

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
COLOMBIA AND PRO TEMPORE SECRETARY OF THE
GROUP OF RIO, ANDRÉS PASTRANA, AT THE
MILLENNIUM SUMMIT OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York, 6 September 2000

Distinguished Chairmen and delegates

I come to this historic summit today not only as President of my country, but as the voice of 500 million inhabitants of this planet who live in 33 States of Latin America and the Caribbean who form the Group of Rio, of which I am today the Pro Tempore Secretary.

And in their name, I proclaim:

We aspire to be, above all, a region of peace.

We value the protection of human rights, in their integral application, and of the environment, since both are ways of defending man.

We reject all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

We exalt solidarity and cooperation as the value which should guide us in the 21st century.

And we therefore declare:

The United Nations is the most important world organization, and it is our duty to strengthen and increase its capacity.

We defend a multilateralism which always acts within the framework of the United Nations as the prime regulator of world order, and we consider that any international action taken outside the legal framework of the Organization's Charter or any reform which would be to the detriment of its social agenda are unacceptable.

Distinguished Chairmen:

We in Latin America and the Caribbean have a decisive commitment to democracy and the respect for human rights as the guiding principles of the new international order.

This is what we, the Presidents of the Group of Rio, asserted in Cartagena when we signed a Commitment to Democracy, and

all the Presidents of South America ratified it less than a week ago in Brasilia.

With the authority to which we are entitled, as the first major region of the world to be free of nuclear weapons, Latin America and the Caribbean strives to create a world free of the nuclear threat and of other weapons of mass destruction. We also expect the best possible results of the International Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons to be held next year; and we condemn the use of excessively cruel and inhumane weapons, especially those of an improvised or “home-made” type.

As a priority and a matter of urgency, war must be avoided; but where conflict already exists, we must at least observe the rules of International Humanitarian Law. Colombia firmly believes in its postulates, and I am proud to be able to say that today there is no-one under age serving in our Armed Forces.

And in order to secure a firmer future for the generations to come, we must also show courage and determination in facing the world problem of unlawful drugs and related crimes such as

money-laundering, the traffic and diversion of precursors, contraband and arms-dealing.

The Group of Rio is convinced that this is a problem for all, and that it must be solved by all in a global effort which should be based on the principle of shared responsibility.

Distinguished Chairmen:

It is our duty to foster the conditions for the globalization process of the last ten years to be controlled and fair in human terms.

In these new circumstances, trade and finance cannot afford to lose sight of man and his needs. In Latin America and the Caribbean there are more than 200 million poor who hope to share the benefits of progress, and we cannot leave them behind.

What we seek is growth with social equity.

For this, we need international cooperation to finance the networks of social protection and the investment in human capital and infrastructure.

We need to increase the flow of international trade, and put an end to the protectionist measures of the wealthier and more developed countries.

In sum, we need a new architecture for the international financial system which will help to secure stability and provide assistance and support for countries which are undergoing a process of adjustment.

Distinguished Chairmen and representatives of the Nations of the world

I come from Colombia, a beautiful country inhabited by 40 million people who love life, where, unfortunately and illogically, confrontation continues, fed by a few violent men and by the tainted money of the traffic in drugs which affects and involves the whole world.

But we are committed to the quest for a negotiated peace. We are possessed by a desire to achieve greater social justice for Colombians most in need. We are determined to combat drug-trafficking and to fight for human rights. We have been living in a democracy for over 180 years, and we will continue to do so.

We are the future. We are the promise. We are a land of hope and friendship.

Drawing on the spirit of the fallen heroes of our struggle, suffering the anguish of our poor, trusting in the talents of our people, we strive –as our Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez has put it - for a second opportunity on this earth. ¡And I have no doubt that we shall obtain it!

Thank you very much