

**REMARKS BY PRESIDENT ANDRÉS PASTRANA OF  
COLOMBIA TO CNN INTERNATIONAL'S WORLD REPORT  
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**COLOMBIA IN A GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC  
COMMUNITY**

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be part of this special program today. One of the most remarkable events in the last two decades has been the proliferation of global communications. Today, more people around the world have access to more information, news and opinion than in any time in history. Communications today is global, instantaneous and a powerful influence on ideas and how countries, governments, markets and peoples from the around the world interact with each other. "Ground zero" for this remarkable trend has been this network, and the vision of its founder, Ted Turner.

I have had the opportunity to witness this revolution in global communications from two different perspectives: first, as a television journalist in Colombia for many years, and today, as Colombia's President. In fact, I remember when CNN was just

starting, I visited its first headquarters at 1050 Techwood Drive. In the beginning, the idea of a 24-hour-a-day, global news network seemed a bit crazy to many people. Certainly, such an endeavor could never possibly succeed.

I can appreciate the frustration that Ted and others who founded this network must have experienced in those early days. In some ways, it is similar to the way many people think of the challenges facing the President of Colombia today. For example, when I say that I am committed to ending forty years of armed conflict in Colombia and bring peace to my country, many people say I am crazy to think this is possible. Or, when I say that I want to defeat powerful drug cartels and make real progress in the war against narco-traffickers, others say it is futile to believe this can be achieved.

This network is demonstrable proof in the power of an idea, and a testament that through determination and perseverance, revolutionary change can take place. Such is the challenge for leaders in business, and those of us who serve in public life.

It is unfortunate that Colombia's image around the world is often defined by the actions of a small minority of our people. In a nation of 40 million people, those in Colombia who are engaged in violence, armed conflict and narco-trafficking would not fill to capacity the seats at Turner Field, this city's baseball stadium. Lost amid the daily headlines and news coverage of Colombia is a nation many in the international community never see or experience. It is a nation of extraordinary beauty, a determined people, notable achievements and tough challenges.

What is also lost in the glare of media attention is the historic truth that Colombia is South America's oldest and most resilient democracy, and that Colombians share this country's long tradition of a free and competitive press and open access to information.

Ours is a nation blessed with people of energy, faith and enterprise. We enjoyed six decades of uninterrupted economic growth. A pantheon of Colombians have made a difference in the wider world. Today, some of these individuals include our Nobel Laureate, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, whose writings have been translated into numerous languages and

enjoyed around the world; Fernando Botero, whose sculptures have graced Park Avenue and the Champs Elysees; Juan Pablo Montoya, winner of the Indianapolis 500; and Shakira, our amazing Spanish rock superstar and Grammy winner.

I take some pride, too, in the accomplishments of Colombian workers and entrepreneurs. Six out of every ten fresh-cut flowers imported into the United States are grown in Colombia. We are a major world producer and exporter of oil and coal. We manufacture world-class apparel, textiles, jewelry and leather goods. And, of course, Colombian coffee is known around the world for its superb quality and taste.

To understand modern Colombia, you must look beyond the daily headlines and see conditions for what they are. You must understand that the violence and armed conflict that is regularly reported in the international media is not the result of a civil war. We are not a nation under siege. The insurgents who inflict enormous suffering and kill innocent victims in our country represent less than one tenth of one percent of Colombia's population. Their tactics are classic guerilla – hit and run, strike and retreat. Unlike insurgency movements elsewhere, they have failed to convince Colombians that they

provide a legitimate alternative to our tested democracy. They enjoy almost no support among the population – and no one knows this better than they do.

The same is true for the other violent actors in Colombia – the narco-traffickers. Here again, to understand the war against drugs in Colombia, you must appreciate the true nature of this violent business.

The business of producing and consuming illegal drugs is today a global industry. While much of the raw material for this business – such as coca leaves – originates in Colombia, nearly every other aspect of the drug business resides in the international community. This includes the precursor chemicals used by traffickers to turn coca leaves into cocaine. It includes the arms and weapons used by traffickers to conduct their business. It includes the illegal profits that are money-laundered through financial institutions around the world. And finally, it includes consumer demand, much of it in industrialized countries, that makes such a violent and profitable business possible.

This is why as President, I have argued many times, in many forums, that the international community must join with Colombians to rid the world of the scourge and violence of illegal narco-trafficking. We do not have the resources to fight these powerful, trans-national criminal organizations by ourselves. Winning the war against drug traffickers is a global fight that requires burden sharing among both producing and consuming nations. Defeating this illegal business requires the cooperation, knowledge-sharing and support of the entire global community.

Over many years, Colombia has demonstrated its commitment to this fight. We have taken on powerful drug cartels and in the process lost some of our best and brightest citizens – political leaders, judges, soldiers, police officers, journalists and citizens from every walk of life. The cost to our society and economy has been high. Resources we need to address the many needs of our population – from education to housing to health care – have been instead invested in fighting narco-trafficking.

In response, my Government in 1999 developed a \$7.5 billion program, called Plan Colombia, that represents a real solution

to the phenomenon of drug trafficking. We are attacking this problem not only with more resources to go after traffickers and destroy their infrastructure, but also by creating stronger State institutions that can provide for a more secure and prosperous country. This includes new investments in economic and social development that will enable those Colombians who today are engaged in coca and poppy production for their survival to move to legal and legitimate endeavors. To fight drugs, we must first fight poverty.

While Colombia is providing the largest share of funding for this multi-year program, we have asked other countries and international institutions to join us in this effort. Last year, the United States demonstrated global leadership by committing \$1.3 billion in assistance to Colombia. Recently, several European countries and institutions have committed to help Colombia. It is important for Colombians – who have sacrificed so much, and who have demonstrated extraordinary courage in standing up to powerful and violent criminal organizations – to know that we are no longer alone in this global struggle.

Many elements of Plan Colombia are currently being implemented. Since last December, we have destroyed more than 60,000 hectares of coca through aerial spraying in southern Colombia – or about sixty percent of the country’s total illegal coca crop. In addition, we are negotiating agreements with thousands of farmers who cultivate small amounts of coca to destroy their crop and replace it with legal ones. The Government made significant progress last year in interdicting cocaine, arresting drug traffickers, and destroying the infrastructure of this business, such as drug laboratories, money laundering operations and transportation systems.

However, while crop eradication and interdiction are important to defeating the traffickers, they are not the whole solution. We cannot convince peasant farmers to move from coca cultivation to legitimate crops if we cannot create economic opportunities for them and their families. We must provide them with the tools and resources to succeed. This we are doing. Last week, I had the opportunity to inaugurate several economic and social projects in the Putumayo region of Colombia that are critical to the success of Plan Colombia.

Putumayo has historically been geographically and economically isolated from the rest of Colombia. Its isolation is what has made it so attractive to drug traffickers. By building roads, highways, schools and health clinics in this region, we are offering its residents a real, practical alternative to growing illegal crops. We are increasing the presence of the government – and by extension services to the public – in a region where it has historically been absent.

One of the underreported aspects of the drug business is its impact on Colombia's environment. Colombia is home to vast tropical forests which contain 10 percent of the world's biodiversity. These forests cover more than half of our country. Colombia's tropical forests have one of the highest carbon dioxide sequestration rates in the world. This makes them a particularly valuable environmental resource. They are a natural counter-balance to greenhouse gas emissions that affect global climate change.

Since 1985, narco-traffickers have destroyed more than a million hectares of Colombia's tropical forests to grow illegal coca. Traffickers have gone deeper and deeper into

Colombia's forests to be able to conduct their business where there is little presence of the State.

In addition to clearing forest lands to grow illegal crops, drug traffickers cause further environmental damage in the Amazon region by using, and then dumping, millions of gallons of toxic chemicals into the region's river systems. These chemicals are necessary for the production of cocaine, and they are smuggled into Colombia from around the world.

The environmental consequences of the world's drug trade is serious. Drug producers, and by extension the people who create the demand for these products – drug consumers – are helping to destroy one of the few weapons the world has to manage climate control and global warning.

But for Colombia, the challenges of globalization means more than combating drug trafficking. Colombia has historically been one of the strongest and most stable economies in Latin America. We did not have a single year of negative economic growth between the 1930s and 1998. We have never experienced the hyper-inflation that has been characteristic of

many developing countries. We have never defaulted on our international debt or our financial obligations.

Colombia has historically been one of the most open economies in Latin America, with a liberal trade and foreign investment regime. We have attracted significant foreign investment from the United States, Europe and other regions in our energy and manufacturing sectors.

Colombia has been supportive of global and regional trade liberalization efforts. In our own hemisphere, we have negotiated preferential market access agreements with our largest trading partner – the United States – and free trade agreements with several of our Andean and Latin American neighbors. We are working toward the establishment of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, which will create a free trade zone from Alaska to Argentina.

Today, Colombia is recovering from a recession that began in 1998. This recession was the result of macroeconomic imbalances, global investor uncertainty in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, and growing violence caused by civil conflict within Colombia.

To return to economic growth, my Administration has enacted a series of economic reforms and restructuring measures. We have reduced government spending and passed new tax measures. We adopted new regulations to encourage foreign investment in the energy and infrastructure sectors. We restructured and recapitalized failing banks. We are privatizing state assets. And we are reforming pension and social security systems.

These reforms will put Colombia on a solid economic footing. We understand that a strong and growing economy is the foundation for regional stability, peace and making progress in the drug war.

The search for peace has been at the center of my Government's efforts over the past three years. For the first time, we have brought the two largest guerrilla organizations in Colombia to the peace table. As is the case with peace negotiations elsewhere, there has been both progress and setbacks. We cannot wipe away four decades of conflict and violence with an enlightened sweep of the hand.

To succeed, these peace negotiations need the support of the international community. We have invited several countries and international institutions to contribute to our efforts, and many have responded. Colombia's conflict is of interest and importance beyond our domestic borders. The international community will benefit from a Colombia – and an Andean region – that is stable, at peace, and an active participant in the global economy.

Today, Colombians are more engaged than ever before in working with others in the international community to confront the problems we face. And because of this engagement, today we are a more hopeful nation that we can succeed in building a peaceful and prosperous society, defeat narco-traffickers and contribute to addressing the global challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you.