

**ADDRESS, BEFORE THE 56TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION.**New
York, November 10th, 2001

Mister Chairman:

Allow me, on behalf of the Government of Colombia, to express satisfaction for your election to preside this General Assembly session. Your experience and leadership constitute valuable credentials for bringing our deliberations to fruitful results.

Allow me now to pay tribute to your predecessor the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, his Excellency Harry Holkeri, whose diplomatic skills contributed decisively to the Assembly's work.

Allow me also to make special mention of our Secretary General, Koffi Annan, whose authority, dedication and significant contributions will surely serve as inspiration for the decisions to be made by Members States on this occasion.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate our satisfaction with the honorable world recognition behind the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations and its Secretary General. This is a well-deserved tribute to our Organization, to the values

shared by Member States, and, in particular, to the Secretary General, whose personal commitment and visionary approach have given new life to the United Nations while simultaneously consolidating the UN's international credibility. This decision represents more than an acknowledgement of past achievements; it is the encouragement that inspires the UN's work in respect of the challenges posed by the new millennium.

Mister Chairman:

Two months ago the world was shook by several unprecedented terrorist acts. We have all spoken of the dreadful effects of these attacks. We have all expressed our solidarity to the people of the United States and we all agree that these irrational acts, besides affecting a single country, are in reality an attack against all mankind.

I believe we must go one step further: we must understand why these events occurred and what we must do to ensure that acts such as these never happen again, never, ever!

The tragedy of September 11 had the positive effect of bringing us all together against the common enemy of terrorism. It has

served to accomplish something else: it removed the masks that disguised our words, it took out the hypocrisy from our discourse, it left behind the gray world we were so accustomed to, and now we must work to replace it by a world that is free of ambiguity, in black and white.

And what grays are evident today? Gray were the ambiguities we all expressed in respect of violence and the moneys that finance violence.

In the past, when an act against a civil population anywhere in the world suited our interests, we used to speak of a humanitarian crisis, of defending democracy, of reasons of State, and we continued on impassive, with no scruples on our conscience.

On the contrary, when an act against a civil population anywhere in the world did not suit our interests, we would take a firm stance, we would react indignant, we would speak of terrorism, of attacks against mankind, of treacherous attacks against democracy and human rights.

Mister Chairman, fellow Delegates:

No more ambiguity or double meanings! The time has come to define our position, with no vague half answers: either we side with mankind, its dignity and integrity, or we don't.

We stand before an act of terrorism whenever dignity or civil populations are attacked. It does not matter whether such attacks are launched by a group of religious fanatics or organizations presuming to have political ideals. There is no pretext for attacking defenseless civilians!

The dividing line is very simple: we either respect man's life and dignity or we stand against mankind.

The horrendous acts of September 11th do not represent a collision of civilizations, religions or cultures. The only collision evident here is between a violent fanatic minority against all forms of civilization.

We cannot accept any further justification of violence! No matter how hard, even if it goes against our present interests, there is something far more valuable than every thing else in the world, and that something is man's life and dignity.

At this point in time we must all stand together and condemn all acts of violence against any human being, regardless of the pretext! If we do not wage our bet in favor of man and our values, then what will be left for us? What right have we to call ourselves the leaders of a civilization left a drift?

I address you here today with the overwhelming responsibility and authority vested in me as President of a country that, like Colombia, has endured for decades an internal conflict where every new day brings more deaths and kidnappings thanks to the intolerance of illegal groups who hope to impose themselves at the cost of their fellow countrymen's lives.

I address you here today with the commitment of representing a country that, like Colombia, has been the main victim of global drug addiction, a country that has put too many deaths, that has sacrificed natural and financial resources to combat a crime that is not its own. This is a global crime, a crime whose illegal proceeds stay outside our country's borders.

I address the international community, represented here at this Assembly, to demand, with my head up high, that we move from rhetoric to facts.

The world is in awe thanks to this ill-fated terrorism. We too, and I say this very candidly, have suffered such terrorism in our own flesh for quite some time, but we have not always felt the international community' firm pulse on our side.

We all know that the world market for illegal drugs is the number one financier of terrorism and death in the world. Yet, the international community was content with simply promoting and demanding that production centers control narco trafficking through law-enforcement, eradication and interdiction actions, forgetting that this scourge is much more than just a cultivation and trafficking problem. It is a world problem having global ramifications.

Colombia has always said, and my Government has repeated once and again, at every international scenario possible, that it is necessary to control illegal drug production, but we cannot forget that this is a very complex transnational business and that the overwhelming proceeds of narcotics trafficking do not stay in our

country. No sirs! These profits move freely through international financial markets where financiers and businessmen of respectable appearance prosper amidst the whole world's tolerance.

We must also learn from our disgrace, especially from our disgrace, and we have learnt something from the September 11 events:

We have learnt that lenient control of financial institutions and the existence of tax and bank havens is like giving criminals a letter of marque to make and multiply their profits, to amass the fortunes that finance death.

The shared responsibility demanded by my country in the fight against illegal drugs also applies to the fight against terrorism.

This new international conviction that we have all been late in enforcing -maybe because we are still numbed by the so called post-cold war-, must translate into facts that go beyond discourse:

No more coexisting with asset laundering, even if it means going after the major financial conglomerates of the world!

No more uncontrolled production and sale of the chemical precursors used in illicit drug production!

No more illegal or uncontrolled manufacturing and sale of the weapons that propagate death!

If we manage to translate these principles into reality -starting with the developed countries-, with concrete facts and political will, then we will give meaning and effectiveness to the fight waged by my country, Colombia, for many years, against the cultivation and production of drugs.

No country is free from the destructive consequences of the illegal drug issue. There are no epicenters in this illegal business. This criminal activity is global in nature. The drug problem, and organized crime in general, undermine the institutional framework, conspire against democracy, deteriorate governance, plant death and violence. They are a culture broth for corruption, they erode judicial systems and hinder the rule of law. Shared

responsibility, therefore, means the responsibility to defend democracy, our principles and institutions.

In the year 2003 it will be five years since we held the World Drug Summit. Let us start promoting now an in-depth review of all the accomplishments, of all the obstacles encountered along the way, of the new challenges to be faced and the additional actions we must implement to break, once and for all, the links that make up this global phenomenon.

But we must do so without losing ourselves in gray colors. We need for the international community's commitment to be real and concrete! So we can at last touch the finances of the traffickers of death! Let us combat their business where they make all their profits!

The Security Council has fortunately made important decisions in this regard and it is channeling the fight against crime in the right direction. Security Council Resolution 1373, as well as the measures taken by all the Governments of the world to combat the financing of international terrorism, constitute important progress, progress that has Colombia's unwavering support.

We must work together to disarm the extremists' financial structure. This is the only way to leave our sons with a safer world. This is the only way of defeating the origin of the plague of violence and terrorism that springs from the transnational empires of drugs.

Mister Chairman:

A year ago we met in this same room during the Millennium Summit. None of the priorities identified at that time were stressed as much as the need to ensure that globalization benefits all the peoples of the world. The reality of globalization is a reality of asymmetries that have brought dissatisfaction and conflict. We need an in-depth reflection to recognize our responsibility to humanize globalization and ensure that globalization reflects the interests of all countries and regions.

In this context, the Development Finance Conference to be held early next year in Mexico acquires special importance. If we do not mobilize the required financial resources and we do not advance toward a new architecture that ensures the stability of the international financial system, then the commitments and the course set at the Millennium Summit will turn into dead letter.

These same criteria must move us to hold the World Summit on Sustainable Development next year in Johannesburg. On that occasion we must consolidate a positive vision and devise the road map that allows us to achieve true harmony between economic growth, social development and preservation of the environment.

Mister Chairman and fellow colleagues:

This is the last time I address the United Nations General Assembly as President of Colombia. Every year, since 1998, I have stood here and spoken of my Government's commitment and the commitment of the people of Colombia to achieve peace with democracy and progress with social justice.

I have devoted myself full-time to achieving peace, like no other ruler of my country, and I don't repent doing so, because we Colombians are tired of violence, crime, intimidation and kidnapping. I hope all groups living outside the law make the right decision at this crucial moment not only in Colombia's history, but also in the history of all mankind.

It is up to them to determine how they want to be treated: as terrorists and narcotraffickers or as political insurgency. They must define themselves through their actions. If their actions lead them to be treated as mere terrorists, then they must clearly understand –and I say this vehemently to the world– that Colombia and the international community will honor their commitments and the measures adopted by the Security Council for combating terrorism.

History continues: it doesn't end. Rulers come and go, but people continue the course set beforehand. Even today I still believe that peace is possible, provided the will to make peace exists. I still believe, with the true hope of one who knows the values of his people, that the road we started to take will not be barren.

The international community showed an unprecedented solidarity with the people of Colombia and its quest for peace during my mandate, and I thank you for that from the bottom of my heart.

I give special thanks to the UN Secretary General's Special Advisor on International Assistance to Colombia, Jan Egeland, and the generous contributions made by friendly nations during the talks with insurgent groups. The world sided with Colombia's

peace, and that is a gesture we understand and appreciate in its full value.

Mister Chairman:

Today I echo the strong and decided voice of 40 million Colombians, all fighting for a better and dignified life, and I reaffirm to the world a message that proposes and demands clarity from the international community.

The time for lamenting is over. It is time for definitions!

Let us leave aside empty speeches; let us leave behind us the double moral that measures the acts that suit us with one yardstick and the acts that don't with another. Let us advance together against terrorism in all its forms, and in spite of all its pretexts!

No more ambiguity! No more justifying violence! Let us never forget that nothing is more sacred or valuable, nothing is more sublime than human life!

Thank you very much.