consolidating the e-government process. Through this plan, technologies will be promoted and made available to citizens in their everyday lives.

Satellite Access

The MINCOM has been developing a proposal to modify the unified payments regime, which includes updating the fees for radio spectrum use charged to operators of fixed and mobile satellite services. The Ministry is also reviewing its internal regulations governing the satellite service regime, including landing rights for satellite service operators and licenses for providing services that make use of the satellite spectrum.

Development of Port Infrastructure

In this area, the DIMAR has carried out the following actions:

- Modernization of the Maritime Traffic Control Stations at the ports of Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Turbo.
- Design and drafting of architectural plans for the harbor master's office at Buenaventura.
- Purchase of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) for the Maritime Traffic Control Stations at the ports of Santa Marta and Barranquilla.
- Organizing a guidance and updating seminar for harbor masters, held on April 1–4, 2008.
- Training, provided by the International Maritime Organization and the Spanish Government, on maritime traffic control topics.
- Permanent work with the products of Light Detection and Ranging technology (LIDAR), which can, *inter alia*, recreate scenarios for events such as tsunamis, hurricanes, etc.

Compliance with Safety Standards of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Colombia, through the General Maritime Directorate (DIMAR) in its capacity as the national maritime authority, continues to conduct permanent studies, advisories, monitoring, and verifications of compliance with the international conventions and other instruments issued by the International Maritime Organization; the competent authorities' compliance with this is monitored, as is that of all maritime sector users involved in maritime activities of all kinds, including maritime transport.

Compliance with Current IMO Conventions, Rules, and Codes of Conduct

The written proposals made by Colombia, its coordination of working groups, and its leadership within the IMO make an important contribution to topics related to preventing the illegal maritime trafficking of narcotics. In that regard, particularly worthy of note was the IMO's issuing of joint resolutions MSC 228 and FAL 9(34) adopting the "Revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals on ships engaged in international maritime traffic." These guidelines, considered to truly reflect of the balance that must exist between international maritime transport and seaport protection, came into effect internationally in April 2007.

Energy

Regional Infrastructure Projects toward Consolidating an Integrated Energy Market

Energy Integration

1. Colombia–Panama Electrical Interconnection Project

High-tension electrical transmission line that will connect the two countries, integrating the electricity market of the Andean Community with that of the Central American region. This project is part of the Mesoamerican Energy Initiative of the Puebla–Panama Plan and its implementation and development takes full account of the regulations and environmental and social demands of each country. The project will handle a voltage of between 250 and 400 kV, and a capacity of 300 megawatts; it covers a total length of 614 km, of which 340 km are in Colombia and 274 km are in Panama.

2. Project to Strengthen the Electrical Interconnection between Colombia and Ecuador

The Bogotá Energy Company proposed a project for a dual-circuit 230 kV interconnection line between Betania, Altamira, Mocoa, Jamondino, and the Ecuadorian border, and the associated infrastructure works, with the Colombian portion starting operations in November 2007. The Ecuadorian section is currently operating. The project will increase Colombia's capacity to transmit electricity to Ecuador to 500 MW.

3. Project for Gas Interconnection between Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama

On April 12–13, 2007, Bogotá hosted the 12th meeting of the Colombian–Panamanian Neighborhood Commission, which reported that the Negotiation Committee involving Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama had made progress with the decision to continue with studies to visualize and conceptualize the gas interconnection project, based on an alternative route for the gas pipeline that had been preliminarily identified by the technical teams and the approval of joint funding for these studies, the terms of reference, and the project's execution calendar.

The third meeting of the Negotiation Committee was held in Caracas on June 19, 2007. It identified the basic scenario for the route of the transoceanic gas pipeline. Progress would also be made with the bidding process for its conceptual and basic engineering, and the working timetable for project visualization and the consulting firms that are to develop the visualization.

Meetings between the technical teams of the three delegations continued between September and December 2007, and they monitored progress with the study. By March 2008 the study was finished and pending the approval process.

In the Ballena–Maracaibo project, the Colombian portion of the Ballena–Maracaibo connection was opened on October 12, 2007, and the complete connection came on line on January 1, 2008, in accordance with the contract conditions signed by PDVSA, Chevron, and Ecopetrol for exporting gas to Venezuela.

4. Fuel Sales in the Border Region

Colombia and Venezuela signed the “Framework Contract for the fuel supplies between Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), and Ecopetrol, S.A., as agreed in the Fixed Point Agreement.” In addition, a specific agreement was signed for fuel imports into the department of Norte de Santander, and there is an agreement, through the Wayuu indigenous people, for fuel supplies for the department of Guajira. At present, only imports into the department of Guajira are taking place; imports into Norte de Santander are

expected to begin soon, and progress is also expected in signing specific contracts for the Arauca, Guainía, and Vichada areas.

5. Oil/Multipurpose Pipeline to the Colombian Pacific

In 2007 a binational group identified three alternatives for plans to build an oil pipeline from Venezuela to the Colombian Pacific. Once work with Venezuela has recommenced, the technical groups are to present the Guiding Committee with a draft report; those groups will in turn forward it to the relevant Ministers for approval and, finally, for consideration by the Presidents.

6. Regional Oil Product Market Project

The aim of this project is to build a high-conversion refinery in Central America to produce oil-based products for the entire region. The refinery's capacity will be selected by the bidders, with a guaranteed contract for 80,000 barrels a day of Maya (Mexican) crude for a period of eight years and with the obligation of supplying at least 55,000 barrels per day to the Mesoamerican region. Panama, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica are the potential locations of this refinery.

More than 60 companies were invited to bid; of these, 11 expressed an interest and the technical committee admitted five of them (Ecopetrol S.A, Reliance Industries Limited, China National Petroleum Corporation, Valero Energy Corporation, and ITOCHU Corporation). The contract will be awarded in May 2008.

Financing for Electrical Infrastructure

Policies implemented to improve the quality of life of the lowest-income population segments:

1. Financial Support Fund for the Energization of Non-Interconnected Zones (FAZNI)

The FAZNI was created in 2001 and, by means of Law 1099 of 2006, its existence was extended until 2014. It facilitates greater investment in existing electrical infrastructure and the construction of new infrastructure in non-interconnected zones. The aim is to introduce a concession mechanism, whereby this fund will assist in the development of plans, programs, and projects in pursuit of the rational use of energy, the substitution of fossil fuels, and the sustainable expansion of the electricity grid.

2. Financial Support Fund for the Energization of Interconnected Rural Zones (FAER)

With the aim of providing better electrical energy coverage in certain rural areas of the nation, the FAER was created in 2002, with a planned existence until 2009.

The progress made in expanding electricity coverage in the rural areas of the National Interconnected System (SIN) has led to the emergence of proposals whereby Network Operators will be the chief channels for access to FAER funding, through public requests for tenders; for this, each company will have to estimate the financially viable level of investment, in order to attain the coverage targets sustainably, guaranteeing the administration, operation, and maintenance of the plans, programs, and projects.

Electrical Network Standardization Program (PRONE)

The PRONE provides government financing for eligible plans, programs, or projects in accordance with the rules set out in Decree 3491 of 2007; it is to remain in existence for the same length of time as the different funds that finance the program. The PRONE is funded by up to 20% of the FAER's resources, with the adjustments made in order to reduce levels of below average electrical access.

The progress made in with the PRONE has led to the emergence of proposals whereby Network Operators will be the chief channels for access to FAER funding, through public requests for tenders, as described above.

Environmental Energy Management and Access to Economically Efficient Technology

The National Energy Plan states that the rational and efficient use of energy is an effective method to promote economic growth, social development, and, consequently, national wellbeing, thereby contributing to Colombia's development. Law 697 of 2001 declared the rational and efficient use of energy to be a matter of public and social interest and national desirability.

The biofuels program in Colombia seeks to reduce fossil fuel imports, assist rural growth and development and the creation of sustainable jobs, improve the competitiveness of the productive and transportation sectors, and reduce air pollution and its impact on health. Both the strategic plan of the transportation sector and the national policy for cleaner production contain components of this effort.

Colombia is a part of the Intersectoral Commission for the Rational and Efficient use of Energy and Nonconventional Energy Sources (CIURE). It participates in the Commission's programs intended to promote projects with non-conventional energy sources and energy efficiency, including cleaner or renewable energy projects, with particular attention to non-interconnected zones, as well as substitution of traditional fuels with other potentially cleaner fuels, and, in particular, the promotion and use of biofuels.

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

Ongoing Projects and Projects Under Development

- Ethanol: The country started to implement the fuel alcohol initiative in the southwest region, where the first sugarcane alcohol plant opened in 2005. At present there are five plants operating (Incauca, Providencia, Manuelita, Mayagüez, and Risaralda), which produce around 1,050,000 liters of fuel alcohol per day from sugarcane, which is mainly used to supply the domestic market. Currently, 71% of our gasolines are mixed with 10% fuel alcohol.

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

- Biodiesel: the first production plant that uses palm oil recently came on line, with a capacity of 50,000 t/year (Oleoflores, in Codazzi). A further eight projects are currently under construction: two in the north and one in the east, which will start production during the first half of 2008, and five projects that are planned to start up during 2008 and 2009.

Energy and the Environment

Colombia agrees with the central argument under discussion, which has to do with the security of the energy supply, and for that reason it has instituted a reorganization and reorientation process at the

institutional level in the energy sector in tandem with the development of an effective, efficient, and rational plan for the exploitation of mineral and energy resources.

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

As regards liquid fuels and the development of studies and projects on the use of biofuels, since 2005 all cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants are required to mix gasoline and oxygen components in the fuels they use. This measure, and others, has helped lead to the emergence in the country of a set of rules and proposed laws to promote the use of biofuels, thus steering energy regulations, from both an institutional and a business perspective, toward the promotion of generation and use of clean fuels in our country.

Education

A variety of strategies are pursued to respond to the need for expanded coverage; these emphasize the most vulnerable population groups, and improvements to the quality and relevance of education by interconnecting the entire education system around the development of basic skills and the strengthening of the efficiency with which education services are provided.

Expanding Education Coverage

Preschool, Elementary, and High-School Education

To guarantee comprehensive attention for children aged under five, particularly those belonging to the poorest and most vulnerable population groups, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) lead the implementation of education policy for early childhood. In order to attain total coverage in elementary education, emphasis has been placed on establishing the conditions necessary to keep pupils at school, with actions focusing on the rural population and the most vulnerable groups.

This attention combines several strategies to strengthen the role of the family, community mothers, teachers, and other education stakeholders. In 2007, 35,705 children received these services, and the total is expected to rise to 124,000 in 2008. According to 2007 figures, official enrolment rose by 139,793 at the secondary level and by 68,440 at the high-school level for a total of 208,233 new secondary and high-school places. Thus, the total official enrolment figure increased by 147,614, of whom 74,355 are vulnerable pupils. Similarly, 271,279 displaced pupils were attended to in 2007.

Under the literacy program, between April 2007 and April 2008, services for 205,097 new youth and adult students were contracted. During 2007, 45,768 students with special educational needs were catered to, and 77,914 students from ethnic communities received appropriate services.

To support this expansion of coverage, the remodeling or construction of 911 classrooms was approved. Work also began on the design of eight new schools in critical areas of cities with high displaced population levels; these will be built in the municipalities of Turbo, Cúcuta, Floridablanca, Cali, Cartagena (2), and Pereira (2).

Higher Education

- **New Places in Higher Education**

Total enrolment in 2006 was 1,301,728 students, for a coverage rate of 28%, according to preliminary population figures from the most recent census. Enrolment in 2007 rose by an additional 58,100 students, 28,935 of whom were registered in technical and technological programs; as a result, the proportion of the total enrolled in technical and technological education rose from 25.7% in 2006 to 27.9% in 2007.

- **ICETEX Credits and Subsidies**

Between April 2007 and March 2008, 75,820 students received credits through ICETEX, of which 49,724 were Access credits. This figure means that 17% of higher-education students receive funding from ICETEX credits. Of all the credits extended during this period, 47.7% were given to students from socio-economic levels SISBÉN I and II; in addition, 26,349 young people from SISBÉN levels I and II are receiving maintenance subsidies. As of March of this year, the resources in the ICETEX portfolio totaled \$1.23 billion.

- **Regional Higher Education Centers (CERES)**

The goal for the 2006–10 period is to create 50,000 new higher-education places through this strategy. During 2007 and 2008, 6,372 places were created.

Access to Education

The Digital Territory Strategy is a government initiative to transform the ways in which Colombians are educated and the ways they access state services, healthcare, information, and knowledge, how they do business and become more competitive, and many other undertakings.

This strategy seeks to improve learning environments through a series of actions including internet connections, distributing computers and technological solutions to public schools, teacher training, and the joint construction of a pedagogical model to recommend best practices for teaching classes that make use of information and communications technologies. In addition, educational materials have been prepared for students, teachers, and administrators, enabling them to exchange and secure access to up-to-date information and knowledge.

- **New Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)**

With the aim of expanding coverage in the higher education sector, support has been given for the implementation of new programs for the regions, using new methodologies, technologies, and alternative strategies. These include the Higher Education Virtual Object Database, which currently contains 2,055 learning objects available to institutes of higher education.

During 2007, 634 teaching staff in the higher education sector received training in basic ICT skills, and, through learning objects workshops and strategic ICT plans, a further 182 were trained. Support was given for the creation of the Tutors Network, and the Network of Higher Education Managers was created. Work is underway on consolidating the National High-Speed Academic Network (RENATA), which connects the academic world with educational and scientific facilities, both at home and abroad, to encourage research, innovation, and academic development. This network comprises 64 institutes of higher education.

- **Pedagogical Use of New Technologies and Media for Learning**

Between 2007 and March 2008, through the Computers for Education program, 37,237 computers were handed over to 3,355 official educational establishments. In addition, 4,110 rural and urban educational establishments were connected to the internet through phases I and II of the Compartel program.

A total of 10,942 teachers were trained at the national day for learning about the basic use of information and communications technologies and media called *A que te Cojo Ratón* (“I’ll Catch that Mouse”); another 15,190 teachers received more advanced courses in the use of information and communications technologies in the classroom. 9,790 teachers received training in the use of municipal public libraries provided by the National Reading and Libraries Plan.

Consolidation also continues of the **Colombia Learns Educational Portal** as the main vehicle for educational community access and contacts for developing basic skills. During the same period, 4,741 rural and urban educational establishments implemented plans for the use of ICTs in education.

Improving Education Quality

The proposal for the 2006–10 period is to consolidate an integral training system based on interconnecting all levels, from elementary to higher education, with work-related training in the development, acquisition, and strengthening of basic civic, general, specific, work, and research skills.

Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Education

The strategy is to involve schools, teachers, administrators, local administrations, and society in general in the implementation of a continuous improvement system to raise quality based on three basic elements: (i) defining, updating, and publicizing curricular standards and guidelines, (ii) regular evaluations of skills, and the publication and dissemination of the results, and (iii) promoting and assuring the quality of the schools and of the flexible educational models.

- **Formulation, Dissemination, and Social Ownership of Standards**

Between April 2007 and March 2008, progress was made with the training of serving teachers, through various pedagogical strategies to foster the ownership of basic skill standards in the educational community. 40,669 teachers participated in the dissemination and ownership of basic skill standards in language, mathematics, science, and civics in the 78 territorial entities.

- **Student Evaluations**

SABER Testing (Grades 5 and 9). Although these tests were not applied in 2007, progress was made with preparing the reference frameworks and with adjusting the tests to the basic skill standards required of students. Preparations were also completed for its pilot application among 10,000 pupils at B-schedule schools during the first half of 2008.

During 2007 progress was made with updating the web page that was used in interpreting, analyzing, and using the results with teachers and school administrators from territorial entities with a predominance of schedule B, by holding workshops organized by the MEN.

State Testing for Higher Education Entry (Grade 11). During 2007 the average national score in the eight common core areas was 44.39; this result was obtained from a total of 502,762 tests taken by students across the country.

In April 2008, the first annual round of the state tests for higher education entry will be held, during which students from B-schedule schools will be tested.

- **Promoting and Assuring Quality at Institutes of Education**

During the 2007–08 period, the MEN continued to advise and assist the 78 education secretariats of the certified territorial entities in supporting and developing plans to improve official places of learning and in consolidating their improvement support plans. Through this strategy, 3,264 educational establishments implemented institutional improvement plans with assistance from the education secretariats. 1,074 of these were among the lowest achieving schools.

Significant Experiences. The National Educational Forum on educational management and quality assurance was attended by 1,900 people. This event facilitated discussions on the impact of educational management in continuous quality improvement and heard presentations covering 170 significant experiences. This year, a national educational forum on evaluation will be held.

- **Training Teachers in Basic Skills and Improvement Plans**

In 2007 and to date in 2008, 1,369 official educational establishments in the rural and urban sectors have been strengthened, with permanent training projects for teachers in basic skills as indicated by training plans; in addition, territorial training committees in the 78 certified territorial entities were established and consolidated.

- **Development of Job Skills**

Between April 2007 and March 2008, the MEN trained – either directly or through its regional partners – 2,524 teachers and other educational agents in designing strategies so that elementary and secondary pupils can develop general job skills. With this same aim, assistance was given to 101 institutes of education belonging to 21 education secretariats, through integrated training, advisory, and assistance programs. Support was also given for connecting the SENA with secondary education to strengthen the acquisition of specific job skills by young people. To date, 36% of all academic secondary schools offer training in general job skills; in addition, 61 significant experiences with incorporating job skills into different arenas have been identified, systematized, and disseminated.

Higher Education

- **Higher Education Quality Assurance System**

Qualified Register of Programs. By March 2008, 97% of all undergraduate programs and 86% of postgraduate programs had been assessed, with the conditions under which those programs are offered and taught verified in light of the regulatory framework set by the established standards.

Accreditation of Programs and Schools. Between 2007 and March 2008, the National Accreditation Council awarded high-quality accreditation to 131 higher education programs, giving an accumulated total of 691 accredited programs. In addition, one university was accredited, giving an accumulated total of 13 institutes of higher education with high-quality accreditations.

- **Definition of Standards and Evaluation Skills (ECAES Testing)**

During 2007, progress was made with reviewing, grounding, and updating the design of how the ECAES tests – administered to students in the final year of higher education – are processed, marked, and reported. This method will be used as of 2008, which will enable this evaluation to be directed toward the development of skills.

During the first six months of 2007, 48,600 students in university, technical, and technological programs in 47 of the country's municipalities were assessed.

In November of that year the second ECAES 2007 test was administered, and, again, university, technical, and technological programs were evaluated. 49,392 students registered for this test, 48,041 of whom sat the exam in 38 different municipalities.

- **Research Promotion**

During 2007, nine research projects on the RENATA network were given financial support. Encouragement was given for the creation of doctorates from masters' degree programs in the country's main cities, to which end 12 masters' programs from the 65 registered programs were selected. An agreement was signed with the Fulbright Program, for masters' and/or doctorate training in the United States, and another agreement was signed with Germany's DAAD for postgraduate programs in that country.

- **Labor Observatory for Education**

During 2007, the results of monitoring the working conditions of 706,656 students graduating from higher education between 2001 and the first half of 2006 were published. The observatory has data on average income levels, employment rates, and the time that graduates take to find employment on the labor market.

- **Training for Work and Human Development**

Five well-attended workshops were held for agencies interested in the drafting of Decree 2888 of July 2007, which sets regulations for the creation, organization, and operation of institutions that offer educational services for work and human development and establishes basic quality criteria.

As regards information system covering nonformal educational institutions and programs, development continues through program modules, the registration of schools, and administration.

- **Internationalization of Higher Education**

The MEN has participated in the international trade negotiations of the Andean Community, Mercosur, and the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA), assisting with the topics of professional mobility and crossborder services. In order to promote exports of educational services, the Ministry supported a meeting of language specialists from Brazil and Colombia to support that neighboring country in its implementation of Spanish as a second language.

In 2007 and to date in 2008, 1,857 requests for the validation of higher education certificates issued by foreign institutions have been resolved.

- **Alliance for the Promotion of Higher Education**

The agreement signed by Social Action and the ICETEX seeks to promote access to higher education by Families in Action by granting, as an education credit, a subsidy to improve students' access conditions and permanence in their education processes. Social Action awards, as a nonreimbursable monetary incentive for students' maintenance, the amount of 1.15 times the minimum monthly wage per semester. In turn, through the ACCES project (Quality Access to Higher Education), the ICETEX awards a subsidy of 25% of the requested loan value to those who receive education loans and are registered at levels I and II of the SISBÉN.

As of March 10, a total of 1,160 loans had been approved for potential beneficiaries; for this year, however, the target is 7,000 students. In addition there are plans to hold 60 student encounters, styled "Looking for a degree?", in 16 municipalities around the country's 32 departments, which are expected to be attended by 29,115 secondary school students belonging to the Families in Action program.

Improving the Efficiency of the Educational Sector

- **Modernization of the Ministry of Education**

Strengthening Service Management. During the second half of 2006, the MEN obtained, from ICONTEC, ISO 9001:2000 Code SC 4006-1, certifying 6 services, and NTCGP 1000:2004 Code GP 001-1.

In pursuit of the Integrated Management System, 41 systematized processes were implemented; in addition, six functions and profiles manuals for six different offices were produced and implemented. In October 2007, ICONTEC conducted a follow-up audit and, in accordance with the results, the Quality Management System Certificate was retained in line with provisions NTC-ISO 9001 and NTCGP1000.

Information Systems. The MEN has persevered with developing and integrating the information systems necessary for processing on-line formalities, in order to foster the use and acceptance of the information systems available in different areas.

- **Modernization of Education Secretariats**

Information Systems, Computer Equipment, and Internet Connections. Between 2007 and March 2008, support was given to 57 education secretariats for the analysis, design, and implementation of procedures; 78 education secretariats received support for internet access and the continued availability of the Datacenter service to assist them in their work.

Technical assistance and advice for strengthening planning, decentralization, and reorganization processes in the education sector. Between April 2007 and March 2008, eleven workshops were held with the education secretariats in order to interconnect national policy with territorial policies, sectoral planning, the table of indicators, and legal matters. Two guides were also published: one on the management of good practices, and the other on guidelines and instruments for the sector's strategic management.

- **Modernization of Attached and Related Agencies**

A restructuring process is currently underway in three agencies attached to the MEN: ICFES, INCI, and INSOR.

ICFES Modernization. The technical team responsible for the design and implementation of Quality Management Systems was set up, with the aim of obtaining NTC GP 1000 certification.

ICETEX Modernization. Efforts were made to bring it into line with the demands of its special financial nature.

- **Modernization of Management of Institutes of Higher Education**

Modernization Plans. During 2007, the MEN supported 12 higher education institutes in modernizing their management processes.

Support for Decentralization Processes at Public Institutes of Higher Education. Eleven institutes of higher education were decentralized and transferred to the corresponding territorial entities; this process also entailed an improvement plan for each institution, aimed at expanding its coverage and improving its quality and efficiency.

National Higher Education Information System (SNIES) and Reference System. These systems seek to create a reference framework for higher education institutes that will inform them about the quality and efficiency of their internal policies, assess critical issues for decision making, and identify best practices

for replication. Between 2007 and March 2008, 106 higher education institutes were incorporated into the SNIES's table of indicators. Currently, 50% of higher education institutions are monitored through the SNIES table of indicators, and 30% of them automatically report information to the new SNIES.

Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology

In September 2007, the fifth regular meeting of the Inter-American Commission on Science and Technology (COMCYT), the principal hemispheric forum for consensus-building on the topic of science and technology, was held in Washington.

Colombia and Argentina were elected to chair the COMCYT, with each occupying the position for a period of one year. Colombia noted its commitment toward establishing mechanisms to evaluate the Plan of Action of Lima; it therefore set up a follow-up committee that is working jointly with the OAS Department of Science and Technology toward that end, as well as on preparing the second Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology, at which it hopes to present that assessment and a new Plan of Action.

In pursuit of the commitment to support public and private research associations, work has begun on devising a policy for consolidating the country's research and technological development centers in the different areas covered by national, sectoral, and regional programs; this is one of the main dimensions of the policy that is to guide actions in this undertaking. The targets of this policy are: (i) guaranteeing the consolidation and continuity of research groups and centers; and (ii) consolidating and creating new research groups and centers at universities, seeking to attain levels of excellence that will set solid foundations for masters' and doctorate programs.

During 2007, Colciencias assigned resources worth approximately US\$6 million for the institutional strengthening of 10 research centers, 11 technological development centers, and 7 Support Service Management Centers.

Science, Technology, and the Private Sector

Although the country's total investment in science and technology is not solely limited to the budget of Colciencias, the agency that serves as the technical secretariat of the Science and Technology System, 95% of its budget is used to promote science, technology, and innovation (STI). In 2007, the investment budget of the agency totaled some US\$70 million, which represents an increase of approximately 5% over the 2006 figure.

In addition, various multilateral agencies have supported Colciencias in its effort to promote STI in Colombia, through donations or reimbursable loans.

- OAS: "Promoting ownership of the ScienTI Network in Latin America and the Caribbean," funded with resources from OAS/FEMCIDI since 2006. This project entails three execution phases; during 2007, phase II was finalized, using resources totaling US\$70,000.
- IDB: In 2006, Colciencias signed a nonreimbursable cooperation agreement with the IDB for US\$392,994, to finance the consultancy services and asset procurement needed to carry out a technical cooperation project for developing an institutional framework to promote private capital investment in technology-based companies.
- World Bank: In 2002, Colciencias, ICETEX, and the Ministry of National Education signed an agreement with the World Bank for execution of the "Doctoral Training" project as a part of the Quality Access to Higher Education project (ACCES). Using funding from this agreement (US\$4.4 million), during 2007 support was given to the doctoral studies of 50 individuals through nonbinding

loans, and Colciencias provided counterpart funding worth US\$4,900. In addition, 65 doctoral programs in Colombia received support for infrastructure and mobility in the amount of US\$2.5 million.

In terms of the incentives granted to universities and other institutes of higher education for basic and applied research, during 2007 Colciencias supported 185 research projects with a total amount of some US\$16.8 million.

Dissemination of Science and Technology

Colciencias seeks to increase public perceptions of the importance and relevance of STI, and its chief target is to have at least one third of the population aware of STI developments and their importance for the country.

In promoting the production and transmission of STI television programs, an agreement was signed with the National University of Colombia for production of the sixth season of the magazine show *Mente Nueva*. Production was completed on the first stage of the children's series *Los Pepa*, comprising eight TV programs and a short feature film for the cinema; work also began on the second stage of this project, which will be broadcast nationwide in 2008. A project was designed for the production of 60 TV shorts on science, technology, and society.

For radio placements, the five community radio station networks, which had received training in the promotion of science and technology, were invited to submit proposals to produce 30 radio shorts on science and technology in their regions; this project progressed successfully and transmission is beginning, as are exchanges of the shorts – which totaled 150 – among the community radio stations. Various pullout sections on “Business Development Innovation” were published in *Portafolio* newspaper.

Continued support was given to the Science and Technology News Agency (Noticyt), which produced 48 press releases during the year, and the agency's web site was connected to the STI communication module on the Colciencias portal.

In strengthening Interactive Centers, new activities were established in: Maloka, the new “Life Gallery”: the “Biojourney” traveling project came to an end; and support was given for the preparation and production of modules for the science and technology gallery that is to be opened in 2008; Palmira Archaeological Museum: interactive displays were put in place in various galleries; Museum of Science and Play of the National University of Colombia: a cooperation agreement was signed for the design and production of two interactive traveling suitcases covering the topics “Gabriel García Márquez and *100 Años de Soledad*,” and “Look, look: What do you see?” (on optics) – 12 copies will be made of each and they will travel around the country, using the network and infrastructure of elementary and secondary schools associated with the Colciencias Ondas Program; support was given for the construction and launch of the new Explora Park in Medellín.

The interactive proceedings of the First National Science, Technology, and Innovation Week were produced and distributed among the 25 departments that participated in that great event. At the invitation of the Andrés Bello Convention, this project was presented at the annual meeting of the POP Network held in May 2007 in San José, Costa Rica. It was also accepted, in poster format, at the Ibero-American Congress on Citizenship and Public Policies for Science and Technology, held in February 2008 in Madrid, Spain.

As part of the public awareness efforts, two diploma courses on public dissemination of STI were held: one in Medellín with 28 students, and the other in Cali with 32 participants.

The National Conservatory on Relations between Science, Technology, and Culture was organized as part of Expociencia–Expotecnología, an event attended by 78 stakeholders from across the country. As a result of this event, the Colombian Network of Social Studies and Social Ownership of S&T (RedCESACyT) was created, and three working groups were set up to deal with the strengthening and/or creation of ownership projects, the role of ownership in S&T policy, and S&T communication; these topics will be promoted through the RedCESACyT, which will be hosted on the Colciencias web site.

It was decided that the first public debate, which is currently being organized, would be on biofuels. Universities and research groups involved with the topic were invited to present their citizen participation proposals and, after they had been studied, an agreement was signed with the National University of Colombia, which will carry out this activity in conjunction with the Fifth Commission of the Senate of the Republic.

Training Human Capital in Science and Technology

In this process mention must be made of the progress made with the nonbinding loan program for masters' degrees and doctorates, young researchers and innovators, and the Ondas Program.

- **Program of Nonbinding Loans for Masters' Degrees and Doctorates.** Colciencias has developed several strategies in pursuit of this goal, including the programs “Postgraduate Studies Abroad” and “Support for National Doctorates.”
 - Doctorate Programs Abroad: Supported by agreements with the Fulbright Commission and the National Planning Department, to fund studies in the United States; and Colciencias, with the support of LASPAU, intended to fund studies anywhere in the world. In the 2007 competition for postgraduate studies abroad, 95 beneficiaries were selected. In the 2007 competition for national doctorates, 50 beneficiaries were chosen.
 - Support for National Doctorate Programs: Colciencias has been supporting these programs since 2002 with resources from the ACCES project, used to fund infrastructure purchases, scientific exchanges, and nonbinding educational loans. Strengthening infrastructure has helped with the acquisition of laboratory equipment, specialized literature, computer equipment, specialized software, and connections to information networks. Scientific exchanges have allowed the internationalization of program research through scholarships for foreigners visiting the country and for Colombian academics abroad.
- **Young Researchers.** This is a strategy to bring young professionals with talent for research and innovation closer to the world of science and technological innovation, by connecting them with high-level research centers and technological development groups through grants and fellowships, educating them by means of guided practical learning. To date, 13 requests for proposals have been issued, through which support has been given to a total of 2,175 young researchers and innovators in different areas of scientific knowledge.

In 2007, 233 young researchers were funded by a \$1,450 million budget allocation for the Program. In addition, SENA resources were used to fund an additional 140 young innovators in the amount of \$874 million, giving an annual total of 373 young investigators and innovators.

- **ONDAS Program.** This is Colciencias' basic strategy for building a civic culture of science, technology, and innovation among Colombia's children and young people through research.

Through its efforts in the field of education, ONDAS promotes processes in schools, science clubs, and youth groups that are intended to develop inquisitiveness, so that students can become scientists and, at

the same time, cultivate their curiosity, imagination, discipline, logical thought about reality, and recognition of their values. In addition, this training for research enables them to understand their surroundings and prepares them to participate, on a rigorous basis, in society's decision-making. They also develop capacities for cooperation and solidarity within their working groups and with the individuals and institutions that support their scientific activities.

To meet these objectives, the Program restructured its 2007–10 plan of action into three strategic projects called Consolidation, Deepening, and Expanding. These seek to make more efficient and effective use of the experience accumulated by ONDAS in its six years of execution, as well as of the human, technical, and financial resources it has at the national level.

Colciencias, as the current Executive Secretariat of the International Network of Information and Knowledge for Science, Technology, and Innovation Management ("SCienTI Network"), and as one of the region's leaders in developing computer tools for measuring national capacities for science, technology, and information, has been pursuing the development of the multinational project "Strengthening the SCienTI Network in Latin America and the Caribbean," funded by the OAS and Colciencias.

The first technical meeting of phase II of the project was held in Bogotá in October 2007 and was attended by representatives of the national S&T agencies of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Other agencies, including the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, Brazil's BIREME, and the QUIPU Development Group of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, also attended.

The meeting also revealed the need to reorient the project in light of the current context of each country and the established targets. Eight working groups were set up, one for each topic identified as of importance to the aims of the SCienTI Network. For that reason, in October 2007, the OAS was asked for its authorization for the reformulation, while preserving its general objectives and purposes. Once that authorization was obtained, and in accordance and agreement with the identified need, the products and activities of phase II were redefined. This allowed progress to be made with three groups considered strategic in light of the network's current conditions.

Implementation and Follow-up of Scientific and Technological Activities

CIAM: Colciencias approved an amount of some US\$15,000 to support international mobility activities for the project "Comprehensive study of tropical aromatic and medicinal species with promise for the competitive and sustainable development of the natural essence, extract, and derivative agribusiness in Colombia," which is being carried out by the Colombian group and its counterparts in the United States and Chile.

CYTED: This organization approved 9,200 euros for Colciencias to carry out a series of one-day meetings on information policy in Latin America and the Caribbean; these are expected to take place in Bogotá during 2008. CYTED approved an additional two projects, with Colombian participation, as part of the agency's 2007 activities and worth an amount of approximately US\$11,000 each.

CABBIO: Support was given for CABBIO's course on "Microorganisms that encourage vegetable growth: Rhizobacteria and phosphate solubility or mobility agents," at the National University of Colombia.

ICGB: US\$10,000 were awarded for a research project and to enable Colombians to attend 19 international conferences.

OAS: Phases I and II of the project “Promoting ownership of the ScienTI Network in Latin America and the Caribbean,” in which Colciencias serves as the Hemisphere’s lead agency, were carried out successfully.

Puebla–Panama Plan: During 2007, Colciencias presented a cooperation project aimed at the countries of the Puebla–Panama Plan and styled “Assistance for the Design and Implementation of Financing Instruments for Technological Innovation Activities in the Productive Sectors of the PPP countries.” The activities proposed in this project’s work plan are expected to be carried out during 2008.

Health

Essential Functions of Public Health

For the Public Health Monitoring and Laboratory components, since 2006 actions have been underway to reaffirm and strengthen commitments toward essential public health functions.

Parallel to this, the strengthening of the Monitoring System continues with its organization and development as a unified mechanism for providing efficient, quality, and timely information. In the Laboratory area, major investments were made in public health laboratories in order to strengthen their technological, technical, and logistical capacity for health monitoring, particularly as regards foodstuffs.

Under Law 1122, Decree 3039 of 2007, and Resolution 425 of 2008, the National Public Health Plan was adopted and developed as a framework document for directing the actions of agencies at the subnational level, with a view toward developing public health priorities.

International Health Regulations (IHR)

Under Decree 3518 of 2006, which regulates the Public Health Monitoring System (SIVIGILA), the Ministry of Social Welfare (MPS) was named the National Liaison Center for the International Health Regulations, for exchanges of information with the WHO and other international health agencies.

In order to enforce the obligations and procedures established by the International Health Regulations, the Colombian State has held meetings with the Ports Health Commission, comprising all the sectors with an interest in that international instrument. Circular No. 04 of January 21, 2008, set general guidelines for the application of the IHR and established the port health functions of the Territorial Health Directorates.

Work is currently underway on the adoption of rules to update the established regulations for the inspection, oversight, and control of risk factors that could affect human health at points of entry, free zones, and port facilities.

Maternal Health

During 2007, an inter-administrative technical cooperation agreement was signed, which led to the successful implementation of two initiatives for improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health and helping reduce maternal morbidity and mortality by adopting the adolescent-friendly health service model and designing and implementing a proposed methodology for monitoring extreme maternal morbidity in the departments of Nariño, Caldas, Cesar, Santander, and Meta.

After evaluating the results, the implementation of the adolescent-friendly health service model was expanded in the departments of Antioquia Bolívar, Boyacá, Guaviare, Huila, Norte de Santander, Tolima, Putumayo, Risaralda, and Valle del Cauca, and the proposed methodology for monitoring extreme

maternal morbidity in ten departments plus Bogotá, Boyacá, Cundinamarca, Huila, Magdalena, Norte de Santander, Tolima, Quindío, Risaralda, and Valle del Cauca.

Three service contracts were signed to strengthen the management skills of all stakeholders vis-à-vis the three topics of interest in maternal health and the risk-free exercise of sexual and reproductive rights in order to: strengthen the management of SRH as regards the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents; strengthen the management of the strategy to eradicate congenital syphilis and to prevent and control in utero syphilis; and strengthen the actions of all stakeholders vis-à-vis the prevention and control of maternal mortality.

HIV/AIDS

- **Cooperation and Exchanges of Information**

Technical assistance has been given to the National Health Institute (INS) for standardizing and making use of consolidated data from the database of cases registered nationally by means of notifications from the epidemiological monitoring system (SIVIGILA). Guidelines and support mechanisms were defined for the preparation of five research protocols needed to provide up-to-date information about the epidemic among the most vulnerable segments of the population. The reports needed by the international community were submitted, and other requirements to date were met.

- **Stigmatization, Misinformation, and Discrimination in the Workplace against People with HIV**

UNAIDS, UNFPA, and the United Nations Office for Security in Colombia pursued activities to assist the UN agencies' workers and associates in preventing the disease and in overcoming stigmatization and discrimination, by holding awareness meetings and providing information on transmission mechanisms and the potential for contagion in the workplace, voluntary advice, and laboratory tests; these actions were also made available to family members.

- **PAHO/WHO Crosscutting Cooperation Mechanisms**

The actions agreed on with PAHO/WHO include the preparation of a proposal for an Andean subregional monitoring and evaluation system for HIV/AIDS, and support for training technical staff from the INS and the Ministry of Social Protection in HIV/AIDS epidemiology and in methods for assessing resistance to antiretroviral therapy (ART). A replication effort of the latter is planned for the second quarter of 2008. Later, the feasibility of expanding epidemiological monitoring in this important area will be established.

UNAIDS supported training in the use of the software for making estimates and projections of the epidemic; a replication effort was carried out in the second half of 2007. In March 2008, it reviewed the projections and estimates for the world report, and it supported training in the method for measuring spending on AIDS (MEGAS).

- **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria**

The country presented the joint proposal to the Fund during the seventh round. The proposal was not accepted because the institution determined that there was not enough proven experience for managing the program. Discussions continue on the structure and scope of the proposal for the eighth round, with an Andean subregional coverage project as an additional component.

- **Access to ART**

Work continues to develop strategies and national and regional agreements to reduce prices. The Bill Clinton Foundation provided technical assistance. Although the ART coverage figures for 2007 are still being collated, in 2000 coverage was 40% and, by 2006, it had risen to 80%. The government's target is to achieve coverage rates of 86% in 2009 and 96% in 2011.

ART coverage among uninsured women, who receive services from the INS, totaled 68% over the period August 2006 to November 2007.

- **Prevention, Attention, and Treatment**

Currently, only 30% of cases are diagnosed at the AIDS stage, and the insurance agencies have stepped up their search for new cases. These are all a part of the National HIV Observatory and, in turn, have their own observatories for management and results, through which they detect and treat HIV among people with TB and STIs, pregnant women, and members of the public who voluntarily request tests.

The insurance agencies of the contributions regime have approximately 10,774 patients, which gives a prevalence rate of 0.08%; this is higher than the national figure, indicating that patients are concentrated among the insured population, which is supported by the incidence rate of 15.1 per 100,000. Thus, most HIV patients are handled and receive pharmacological and nonpharmacological treatment through the agencies of the contributions regime, and approximately one third of the tests with likely or positive results have been conducted under that regime.

The comprehensive attention model seeks to ensure that its programs address the problem starting before the pathological process begins, through activities to promote sexual and reproductive health that are interconnected with interventions made by the primary care network and at the community and family levels.

Children's Health

Continuing with the actions implemented over the previous four-year period, the coverage of the Comprehensive Care for Prevalent Childhood Diseases Strategy (AIEPI) was expanded, by providing training and technical assistance for the territorial directorates, EPS, and ARS for implementing the Management Model for Children's Health and Wellbeing, which includes components for the local, clinical, and community management of that strategy. In addition, courses on the clinical and community components were held for national-level officials and those responsible for managing children's health in the territorial entities.

- **Children's Health and Wellbeing**

The Management Model for Children's Health and Wellbeing serves as a conceptual and methodological guide for devising children's health management plans through meetings and consensus-building between the public and the local authorities; it facilitates the existing tools, instruments, and methods in keeping with local realities, with the purpose of offering all children an equal start in life within a harmonious and equitable environment, thereby ensuring sustainable human development irrespective of differences of race, creed, or socioeconomic or cultural situation.

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

- **Promotion, Prevention, Control, and Treatment Programs**

In September 2007, the Ministry of Social Welfare and PAHO signed an agreement on the cooperation strategy agenda and technical cooperation portfolio for social protection in Colombia, with the targets of the Millennium Development Goals as the priority areas.

- **Inoculation Programs**

National vaccination coverage for 2007 was above 92.9% for all diseases. New vaccinations introduced included pneumococcus and rotavirus, for children with birth weights below 2.5 kg or with an identified basic pathology. In 2007, inoculations against seasonal influenza began among children aged between 6 and 18 months. This will be expanded during 2008 to cover those aged from 6 to 23 months.

Tobacco Control

The country deposited its instrument of ratification of the Framework Agreement for Tobacco Control with the United Nations. The Ministry of Social Welfare is committed to taking steps to promote and develop strategies to prevent and control the use, sale, and advertising of tobacco and its derivatives across the nation.

Tuberculosis Prevention and Control

In 2006 Colombia adopted a strategic plan styled “Colombia Free of Tuberculosis 2006–15 for expanding and strengthening the DITS/TAS Strategy,” as a part of the new “Stop TB” global strategy proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) for 2006–15, the aim of which is to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health problem by 2050 and ensure a world free of TB.

Diagnosis and Clinical Management of Dengue

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

Monitoring dengue morbidity and mortality rates is covered by SIVIGILA’s mechanism for the oversight of transmissible events and preventable deaths, and actions taken must be in line with the competences assigned to the different players by the system. Over the past year, 22,205 cases of classical dengue and 3,383 cases of DHF were reported to SIVIGILA. Figures indicate a declining trend in the number of cases over the past three years.

Because of their dimensions and importance, diseases such as dengue and malaria have been identified as public health priorities by the Ministry of Social Welfare. This is in line with global priorities and the Millennium Development Goals. The National Development Plan includes the target of reducing complications and deaths from these diseases among Colombia’s at-risk population by 50%.

Influenza and Bird Flu

Since 2005, Colombia has a National Plan to prepare for a pandemic of influenza and bird flu. This plan is currently being implemented by the INS; some significant progress has been made with the production of technical documents for involving and preparing stakeholder sectors regarding the topic, and a Technical Commission for preventing and mitigating the impact of the bird flu pandemic in Colombia was created and put into operation. In conjunction with PAHO, Colombia is conducting practice drill exercises to prepare for a potential pandemic.

Social Protection for Health

During 2007, a total of 3,300 professional risk cases were attended to, in accordance with the established forms of intervention: agreements, rural women, young workers, and the mining sector. For 2008, informal economic activities in the forestry, tanning, informal commerce, and palmtree sectors were included.

Work is underway on analyzing and consolidating the results of the 22 exploratory studies of health and working conditions, carried out under agreements covering vulnerable working populations in the departments of Bolívar, Santander, Medellín, Tolima, Valle, Magdalena, Caquetá, Quindío, Risaralda, Casanare, Huila, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Sucre, Boyacá, Nariño, Córdoba, Atlántico, and Putumayo over 2004–07. Based on these results, a national diagnosis of health and working conditions among the vulnerable working population in the informal sector of the economy will be prepared, covering variables related to socio-demographic profiles and health and working conditions, broken down by economic activities.

In addition, work is underway on designing a model for monitoring the health and working conditions of workers in the informal sector of the economy engaged in commerce and agriculture; the aim is for this model to be applied in the country's 22 departments that have diagnoses of health and working conditions, as a follow-up effort for the promotion and prevention already carried out.

To impact certain specific segments of the population, during 2008 actions in urban areas will focus on informal commerce, while those in rural areas will concentrate on agriculture, fishing, and forestry; in this way, those economic activities that account for a major proportion of the economy's informal sector will be covered. Also involved will be those community mothers of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), who are independent workers who seek to promote a culture of self-care.

Service Quality

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

Human Resources for Health

In October 2007, Law 1164 of 2007 was passed, establishing the legal framework for regulating the training, professional exercise, and work of health practitioners and occupations. The corresponding regulations are being drafted, involving, *inter alia*, the National Council for Human Talent in Health; the Intersectoral Commission for Human Talent in Health; certifications, re-certifications, Single National Register, or Sole Identification Card; allocation of public functions to professional associations; bonuses and incentives for health-related human talent; relationship between teaching and service, and forums for practical training; interconnections between the Ethics and Bioethics Commission and the Intersectoral Bioethics Commission; mechanisms for the oversight and control of practices based on alternative medicines and forms of treatment; mechanisms for the oversight and control of practices based on traditional medicine; and the Observatory for Human Talent in Health.

Children and Youth

1. Ten-year Plan for Children and Adolescents

In compliance with the commitments acquired with the United Nations, in 2003 work began on drafting the National Plan for Children and Adolescents, with the participation of both national and territorial agencies. This process defines the objectives, targets, and strategies for improving the quality of life of children and adolescents over the next 10 years.

Known as the “Country Plan,” it uses a rights-based approach and is framed by the social protection system and the social management of risk; it has, as its axis for action, the joint responsibility of the family, society, and the state. It thus seeks to set general guidelines for the territorial-level development plans that are to be devised over the coming years. In the long term, its goal is to consolidate attention for and investment in children and adolescents as a priority on the country’s public agenda.

The final version of the document “Colombia: Happy Children with Equal Opportunities – National Plan for Children and Adolescents 2007–17” was recently presented, with the participation of the public policy agencies with responsibilities for this segment of the population, nongovernmental and civil society organizations, and international cooperation agencies.

This document was preceded (since early 2007) by a national effort for local authorities to recognize children, adolescents, and youths as promoters of development and civic coexistence, at the head of a vital process of social mobilization and political commitments.

During this period the country enacted the Law on Childhood and Adolescence, devised and published the “Framework for public policies and guidelines for development planning for children and adolescents at the municipal level – Guide for mayors,” and finished work on drafting the National Plan for Children and Adolescents.

As a result, and in line with the progress made to date, the national government, oversight bodies, and international cooperation agencies are promoting technical assistance to strengthen local capacities for guaranteeing and restoring the rights of this segment of the population, by providing the territorial administrations with conceptual tools and techniques for incorporating the rights of children, adolescents, and young people in planning for development, conducting social studies, defining policy priorities, and designing and managing the plan – including funding sources – within the legal framework set by the Code of Children and Adolescents, the Youth Law, and the “Framework for public policies and guidelines for development planning for children and adolescents at the municipal level – Guide for mayors.”

Following the electoral timetable, the following actions were taken: work with potential candidates for the inclusion of proposals dealing with childhood and adolescents in government programs (July–October 2007); meeting with governors-elect (November); forums with elected mayors (November, December); forum with departmental planning chiefs (January 2008); 25 departmental forums with 86% of municipal planning chiefs (February); 33 forums with council members and deputies for political control over the development plans (March and April).

2. Municipal and Departmental Strategy for Children and Adolescents

This strategy emerged from a national process led by the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation, UNICEF, and the ICBF, and is intended to follow-up on: (1) the inclusion of the topic of children in development plans, and (2) the quality of life and living conditions of children and adolescents.

Other state players are also involved, as are several international organizations (IOM, UNDAF, International Plan, and Save the Children).

With the participation of the territorial entities, nine priority areas were defined: maternal health; children's health; breast feeding and nutrition; early-childhood education; sexual and reproductive health (emphasizing the prevention of teenage pregnancies); prevention of violence and child abuse; drinking water and basic sanitation; civil registrations; participation; and protecting and restoring violated rights.

In pursuit of this strategy, baselines were set for the main indicators, and five prior meetings were held with the governors to identify commitments in the main subject areas. This year, a six-year strategic plan is being formulated, and work continues on developing the roadmap for territorial technical assistance, with emphasis on the two follow-up objectives.

In addition, the following actions were taken:

- Fifth meeting of governors on November 20–21, 2007, with two main objectives: sustainability of the “Facts and Rights” strategy, and liaison between serving governors and governors-elect.
- Design of the 2008–12 Strategic Plan, along four main lines: promotion of coordinated state action; capacity building among territorial entities; joint social responsibility; and control and assessment of the results obtained by the public administration.

3. National Food Security and Nutrition Policy

The Ministry of Social Protection and the ICBF are the lead agencies for the National Food Security and Nutrition Policy, which was adopted by Conpes 113 in March 2007, as a fundamental priority tool for the country's economic and social development.

The aim of this policy is to “ensure that the Colombian population has, can obtain, and consumes foodstuffs on a permanent and timely basis, with sufficient quality, variety, and safety, and in adequate amounts.” Although the policy targets the entire Colombian population, it requires actions that help mitigate the social and economic inequalities associated with insecurity in food and nutrition among vulnerable segments of the populace.

Priority is therefore placed on the most vulnerable population groups, such as those displaced by violence, the victims of natural disasters, ethnic groups (indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, Raizals, Gypsies/Roma), children, pregnant and nursing mothers, and people (especially rural dwellers) with the lowest levels of income.

As a strategy for the implementation of this policy, work is underway on designing the National Food and Nutritional Security Plan and the corresponding territorial plans, which seek to enable the execution of the policy and to strengthen, raise awareness about, develop, and interconnect a national and territorial institutional structure, through comprehensive actions aimed at the most vulnerable segments of the population; these efforts are intended to reduce malnutrition rates in general, anemia and malnutrition among mothers and children, and obesity and overweight among the adult population.

As a decentralization strategy and to ensure the effective execution of the policy, there has been noteworthy progress to date in the participatory construction of territorial plans in the departments with the gravest food and nutritional problems, including Boyacá, La Guajira, Sucre, Nariño, Tolima, Norte de Santander, Meta, Bolívar, Amazonas, Córdoba, and Chocó, in response to specific regional demands. There are plans to provide the territories with advice and technical assistance during 2008, in order to conclude the preparation of departmental plans for the whole of Colombia.

4. National Policy for Sexual and Reproductive Health

The country has been pursuing this policy since 2003, with the aim of promoting the rights and improving the sexual and reproductive health conditions of the entire population, with emphasis on reducing vulnerability factors and risk behaviors, on promoting protection, and on providing attention for groups with specific needs.

This policy enables the country to strengthen the actions underway from previous years, with emphasis on reducing maternal and perinatal mortality by enforcing the National Plan for Reducing Maternal Mortality and applying the Biopsychosocial Model.

The ICBF's actions enable it to equip the population with tools to improve their enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights:

- Information: Actions to promote sexual and reproductive rights and sexual and reproductive health; training to improve sexual and reproductive health conditions in different sectors.
- Access to information, education, and sexual and reproductive health services.
- Living conditions: The ICBF pursues various programs that work to improve families' living conditions. These include "Living with Wellbeing," which seeks to strengthen healthy living habits, harmonious coexistence, and the exercise of human, sexual, and reproductive rights within families.

Training processes

Training and education on topics related to sexuality are a protective factor and help reduce vulnerability factors such as violations of human, sexual, and reproductive rights, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, school drop-out rates, low levels of schooling, and disadvantageous incorporation into the working world.

Attention for groups with specific needs

Since one of the lines of action of the sexual and reproductive health policy is sexual violence, the progress made by the ICBF on this topic should be noted:

- Attention to Victims of Sexual Violence: The ICBF has been strengthening the Specialized Attention Units for victims of sex crimes and their families in cities with high levels of such problems: it designed and furnished the units in the cities of Cúcuta, Pasto, Quibdó, Cartago, Palmira, and Popayán, and equipped them with Gesell chambers and audio and video gear; in the cities of Manizales, Santa Marta, Huila, and Tunja, it designed the chambers for construction and launch in 2008.
- Training for 129 public servants on the Attention Guide for child and adolescent victims of sex crimes, at the attorney general's Specialized Units in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Bucaramanga, Cúcuta, and Cali. 500 copies were published.
- Sexual abuse prevention strategy using the play *In the Shadow of the Volcano*, in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Sincelejo. This provides technical and legal tools and concepts for tackling abuse problems, with the support of experts in the topic, and serves to raise awareness and motivate the audience about the "duty of reporting." Approximately 4,600 people attended.
- Design and validation of the psychological appraisal and interpretation protocols in the city of Bogotá, with the participation of prosecutors, family defenders, police officers, and psychosocial

teams, for a total of 50 people, intended to study the component competences, tasks, contents, and variables of those protocols so they can be used in any situation involving a child victim of sexual abuse.

This effort was carried out following the launch of the new Criminal Accusatory System and the Children's Code (Law 1098 of 2006), which has led to major changes in the work of the Units for Crimes against Sexual Freedom, Integrity, and Education of the office of the Attorney General.

In addition, actions are underway with specific population groups:

- Under the ICBF's agreement with the European Union for providing street children and youth with care services, a Management Model for the comprehensive attention of sexual and reproductive health and sexual and reproductive rights of children, young people, and families living on the streets or in special situations was designed. This model is implemented by the ICBF's protection centers in the cities of Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, Pasto, and Pereira. As a result of this effort, a conceptual and operational document for the model was produced, together with a description of the supply and demand for services covering sexual health and sexual and reproductive rights among young people and a pamphlet for promoting adolescent sexual rights.
- Education and attention for children and adolescents in the unattached minors program and monitoring of the technical teams covering those services (agreement between USAID and Profamilia), for the prevention of teenage pregnancies and sexual development decision-making.
 1. Temporary Homes: 20 hours of intensive workshops and 10 hours of professional counseling.
 2. Specialized Attention Centers (CAEs): 40 hours of intensive workshops and 20 hours of professional counseling.
 3. Health brigades, medical examinations, and specialized consultations in Bogotá, Cali, Aguablanca, Medellín, Bucaramanga, Cartago, and Villavicencio.

Maternal and Perinatal Mortality through Enforcement of the National Plan for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality and of the Biopsychosocial Model

Although the ICBF has no reports with maternal mortality indicators, it does have programs targeting pregnant and nursing women. These are intended to:

- Support developing families with pregnant and nursing women and children aged under two in the assessment of intrafamily relations and the strengthening of affectionate ties, so they can support the development of their children from gestation onwards, and also involving other adults in the tasks of raising the children.
- Promote a culture of healthy lifestyles to help improve the quality of life of developing families; pregnant mothers who are program beneficiaries are required to attend prenatal control sessions at a health facility and to receive guidance for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
- Support developing families in acquiring knowledge and skills for strengthening appropriate child-raising habits and for preventing child abuse, negligence, and abandonment.
- Foster the construction of family, social, community, and institutional networks, to oversee their own family development and as a strategy to prevent domestic violence.
- Train and refresh institutional and community educational agents in breastfeeding, to strengthen adoption of the practice of breastfeeding among mothers.

- Promote and strengthen breastfeeding support groups and construct networks with those groups to disseminate the practice of breastfeeding within families and the community.
- Promote the affiliation of children and pregnant women to the General Health System, the application of inoculations in accordance with the age-appropriate scheme, and the monitoring of growth and development, coordinating with health agencies toward those ends.

In pursuit of the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, the ICBF has carried out a series of actions:

- Implementation of the first phase of the project “Pedagogical Strategy for Training in Sexual and Reproductive Rights,” in which almost 420 people participated, including children, adolescents, and community education workers from eight cities: Buenaventura, Bogotá, Girardot, Florencia, Pereira, Quibdó, Valledupar, and Tunja. This project was carried out by Profamilia, with the goal of designing, through participatory methods, the four pedagogical modules for training in sexual and reproductive rights.
- Participatory design of the pamphlet *Mucho Gusto*, with young people from the Attention to the Victims of the Armed Conflict program, to serve as educational material for work on sexual and reproductive health and rights with adolescents.
- “Sexuality is also a matter for children,” preparation of the conceptual and pedagogical framework. Operational guide for sexuality work with children aged from 3 to 6. Material for kindergarten staff, family educators, and community mothers.
- Dissemination and training of institutional and community educational agents in 11 regional offices. “Strategy of information, communication, and education to promote the right of affiliation and the exercise of responsible motherhood and fatherhood.”
- National Meeting of young people from the ICBF’s youth clubs, with the support of the Presidential Council for Special Programs under the aegis of the Promoting Rights and Networks for Peace-Building program, intended to train young people in the prevention of teenage pregnancies and the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights.

In addition, through the Children and Family Observatories Program, the ICBF has conducted research into a number of areas, intended to identify risk factors and protection factors on which actions should be focused to enforce the sexual rights of children and adolescents:

- Identification of the psychosocial risk factors that influence pregnancies among adolescents in the municipality of Puerto López, Meta.
- Teenage pregnancies in the municipalities of Soledad and Malambo, Atlántico.
- Psychosocial and cultural elements behind teenage pregnancies in the municipality of Morales, Cauca.

5. National Public Policy for Early Childhood: “Colombia for Early Childhood”

Comprehensive Care for Early Childhood

Colombia has begun to set priorities for actions targeting comprehensive care for early childhood. Thus, it adopted the Children’s and Adolescents’ Code (Law 1098 of 2006) and drafted the National Public Policy for Early Childhood (Conpes Social Document 109 of 2007), with a clear mandate to guarantee the

comprehensive development of the nation's young children, placing priority on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

With this aim, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the ICBF have signed agreements to establish three forms of comprehensive early-childhood attention to take care of 400,000 under-fives, the target set in the National Development Plan. In addition, the country has been making progress in preparing an early-childhood education policy and in involving the health sector with the joint actions taken by the ICBF and the MEN.

The country is seeking to ensure comprehensive, quality attention, including the components of health, nutrition, education, and care services. In addition, the educational focus on early childhood is no longer centered on preparation for formal education. Instead, it recognizes that the life cycle from gestation to the age of six is of the most importance to a person's cognitive, emotional and social development. Education policy therefore centers on creating the conditions necessary for children to develop their full potential: "Early childhood education is a continuous and permanent process of quality, timely, and relevant social interactions and relations that enable children to build their capacities and acquire life skills, in function of the full development that encourages their evolution as subjects of rights."

Since the community-based pedagogical project was designed prior to the new framework for action, it will be necessary to review it to bring it into line with the new approach. The harmonization effort for the community pedagogical project is awaiting the finalized Early Childhood Skills document that is being prepared by the MEN.

For consensus-building about and approval of the National Early Childhood Policy, the ICBF has already prepared and defined the standards for early-childhood care services in the Technical Guideline for guaranteeing the right of comprehensive development in early childhood (Article 29, Law 1098 of 2006), which are classified under the following components: life and health, education and development, and protection and participation.

Formulation of the National Public Policy for Early Childhood

The National Public Policy for Early Childhood, "Colombia: For Early Childhood," is in response to the development of the international agreements that Colombia has signed, particularly: the 2002 Ten Year Plan for Children of the Special Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly; follow-up on the commitments set by the international community at the World Summit on Education For All (Dakar, 2000), which renewed the commitments acquired at the 1990 Jomtiem Summit. It also serves as a tool for enforcing the Children's and Adolescents' Code (Law 1098/06) and, most specifically, Article 29 of that code.

Its general objective is to promote the comprehensive development of children from gestation up to the age of 6, responding to their specific characteristics and needs and thereby helping to ensure equality and social inclusion in Colombia.

Its specific objectives are to: strengthen and expand the coverage of early education in the comprehensive attention it provides at the community, family, and institutional levels, guaranteeing its financial sustainability; position the topic of early childhood in order to raise awareness and mobilize the country regarding the crucial importance of the first years of life in human development and as a factor for the nation's progress and development; promote health, nutrition, and safe environments from gestation up to the age of six; prevent and treat disease; encourage healthy living practices and basic housing and sanitation standards; foster sociocultural and educational practices to enhance the comprehensive development of children aged under six; guarantee the complete protection and restoration of the rights of

children, particularly those belonging to at-risk groups or populations; empower families, primary care providers, child development centers, and the community for relating to children in a more equitable and inclusive way, based on respect for cultural diversity in the upbringing process; create and strengthen the mechanisms necessary for the design, execution, follow-up, and assessment of the early-childhood policy, so that state and society alike can conduct regular reviews to guarantee the policy is implemented efficiently and effectively.

This policy is being executed through programs and projects including the agreement with the MEN and the “Reading Festival.”

- **Reading Festival: a project to encourage language, reading, and artistic expression in children’s homes**

This project is based on the results of the Reading Table and on the experiences of the Scarecrow Workshop, and seeks to enrich and assess the pedagogical practices of Children’s Homes and Community Homes, by setting up “Baby Libraries” as flexible proposals for fostering the development of language and children’s expressive, communicative, and creative skills, providing training, monitoring, and permanent evaluations of the educational agents involved in the project.

In pursuit of these goals, the project focuses on three components: (1) provision, (2) training, and (3) evaluation. The first phase of project is being carried out under an agreement with FONADE since 2007. The second phase is being carried out under an agreement with the IOM.

6. Situation of Juvenile Delinquents

Juvenile delinquents between the ages of 12 and 18 represent a growing phenomenon in the country. According to statistics from the National Police, in 2007 a total of 32,907 minors were detained by the police for criminal infractions; of these, 1,191 were aged under 14 and 31,716 were aged between 14 and 18.

The most frequent crimes were possession, trafficking, and manufacturing narcotics, with 13,313 arrests; these were followed by robbery with 7,700 and, in third place, possession, manufacturing, and trafficking in firearms, with 2,015.

The common feature shared by these juvenile delinquents is the presence, in their personal histories, of elements of exclusion from families, schools, and employment. Understanding this phenomenon therefore implies recognizing the social processes that create such problems, instead of seeing juvenile crime as isolated, individual acts.

7. International Agreements Signed by Colombia

Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

After its ratification by Law 173 of 1994, this Convention came into effect on March 1, 1996. Between 1996 and March 2008, the ICBF, as the central authority for its enforcement, processed 452 international applications for restitution and the regulation of visits, of which 175 are currently active.

In May 2007 the Children’s and Adolescents’ Code came into effect. This code established that international restitution would come under the jurisdiction of Family Judges, and not the Civil Circuit Judges as before; it also set a single-instance procedure for international restitution, stipulating that judges had a period of two months for resolving cases. These provisions will implement the principle of speed set out in the Convention.

Thus, significant progress had been made in enforcing the Convention: delays have been reduced, and the effectiveness of the administrative phase of the proceedings, under the ICBF's Family Defense Offices, has been increased; the attention and information given to the public at Regional Centers has been improved; and the psychosocial attention process under the Convention and the monitoring of the safe return of children and adolescents ordered to return to the requesting country have been implemented.

The trend in the country has been to reduce the time taken to process an international restitution and visiting application, and to train all the administrative and judicial personnel, so that proceedings can be resolved in line with the spirit of the Convention and the country can meet its obligations in full.

In addition, as of this year a strategy to prevent illicit transfers is being implemented, targeting people due to travel abroad and intended to inform them of their obligations, rights, and duties as regards children and adolescents. During 2007, Colombia received 65 requests for the restitution of minors from other countries, along with 18 visit applications.

Inter-American Convention on the International Restitution of Minors

This convention was adopted by the Fourth Specialized Inter-American Conference on Private International Law on July 15, 1989. It has not yet come into effect in Colombia, in spite of having been adopted by Law 880 of 2004 and declared enforceable by judgment C-912 of 2004. The instruments of ratification are currently in the process of being deposited with the OAS.

Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

These matters are mainly addressed by Law 1098 of 2006 (the Children's and Adolescents' Code); this code is in line with the Convention, which came into effect for Colombia in November 1998. Additionally, in September 2007 resolution 2310 published the technical guidelines for the adoption program, which sets out the functioning of and requirements for adoption in Colombia and is binding on the ICBF's regional and zone centers as well as on the eight agencies authorized to carry out adoptions.

During 2007, a total of 3,077 adoptions took place, 1,223 by Colombian nationals and 1,854 by foreigners, representing a 16.48% increase over the 2006 figure. In 2008 up until April 4, a total of 727 adoptions took place: 250 by Colombians and 477 by foreigners. In recent years there has also been an increase in the number of adoptions by Colombian families and in adoptions of children with special needs and characteristics (aged 8 and older; groups of more than two siblings aged over 8; children with physical and/or mental disabilities); the figures were 608 in 2006 and 776 in 2007, for an increase of 25.49%.

Optional Protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography came into effect for Colombia on December 11, 2003, and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict has been in force since June 25, 2005.

In order to make progress with the reports on compliance with the protocols, on February 28–29, 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ICBF held a dissemination and training event about them, aimed at the institutions responsible for complying with the obligations they establish and at the civil society organizations that work with children and adolescents in Colombia. The event was also supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia and by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the IACHR, and the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN)

On July 26–27, 2007, the 82nd regular meeting of the Directing Council of the IIN was held in the city of Cartagena. The event was attended by 21 OAS member countries and eight international observers.

The results of the meeting included the analysis and approval of the IIN's Strategic Plan for 2007–11; the adoption of the Inter-American Program for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Illegal Trafficking (proposed by Colombia); negotiations took place for the central topic of the upcoming OAS General Assembly (Medellín, 2008) to be children and adolescents; and 11 resolutions were adopted, on topics including international abductions of minors, public policies and institutional reforms within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

In addition, inter-American meetings on the following topics were scheduled: implementation of new laws for children and adolescents, and exchanges of successful experiences in attending to children and adolescents.

In accordance with this, the ICBF, representing Colombia, attended the Special Meeting of the Directing Council of the Inter-American Children's Institute, held on November 29–30, 2007, in the city of Quito, Ecuador. That meeting analyzed the process whereby laws for children and adolescents were being implemented in the Americas; the topic of public policies and institutional reforms within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the 2007–11 Plan of Action, as agreed on by the 82nd meeting of the IIN's Directing Council.

In addition, it is also planned for the ICBF to attend the Inter-American Meeting on the Exchange of Child Care Experiences and Programs, to be held on April 24–25, 2008, in the city of Querétaro, Mexico.

Gender Equality

Promoting Gender Equality and Equity

The Presidential Advisory Office for Women's Equality (CPEM) devised and launched the affirmative action policy "Women Building Peace and Development." The priorities of this policy are employment and business development, education and culture, violence against women, political participation, and institutional strengthening. Thus, the affirmative action policy launched during the first administration of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez will be continued over the 2006–10 period.

These affirmative actions target the country's poorest women, particularly women bread-winners; they encourage the expanded, direct, and autonomous participation of women's organizations in different consultation and consensus-building forums; and all undertakings conducted through them take place within the context of promoting and protecting the human rights of women.

Employment and Business Development

- **Program of Microenterprises for Women Breadwinners:** This program offers credits, training, and follow-up, and is intended for women breadwinners with microenterprises at socioeconomic levels 1 and 2 in urban and rural areas. It is carried out under the leadership of the CPEM, in 24 departments, the city of Bogotá, and the district of Barranquilla. Between August 2006 and October 2007, the period covered by phase 3 of the Program, a total of 2,706 microcredits were issued, 70.43% in urban areas and 29.57% in rural areas, for a total amount of \$5,176 million. During the same period, 12,402

women breadwinners with microenterprises received training, in topics covering business, economic activities, and credit lines; thus, between 2002 and 2007, a total of 37,237 women breadwinners with microenterprises from levels 1 and 2 (those with the lowest incomes) have received training.

- **National Fair for Women Business-owners – Expoempresaria:** The fourth edition of Expoempresaria was held on August 2–5, 2007 at Corferias (Bogotá), with exhibitions by 491 women microenterprise owners from 24 departments and the city of Bogotá. Other events included a Suppliers’ Room, an Opportunities Bank day, and a Forum for Women Business-owners.

Education and Culture

- **Meetings of Colombian Women Writers project:** This enables gender-awareness to be included within the cultural sphere, and allows an appreciation and raises the profile of women’s literary production and of their contributions to Colombian letters. On March 27–28, 2007, at the Fourth Congress of the Spanish Language in Cartagena, the Fourth Meeting of Colombian Women Writers was held, at which homage was paid to the writer Ángela Becerra.
- **Plan of Action for Women and Sport:** Run by the Commission for Women and Sport since 2005, involving the CPEM, Coldeportes, the Colombian Olympic Committee, and the Women and Sport Association.

Preventing Violence Against Women

The Networks of Women Against Violence are consolidated through Women’s Community Councils which, in addition to providing a forum for dialogue between women and institutions, simultaneously contribute to consolidating Networks of Women Against Violence and to promoting a national agenda of women’s issues.

Political and Citizen Participation

The Women’s Community Councils program works to promote the political participation of women in municipalities and departments, as well as to build citizenship; they also simultaneously allow the consolidation of Networks of Women Against Violence.

During 2007, four new Women’s Community Councils were set up, with the participation of 48 women from the department of Huila, in the municipalities of Natagá, Tesalia, Tarquí, and La Plata. Progress was made with designing the strategy for strengthening the Community Councils set up through education days and workshops held in different regions and for the creation of new Community Councils by the elected officials who took office in January 2008; this strategy will be implemented over the 2008–10 period.

These meetings, forums, workshops with women, and education days are opportunities for publicizing Colombia’s strategies for promoting women and their rights and gender equality, strengthening mechanisms for citizen participation, associating women with programs and strategies at the national level in favor of women, carried out by the CPEM and other state agencies.

Between January and November 2007 the CPEM participated at and/or organized 93 meetings, forums, workshops, and education days across the country. Over the 2003–07 period, the CPEM has participated at and/or organized 384 events.

Social Policy (with Equality of Opportunities for Women and Men)

The Gender Affairs Observatory (OAG), attached to the CPEM, conducted gender follow-up on the national and international provisions currently in force related to the equality of women and gender

equity, and on public policies, plans, and programs in order to reveal their impact on men and women, using 80 indicators structured along five thematic axes.

International Representation

Colombia was once again chosen to serve as the vice chair of the presiding officers of the ECLAC Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the 2005–07 period, and it was elected to the vice presidency of the Inter-American Commission of Women (OAS) for the 2006–08 period.

Gender Awareness in Public Policies

Efforts are being made to incorporate gender-awareness into the policies, plans, programs, projects, strategies, and budgets of the national government, and to promote the incorporation of such awareness into laws and judgments, establishing frameworks for cooperation with the other branches of the public sector, the private sector, and academia.

To progress with the strategy, the CPEM has given priority to the following policies:

- **Opportunities Bank Policy.** Intended to promote socially equitable access to financial services. During 2007, the CPEM held 11 Opportunities Bank one-day events for women, in partnership with the Opportunities Bank in 10 cities around the country.
- **Strategic Plan for the Defense of the Rights of Women before Justice.** This is a comprehensive, crosscutting plan that involves 116 measures related to the rights of women facing domestic violence, gender rights of women following separation and/or divorce, and the protection of women from job discrimination. The measures seek to bolster the actions of the government of Colombia in favor of women's rights and equality, and to implement new actions to improve the enforcement and enjoyment of those rights already provided for in Colombian law.

Of the 116 measures, one group (16) address legislative amendments; the remaining 100 are prioritized into groups of 25 per year; for their implementation, three projects have been designed and submitted to the Community of Madrid and efforts have been made to build consensus with the various entities and agencies involved with the measures.

- **National Strategy Against Trafficking in Persons.** In 2007, the CPEM set out Colombia's experiences in this area to the Council of Central American Ministers for Women's Affairs, covering the regulations, establishment, and launch of the Committee and the national strategy.
- **Policy for Attention to Displaced Populations.** As a part of the actions taken by Colombia to prevent and deal with forced displacement, the CPEM, under the agreement signed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has been designing a Directive for the Prevention, Attention, and Socioeconomic Stabilization for the Displaced Population with Gender Awareness, aimed at promoting the inclusion of a perspective of gender differences in the policies, programs, and projects pursued toward improving the conditions of the displaced population. The most important advances made under this process include the following: (a) preparation of an analysis of regulations, jurisprudence, statistics, public policies, and the institutional supply; (b) holding awareness workshops addressing the importance of including gender awareness within the SNAIPD; and (c) defining the structure of a Directive based on the government's strategy for promoting the progress of women and gender equality.
- **Policy of Reincorporation and Economic Reintegration.** Given the interest in promoting and strengthening policies for gender equality and establishing, as a priority element on the state agenda,

the reincorporation into civilian life of individuals demobilized from outlawed armed groups by means of a reintegration policy, the CPEM, the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Armed Persons and Groups, and the University of Antioquia combined their efforts to design and implement intervention mechanisms for preventing domestic violence against reincorporated women and families with reincorporated members, and for promoting their economic autonomy and civic participation; to that end, an agreement was signed that will enable a set of actions to be carried out over the 2008–10 period.

Development of tools for providing technical assistance and achieving the Institutional strengthening of the CPEM

The Gender Affairs Observatory (OAG) assisted ECLAC in the design and implementation of a regional Gender Equality Observatory.

The following efforts have contributed to the strengthening of the OAG: eight bulletins published and distributed between 2003 and 2007; and two training seminars held on gender indicators, with the technical assistance of ECLAC (October 23–24, 2006), and another with the DNP on a proposed method for the design of indicators (November 10, 2006).

Migrants

Participation in Subregional Processes

Colombia has been participating, as an observer, in the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), together with Argentina, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Peru. The 12th CRM was held in New Orleans, United States, on April 26–27, 2007, and was titled “Effective Cooperation for Combating Human Trafficking.” That meeting adopted the Regional Guidelines for Special Protection in Cases of the Repatriation of Child Victims of Trafficking.

Colombia has been participating as an active member at the meetings of the South American Conference on Migration (CSM). The 7th CSM was held in Caracas, Venezuela, on July 2–3, 2007, and its central topic was migration and development.

Colombia’s participation at this Conference emphasized the ties being forged among Colombians abroad, the programs implemented by the Colombia Unites Us Program, and the creation of a Comprehensive Migration Policy that brings together both the entry of foreigners and the presence of Colombian nationals in foreign countries.

Cooperation with Specialized International Agencies

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a Partnership Agreement with the IOM in December 2005, with the aim of securing technical assistance for building the managerial capacity of the Colombian government on migration matters. Thus, through the Colombia Unites Us Program, different initiatives are being pursued with a view to improving ties with Colombians abroad, providing them with greater attention, and designing public policies for them.

- In the academic sphere, activities such as training courses provided by the IOM have been held, with follow-up of the participation by the Colombian State; gathering together and distribution of the proceedings of events held with migration stakeholders; technical, administrative, and thematic assistance for the participation of the Colombian government in the different forums that exist for discussing migration issues; studies and research to define the mechanics of Colombian migration;

and participation by the Colombian State in the different training efforts organized by the IOM in the field of labor migration.

- At the local and regional levels, development is underway on a Regional and Local Public Policy for Migration (departmental and local migration plans). In addition, efforts have been made to: design projects for development and labor migration; focus on migrants as being creditworthy; associate the topic of migration with access to comprehensive health care; conduct studies of migration; focus on the relationships between education and migration and between the family and migration; and strengthen crossborder communications and networks.
- Modifications are also being made to the services for Colombians abroad, such as: Real-Estate Fairs; the awareness pamphlet on the sanctions applicable in housing transactions; the Opportunities Bank; the FIG-COL International Guarantee Fund; and the use of migratory statistics in projects for channeling remittances into development efforts.
- In the areas of temporary and circular labor migrations, efforts have been made to raise awareness and provide training; to gather information to influence the preparation of a comprehensive policy for labor migrations; and to conduct studies and research into temporary and circular labor migrations.
- In addition, the partnership with the IOM allowed the joint design of the Networks Colombia portal, as a communication tool for Colombians abroad; and it has also enabled progress to be made in designing strategies for the portal's sustainability and inclusion of information.
- Finally, technical advice and assistance was given to the design of the Comprehensive Migration Policy, the first stage of which covers the drafting of its policy guidelines.

Recognition of the Economic and Cultural Contributions of Migrants

The Colombia Unites Us program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created to promote ties between Colombians abroad and their families, their regions of origin, and, in general, with Colombia, seeking to raise awareness of the Colombian diaspora in order to identify its needs and to design policies in response to their demands.

Against that backdrop, migration is seen as a social process in which migrants operate within social arenas that transcend geographical, political, and cultural borders; this is because they do not separate themselves from their societies of origin, but instead simultaneously live aspects of their lives in the countries of origin at the same time as they incorporate themselves into the host countries. This view sees migration as a positive phenomenon, full of opportunities for their places of origin, since, in line with the crossborder perspective, it understands that a migratory process does not necessarily mean a break with the past, but rather continuity through crossborder connections, by means of which knowledge and technologies can be transferred.

The major impact of remittances on the Colombian economy has been acknowledged, leading to the design of strategies to channel those funds into savings and investments. Thus, remittances rose from 1.9% of GDP in 2000 to 3% in 2007: the third largest source of foreign exchange after direct foreign investment and exports of petroleum and its derivatives. In 2007, Colombia was the third largest recipient of remittances, with a total amount of US \$4.5 billion, trailing only Mexico (USD \$23.053 billion) and Brazil (USD \$7.373 billion).

Since 2005, three annual real-estate fairs have been held in the places that host the most Colombians (New York, Miami, and Madrid), with the aim of channeling their remittances into investments and

savings. The nine events held to date have been attended by some 36,031 people, and business deals worth a total of US \$140.8 million have been reported.

Similarly, the Colombia Unites Us program has been encouraging the creation of common spaces that allow reflection to take place on the role of culture in the different phases of the migration process and in the reaffirmation of national identity. Achievements in this area have mainly focused on the cultural promotion efforts of Colombia's embassies and consulates abroad by holding exhibitions of the national culture; through the 670 associations of Colombians abroad registered with the program; and by means of a program that forges ties between Colombians residing in other countries, seeking to promote national and or local interests for commercial, tourism, or cultural investments.

Support for Ordered Migration Programs

In March 2007, support was given to the proposal to hire unqualified Colombian labor made by Maple Leaf Pork, a Canadian company in the meat-packing sector; to date, 345 individuals have been selected, and they will travel to Canada during February and March 2008.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently working to issue a decree that would create a Follow-up Commission for observance of the agreements and labor contracts entered into in connection with temporary or circular labor migrations.

In addition, the Colombia Unites Us program is working on the topic of social protection with the aim of promoting the design of public policies geared toward reducing the vulnerability of Colombians abroad in the areas of labor migration, pensions, and health.

International Social Security Agreements

Social Security Agreement between the Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Chile

This agreement was signed in 2003, in order to calculate periods during which social security contributions were made. Currently, it is awaiting the presidential signature.

Social Security Agreement between the Republic of Colombia and the Kingdom of Spain

Signed in September 2005 to calculate contribution periods, it was adopted by means of Law 1112 of December 2006 and came into force on March 1, 2008.

Andean Social Security Instrument, Decision 583

This decision seeks to guarantee labor migrants within the Andean region, together with their beneficiaries, in any of the member countries, the same social security rights and obligations as nationals of those countries. Negotiations are underway on the preliminary draft of the instrument's regulations, with agreement still pending on health benefits (health care for workers and their beneficiaries).

The Colombia Unites Us program is working with the Social Security Institute (ISS) on the reactivation of the "Colombian Security Abroad" program, which allows all Colombians resident in the United States to join and make pension contributions, and to maintain any contributions they made in Colombia, so they can obtain pensions once they meet the requirements set for that purpose in Colombian law. This program has been operating for several years under an agreement with Bancafé.

In addition, it seeks to establish swift and reliable mechanisms so that Colombians abroad can pay into pension funds in Colombia; in November 2006, the ISS signed an agreement with the company Giros y Finanzas S.A., the legal representative of Western Union in Colombia, so that Colombians in the United States can pay into their ISS pensions through any of the thousands of Western Union offices that exist in

the United States. The agreement came into effect in the United States during May 2007, and its scope has been expanded to cover the entire country.

In 2008, the ability to pay into pensions through the ISS will be extended to the 158 countries in which Western Union operates, thereby surpassing the goal set by the Colombia Unites Us program.

Reduced Transfer Costs for Remittances

There are currently three projects in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is participating:

- Project of the National Association of Family Compensation Funds (ASOCAJAS), with the support of the IDB, focused on creating financial products for channeling remittances into the development of the market for funding social-interest housing – in other words, for people with low incomes.
- Two projects to facilitate loans from abroad: one through FIG-COL (International Guarantee Fund for Colombians Abroad, led by the IOM), which seeks to facilitate productive, housing, and education loans with financial agencies abroad, and the other through the public policy of easy access to credit that is being financed by the Opportunities Bank.

Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

The National Development Plans include actions in pursuit of social equality, consolidating a social protection system that is committed to the most vulnerable sectors of society, including ethnic groups.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of Colombia, through Law 1151 of 2007 the Government set, as one of its goals, a policy to take account of, *inter alia*, the formulation of specific programs for ethnic groups and intercultural relations. To this end, general and specific strategies will be pursued to benefit all ethnic groups (indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, Raizals and Gypsies/Roma) in response to the cultural characteristics of each group.

The general strategies will be geared toward improving the institutional capacity for attending to ethnic groups at the national and regional levels, developing intercultural processes to enable the structuring of plans, programs, and projects for improving their living conditions, and developing information systems that will include ethnic indicators and variables to support the design and evaluation of policies.

Public Policies Against Discrimination

The following section lists the previous year's most important public policies for the protection and promotion of the right of equality of minority groups:

- Special Strategies for the Colombian Pacific. The most up-to-date and concrete of such regulations is CONPES 3491 of 2007, "State Policy for the Colombian Pacific." The aim of this is to renew the support given to the Afro-Colombian population by seeking to incorporate the Pacific region into national and international development, within the framework of a strategic program for social and economic reactivation that will work to improve the living conditions of the region's inhabitants in consideration of its natural and ethnic ecosystems.
- Creation of a Commission for Women within the Congress of the Republic in 2007, which gathers together female legislators and discusses, prepares, and forwards legislative proposals for progress with guaranteeing the rights of women.
- Colombia is currently engaged in adopting and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Intersectoral Commission for the Progress of Afro-Colombian, Palenquera, and Raizal Populations

Among the actions Colombia has been taking to improve the access of the Afro-Colombian community to economic and social development, Decree No. 4181 of October 2007 was enacted, creating the Intersectoral Commission for the Progress of Afro-Colombian, Palenquera, and Raizal Populations.

This Commission, which will be officially launched on May 21, 2008, is chaired by the Vice President of the Republic. It will also involve, as permanent guests, spokespersons of the Afro-Colombian population, headed by two delegates from the Afro-Colombian congressional caucus; one delegate from the High-Level Consultative Commission; a member of the Association of Municipalities with Afro-Colombian Populations (AMUNAFRO), and a delegate of the legal representatives of the community councils on a collective basis.

The Commission will evaluate the living conditions of the Afro-Colombian, Palenquera, and Raizal populations, and it will present the national government with recommendations for overcoming the barriers hindering the progress of those population groups, particularly their women and children, in the economic and social fields and in the protection and effective enjoyment of their civil rights.

The Commission is not political in nature, nor is it intended to replace national bodies in the construction of new elements and suggestions for overcoming the hurdles that impede those populations' progress.

Culture

Cultural Diversity

Four priority axes have been defined for the 2007–10 period: Diverse Colombia, culture for all; strengthening local, regional, and international cultural management; culture for peace and coexistence; and cultural entrepreneurship.

The Diverse Colombia axis has, as one of its priorities, the adoption of different approaches for ethnic groups, disabled people, children and youth, members of different genders, displaced and reincorporated population groups, prison inmates, etc. Implementation of that approach by the axis is currently underway.

The “Recognizing Diversity” line seeks to generate information and training processes that will promote the recognition of and respect for the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation.

Between April 2007 and May 2008, the following programs and projects were carried out as part of this line of action:

- **May 21: World Diversity Day, and National Afro-Colombian Day.** Since 2003, an information campaign has been underway to make May 21 a symbolic date to encourage the citizenry to reflect on a positive view of the differences and current situation of ethnic groups in our country.

In 2008, the Ministry of Culture is supporting a series of academic lectures to be held during the week of May 19 to 22. In addition to the activities being held around the country's regions, in Bogotá the Minister of Culture will host a cultural event at the Delia Zapata Theater to commemorate this important day.

The focus of the celebration is to publicize the cultural contributions of Afro-Colombians in the fields of literature, music, and dance.

- **Since 2007, the National Incentives Program** has offered research grants for indigenous Afro-Colombian languages, which are intended to support research that will assist the appraisal, strengthening, or recovery of these groups' languages.
- **Cultural Studies Program for Afro-descendant and Indigenous Communities of the Ministry of Culture and Fulbright Colombia.** This program is intended to increase the opportunities for advanced training available to members of Colombia's Afro-descendant and indigenous communities. It will select five Afro-descendant and indigenous students with a commitment toward their communities to begin post-graduate level studies in any culture-related field at universities in the United States.
- **The National Plan for Culture and Coexistence** is intended to use the potential of culture in constructing shared attitudes toward differences and, from that starting point, to promote interconnections with the cultural sector. These processes involve training for cultural promoters, who will then be able to formulate, manage, and monitor the execution of projects to encourage culture and coexistence. Also in place are methods for monitoring and assessing the impact of these projects on the acknowledgement of differences. This plan has benefited representatives of Afro-Colombian organizations, the Raizal community, and leaders of indigenous communities including the Wayuu, Paez, Embera, U'wa, Guambiana, Nasa, and Totoro.
- **National Music for Coexistence Plan.** This aims to promote musical practice and training and to expand the population's possibilities for awareness and enjoyment of music through recognizing regional expressive diversity and community celebrations, thereby contributing to the nation's ethical and esthetic development.
- As part of the process of selecting candidates for the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity Program, in 2007 the process for the admission of the Carnival of Blacks and Whites of San Juan de Pasto to that list began. Of the six entries, four are the work of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Colombia.
- **Ibero-American Meeting of Afro-descendants in the Americas.** This event is scheduled to take place in Cartagena during October 2008. The first Ibero-American meeting of Afro-descendants in the Americas seeks to build on ties among the countries of the Americas dealing with a population sector that is essential to their integration and development. Emphasizing work with young people and children, it will work to identify policies for inclusion through culture. The event will conclude with a publication and an intergovernmental agenda addressing communities of African descent in the Americas.

Languages

In addition to Spanish, 65 indigenous American languages and two Creole languages are spoken in Colombia, the latter two created and developed by Afro-descendant communities in San Basilio de Palenque de Bolívar and on the San Andrés and Providencia islands. These are a part of our cultural and spiritual heritage and an invaluable source of collective memory.

The Ministry of Culture has created the Operating Unit for the Ethnolinguistic Diversity Protection Program, and this proposal is aimed at creating, from within the Ministry of Culture and in consensus with the representatives of the peoples involved, a policy to protect and promote the languages of the ethnolinguistic groups that inhabit Colombia's territory. In order to meet this goal, the following operations have been planned for 2008:

- **Conducting a sociolinguistic diagnosis:** This will include activities such a national seminar-workshop for consensus-building and induction; four regional workshops to present the survey and train the survey-takers; support for preparing the survey results based on the pilot effort to be carried in the department of Cauca during 2008 and 2009, addressing 15 languages each year; a national oversight seminar; updating and dissemination of problems; organization and analysis of the information gathered; a national meeting to disseminate results and identify elements to be taken into account in designing a state language policy.
- **Creation and launch of a National Council for Native Languages, as permanent advisory body:** In this area expert workshops will be held on revitalizing and defining the working rules of a permanent commission charged with dealing with the topic; expert workshops on documentation, investigation, and definition of the working rules of a permanent commission charged with dealing with the topic; expert workshops on working with the corpus and defining the working rules of a permanent commission charged with dealing with the topic; in coordination with the Ministry of Education, a meeting of experts on the use of vernacular languages at schools and on defining the working rules of a permanent commission charged with dealing with the topic; plenary meeting of experts and delegates from the peoples to define the operating rules of a national committee for language policy to advise the national government.
- **Encouraging and supporting projects related to promoting the use, modernization, and revitalization of languages,** by creating and funding, during the first year, a high-profile program specifically targeting the revitalization of languages that will support 20 projects in and after 2009.
- **Developing international interconnection projects** to support the creation of a network of web sites dedicated to providing information, documentation, and texts on the languages used by Colombia's ethnolinguistic groups; support for the creation of archival and documentation programs covering the languages of ethnic groups; support for the creation of specialized training programs for native teachers, training them in the management and promotion of the classroom use of vernacular languages.
- **Raising local, regional, national, and international awareness about the value and importance of native languages and linguistic diversity** by holding national, regional, and local meetings simultaneously with the workshops scheduled to conduct the sociolinguistic diagnosis; and a large-scale National Congress on Native American and Afro-American languages in Colombia.