



*Europe: Neither Plan Colombia, nor  
Peace Process --From Good Intentions to  
High Frustrations*

-Joaquín Roy



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## **The European Union at the University of Miami**

European Union studies were initiated at the University of Miami's Graduate School of International Studies as a scholarly response to the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, and since then have developed into a strong discipline supported by the professors and students who dedicate much time and effort to develop research topics, publish articles and books, and participate in European Union related activities both at home and abroad. As a result of these efforts, external actors have also contributed to the growth and development of European Union studies at the University of Miami. First, in the Spring of 2001, the European Commission awarded Professor Joaquín Roy a Jean Monnet Chair, one of the first four granted to professors in the United States. The award was given for his efforts in developing courses on the European Union and his scholarly publications in the field. Second, the European Commission awarded a European Union Center (one of the 15 in the United States) to a consortium formed by the University of Miami and Florida International University. The Center's mission is to teach, research, and sponsor activities to promote awareness of the European Union.

The Jean Monnet Chair also founded (thanks to private donations, a subsidy from the Government of Spain, and the endorsement of the Salvador de Madariaga Foundation) the "Salvador de Madariaga" Iberian Studies Institute (as an expansion of the former Iberian Studies Institute) for the study of Spain in the European Union and its relations with Latin America, as well as the "Robert Schuman" European Union Research Institute (thanks to the endorsement of the Jean Monnet Foundation and the Robert Schuman Foundation, in Paris) for the study of European Union institutions and policies, and the role of France in the European Union.

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From Good Intentions to High Frustrations**

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# **EUROPE: NEITHER PLAN COLOMBIA, NOR PEACE PROCESS -- FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO HIGH FRUSTRATIONS<sup>+</sup>**

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## **Europe and Colombia**

### **Introduction**

In the eve of the presidential elections of May 26, 2002, only months after the end of the negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrillas, the massacre of more than a hundred civilians (most of them children) in Bojayá, department of Chocó, dramatized the contradictory opinions of different actors regarding the nature of the Colombian conflict. While the United States considers the guerrillas as “terrorists”, the European Union has resisted labeling them as such in expectation of a renewed cease fire and subsequent negotiations. The Spanish presidency of the EU sided with the Colombian government considering these activities as “terrorism”. This episode marked the end of one cycle of the European involvement in Colombia and the beginning of a new one, full of enigmas, limitations, frustrations and still considerable hope.

Since mid 2000, with the public announcement of the reshaped original Plan Colombia, the European attitude toward its involvement in attempting to solve the crisis of endemic violence has oscillated from alarm to hope, and finally to frustration. A sense of powerlessness, mixed with realism and internal contradictions between member states and institutions of the European Union (EU), has dominated the overall scene. In the early stages, Europeans remained cautious of the U.S.-inspired Plan Colombia, badly promoted as a credible Colombian project. “A virtual contribution” to what appeared to

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<sup>+</sup> Monograph originally presented at the conference on “Colombia’s Ambiguous War in Global and Regional Context: Insurgency, Transnational Crime, and Terror,” organized by the U.S. Army War College and the North-South Center from March 24-26, 2002, in Miami. This document updates and summarizes a previous paper presented at the conference on “Implementing Plan Colombia: Strategic and Operational Dimensions for the U.S. Military,” also organized by the U.S. Army War College and the North-South Center, January 31 – February 2, 2001, Miami, Florida. My gratitude is extended to Ambler H. Moss, Director of the North-South Center, and to Max Manwaring, of the U.S. Army War College, for their support in designing the scope of this research, and to Aimee Kanner for editing the text. The updated paper also served as a base for discussion in the conference on “Existe una política de la Unión Europea para Colombia?”, organized by the Institut d’Hautes Etudes de l’Amérique Latine of the University of Paris (Sorbonne) on March 19-20, 2002, and as a background document for a report drafted in a workshop organized by the Fundación Ideas para la Paz in Cartagena de Indias, April 25-26, 2002, thanks to the invitation of Pilar Gaitán and Fernando Cepeda.

be “a virtual Peace Process”<sup>1</sup> –in the off-the-record words of European Union Commission staff--, accurately described, in essence, the European attitude.<sup>2</sup> “Good intentions” became the label attributed to the European involvement in Colombia, illustrating not only its willingness but also its limitations. “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth,” seemed to be the Colombian attitude in view of the pledged yet ambiguous European contribution. High expectations were detectable in public declarations considering the significant diplomatic capital invested.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, a clear message was sent that Europe wanted to distance itself as much as possible from the Plan Colombia, understood as a project centered around counter-insurgency and security issues. After a brief period of uncertainty and the successful and hopeful attempts to revive the Peace Process, the European diplomacy seemed to have its role strengthened from a rank of mere observer to a status of participant in brokering the Peace Process, which was on the verge of collapse in early January 2002. The renewal of the process was then credited to the role of the international community, with heavy European involvement. However, apprehension, pessimism, and a certain degree of realism finally set in the minds of European leaders in view of the decision by President Andrés Pastrana of Colombia to terminate the peace process on February 20, 2002. Considering the continuation of the violent activities perpetrated by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), culminating with the kidnapping of Eduardo Gechem Turbay, a prominent Colombian senator, Pastrana ordered the Colombian troops to enter the territory previously awarded as sanctuary.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, under the new Bush administration, U.S. opinion had already shifted toward a more hard line attitude, as former Clinton administration officials reflected in

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete up to date analysis of the evolution of the conflict and a documented registry of proposals and different ideas, consult the website of the Fundación Ideas para la Paz: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Numerous officers of the governments of France, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, and several members of the staff of the European Commission and Parliament have contributed with commentaries and documents. All of them elected to remain anonymous and should not be held accountable for the content or tone of my commentaries, which are of my exclusive responsibility.

<sup>3</sup> The content of this presentation is reflected in the following articles: “European Union perceptions of Plan Colombia: A Virtual Contribution to a Virtual War and Peace Plan?” U.S. Army War College/North-South Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 2001; “Europa y el Plan Colombia: el doble discurso de la UE,” Política Exterior (Madrid), Vol. XV, septiembre-octubre 2001, Num. 83, pp. 31-42; “La asistencia europea a Colombia: ¿una contribución virtual a un plan virtual de paz? Colombia Internacional (Universidad de Los Andes), 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For samples of the impact of this dramatic event on the future of international cooperation, as reflected in the Colombian press, see: El Tiempo, “Se rompió el proceso de paz con las Farc,” 20 febrero 2002; El Espectador, “CE estudia cooperación con Colombia tras ruptura proceso paz”, 22 febrero 2002; Marta Rojas, “En marcha ‘Operación Tanathos’”, El Espectador, 21 febrero 2002; El Espectador, “Unión Europea ‘justifica’ y respeta la decisión de Pastrana,” 21 febrero 2002; El Espectador, “¿Es posible revivir el proceso?”, 21 febrero 2002; El Espectador, “Los países amigos, en vigilia”, 21 febrero 2002; El Tiempo, “Se rompió el proceso de paz con las Farc; el ejército entra al Caguán después de la medianoche”, 20 febrero 2002; Víctor Manuel Vargas, “Europeos creen que tarde o temprano habrá que construir una salida política al conflicto”, El Tiempo, 22 de febrero 2002.

timely columns.<sup>5</sup> Editorials endorsed President Bush's attempts to make U.S. support more effective.<sup>6</sup> These published opinions confirm that many U.S. elite had significantly shifted toward the idea of more active participation in the Colombian conflict, sidelining the peace negotiations as an apparent result of the attacks of September 11. "Terrorism" was the code word widely used, replacing "counter-insurgency strategy" and "curtailing narco-trafficking" which was the original framework sold to Congress to justify the need for Plan Colombia. The Colombian government began to lobby energetically for the use of U.S. counter-drug trafficking resources in the anti-insurgency activities, equating the fight against the FARC to the military offensive against Al Qaeda.<sup>7</sup> In public statements, the White House limited its position to the parameters outlined by Congress in the fight against drugs.<sup>8</sup>

Mexican and U.S. media dedicated special attention to the sudden shift with apprehension and anticipation of more dramatic news to come.<sup>9</sup> The lively Hispanic op-ed columnists from Miami expressed caution but at the same time endorsed the Colombian government.<sup>10</sup> In Europe, Spanish commentaries captured the nature of the event.<sup>11</sup> The British media took due notice, setting the tone for the rest of European

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Romero, "Save Colombia," The Washington Post, February 20, 2002, A15.

<sup>6</sup> The Miami Herald, "Colombia Strikes Back Attacking Terrorist Rebels", February 22, 2002; The Washington Post, "Help for Colombia," February 24, 2002, B06.

<sup>7</sup> AFP, "Ofensiva de las FARC se acerca a Bogotá", Diario las Américas, 28 febrero 2002.

<sup>8</sup> EFE, "Bush le dice 'no' a Pastrana," El Nuevo Herald, 28 febrero 2002, 1A.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, Scott, "Colombian Army Ordered Into Haven As Rebel Talks End", The Washington Post, 21 febrero 2002; Wilson, Scott, "Colombia Seeks More U.S. Aid for a Broader War", The Washington Post, February 24, 2002; Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, "Ruptura en Colombia", Reforma, 22 febrero 2002; Juan María Alponete, "Colombia: ruptura definitiva ¿o qué?", El Universal, 22 febrero 2002; Frances Robles, "Colombia invades to take back rebel zone", The Miami Herald, February 22, 2002; El Nuevo Herald, "Fin al proceso de paz", 21 febrero 2002.; Gonzalo Guillén, "Guerra frontal a las FARC", El Nuevo Herald, 22 febrero 2002; The Miami Herald, "Colombia Strikes Back Attacking Terrorist Rebels", February 22, 2002; Diario Las Américas, "FARC exige canjear rebeldes presos por Ingrid Betancourt", 26 febrero 2002; El Nuevo Herald, "En Primer Plano", 25 de Febrero 2002; EFE, "Cuestionan la presencia de soldados de EU en la antigua zona de despeje", El Nuevo Herald, 25 febrero, 2002; Frances Robles, "Colombian rebels waiting for army", The Miami Herald, February 26, 2002; Anabelle De Gale, "En Primer Plano", El Nuevo Herald, 25 febrero 2002; AFP, "La guerra es total entre FARC y paramilitares", El Nuevo Herald, 26 febrero 2002; Fabiola Santiago, "Abducted Colombian candidate is an unusual politician", The Miami Herald, February 26, 2002; Gonzalo Gullén, "Las FARC golpean con secuestro de candidata", El Nuevo Herald, 25 febrero 2002; El Nuevo Herald, "Las FARC contaminan un acueducto", 25 febrero 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Guillermo I. Martínez, "Hay que ayudar a Colombia," Diario Las Américas, 28 febrero 2002; Max J. Castro, "Go into Colombia fully aware", The Miami Herald, February 26, 2002; Daniel Morcate, "La guerra de todos," El Nuevo Herald, 28 febrero 2002, 12A.

<sup>11</sup> Francisco Santos, "Más de lo mismo", El País, 22 febrero 2002; El País, "La hora de la guerra", 22 febrero 2002; El País, "El proceso de paz en Colombia queda en el aire tras el secuestro de un senador", 21 febrero 2002; Pilar Lozano, "Pastrana iza la bandera colombiana en el terreno recuperado a la guerrilla", El País, 24 febrero 2002:

[http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d\\_date=20020224&xref=20020224elpepiint\\_3](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d_date=20020224&xref=20020224elpepiint_3); Pilar Lozano, "Indignación por las víctimas de los bombardeos del Ejército", El País, 24 febrero 2002: [http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020224elpepiint\\_4&type=Tes&anchor](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020224elpepiint_4&type=Tes&anchor);

Pilar Lozano, "El Ejército de Colombia reconquista la base de las FARC en la zona neutral", El País, 23 febrero 2002: [http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020223elpepiint\\_2&anchor=elpepiin](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020223elpepiint_2&anchor=elpepiin)

opinion.<sup>12</sup> European leaders expressed understanding and support for President Pastrana's decision. The EU presidency issued the following declaration, setting the tone for future actions, while expressing its general attitude toward the crisis:

- The European Union fully understands and respects the decision which the President of Colombia felt obliged to take on 20 February 2002, putting an end to the Process, which began in 1998, of dialogue, negotiation and the signing of agreements with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) and to the Disengagement Zone. President Andrés Pastrana has, throughout those years, displayed an untiring determination to achieve peace in Colombia, which, unfortunately, cannot be said of the FARC-EP.
- The European Union utterly condemns the latest attack against the civilian population attributed to the FARC-EP. The gravity of the aircraft hijacking and the kidnapping of several of its passengers demonstrates that the FARC-EP pay no heed to the repeated calls from the whole of Colombian society and the international community to ease the conflict.
- The European Union deeply regrets the fact that, since the signing on 20 January 2002 of the Consensus Schedule Agreement for the future Peace Process with the Colombian Government, the FARC-EP have demonstrated their lack of willingness to make serious progress in the Process, by failing to honor the undertakings signed with the Government. The FARC-EP's grave provocations have led to the breakdown of a negotiating process on which the Colombian people had based their hopes for peace. The European Union profoundly deplores these provocations, which come on top of the violence which the paramilitaries continue to perpetrate.
- The European Union has reiterated several times its rejection and condemnation of the practice of kidnapping, extortion and other crimes committed by armed groups in Colombia. In the present grave circumstances, the EU renews its urgent appeal for respect for International Humanitarian Law and the protection of the civilian population, and it reserves the right to change its policy towards the armed groups.
- At this difficult time, the European Union wishes to express its support for and solidarity with the Colombian people as a whole, and with President Pastrana and his Government. The Union hopes that Colombian democracy, on the basis of a strict observance of the Rule of Law and full respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, can completely fulfill the aspirations for peace and prosperity of all the Colombian people.
- The EU once again assures the Colombian people of its support for any initiative to establish a genuine dialogue with a view to ending the conflict which is tearing Colombia apart.<sup>13</sup>

Reacting to the kidnapping of presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, the Spanish Presidency of the European Union issued a declaration condemning the action and demanding her release.

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<sup>12</sup> Oxford Analytica Brief, "Colombia: Escalating Violence", February 25, 2002: [http://www.oxweb.com/search\\_results.asp?numberofresults=500&countries=Colombia](http://www.oxweb.com/search_results.asp?numberofresults=500&countries=Colombia); BBC News, "Outrage at Colombian kidnap", February 26, 2002: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/americas/newsid\\_1841000/1841207.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_1841000/1841207.stm); Martin Hodgson, "Colombian army takes back rebel capital", The Guardian, February 25, 2002: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/colombia/story/0,11502,656625,00.html>; Martin Hodgson, "Colombia abandons peace effort", The Christian Science Monitor, February 25, 2002: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0225/p06s01-woam.html>; Belfast Telegraph-Financial Times, "Politician seized in Colombia", February 25, 2002: <http://globalarchive.ft.com/globalarchive/article.html?id=020225005772&quer>

<sup>13</sup> Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the breakdown of the Peace Process in Colombia (Brussels, 22 February 2002).

- The Presidency of the European Union expresses its most energetic condemnation of the kidnapping of the candidate to the presidential election, Ingrid Betancourt, carried out on February 23, by the FARC-EO, and it demands her immediate release.
- The Presidency of the EU wishes to transmit its solidarity to the family of Ms. Betancourt, as well as to the Government and the Colombian people.
- The Presidency of the EU reiterates its full support for democracy in Colombia in facing terrorist acts that attempt to interfere with the development of the campaign for the upcoming legislative and presidential elections.<sup>14</sup>

The most important part of this trend-setting declaration was the labeling of these types of activities with the novel expression of “terrorist,” never used before by official European bodies when referring to the Colombian guerrillas. This was a drastic change of tone, detected by the Colombian authorities and international observers. Previously much softer expressions, such as “combatants,” were used by the international community to depict the behavior of this guerrilla organization. This declaration had a more complex profile.

First, it was only exclusively issued by the Spanish presidency, in Spanish, with no text available in English or any other EU language, despite standing promises in the web page of the Spanish EU presidency. EU member state diplomats have noticed that the language used (most especially, the expression of “terrorists acts”) left the door open for multiple interpretations. The unavailability of an English text has added to the confusion and speculation.

Second, European and Colombian interpretations range from the extreme thesis that the declaration was inspired by the Colombian government to the more mild picture of an attempt by the Spanish government to please both the Colombian and U.S. authorities, and at the same time lead the EU efforts to pressure the guerrillas.

Third, the declaration (and its interpretations) would dramatically contrast with the decision of the EU on May 2, 2002, of not including the FARC and the ELN on the list of terrorists organizations, while the right wing paramilitary was posted on this roster.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Colombian government, some of the leading presidential

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<sup>14</sup> This is an unofficial, literal translation done by the author. [Declaración de la Presidencia de la Unión Europea sobre el secuestro de la candidata presidencial en Colombia](http://www.ue2002.es/principal.asp?opcion=6&subopcion=1&idioma=espanol) (Madrid, 25 de febrero de 2002). <http://www.ue2002.es/principal.asp?idioma=ingles>

The complete, original text in Spanish (February 25, 2002) is as follows:

La Presidencia de la Unión Europea expresa su más enérgica condena del secuestro de la candidata a las elecciones presidenciales de Colombia, Ingrid Betancourt, realizado el 23 de febrero por las FARC-EO, y exige su inmediata liberación.

La Presidencia de la Unión Europea desea trasladar su solidaridad a la familia de la Sra. Betancourt, así como al Gobierno y el pueblo colombianos.

La Presidencia de la Unión Europea reitera su pleno apoyo a la democracia en Colombia frente a actos terroristas que pretenden interferir en el desarrollo de la campaña para las próximas elecciones legislativas y presidenciales.

<sup>15</sup>“ Decision adopted by written procedure”, Council, May 2, 2002. For a complete documentation on the EU measures, see [www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex)



candidates (Alvaro Uribe and Noemí Sanín), and influential opinion columnists protested the decision and asked for help from the Spanish government. Other candidates (Garzón and the staff of kidnapped Betancourt) seemed to espouse hope that the decision would keep the door open for the FARC to negotiate. According to the Colombian press, this thesis was apparently the argument behind the European governments (allegedly led by Sweden and France) that opposed the official declaration of the FARC and the ELN as “terrorists” (as proposed by Spain and Belgium) because this would make it very difficult to pressure them for negotiations.<sup>16</sup> Following this logic, France has maintained an open door due to the fact that Ingrid Betancourt has dual citizenship. In the same line, Sweden would consider that labeling the FARC as terrorists diminishes the EU’s leverage. The Swedish government has categorically denied that it opposes the inclusion of the FARC in the list. On the contrary, it supports the measure.<sup>17</sup> The French Ambassador Daniel Parfait denied these alleged motivations and confirmed France’s endorsement of condemning all terrorist acts,<sup>18</sup> a statement passionately ratified by President Jacques Chirac during a press conference held at the II EU-Latin American Summit in Madrid on May 17. At the same Summit, President Pastrana obtained an unequivocal backing from Spain’s premier Aznar, who pledged to pressure his colleagues to include the FARC in the EU terrorist list.<sup>19</sup> European observers remind critics that not until the end of the truce did the Colombian government ever use the terrorist label.<sup>20</sup> This controversy also explains why the declaration of the Spanish presidency was not upgraded – it did not receive the necessary approval from the Council to become a full EU declaration with the potential of becoming a common position, or simply serving as the basis for the inclusion of the Colombian guerrillas on the terrorist list.

However, as a result of the Boyajá massacre of May 2, 2002, the Colombian government and public opinion increased the pressure on EU representatives and Member States governments to include the FARC on a future list,<sup>21</sup> in the mist of

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<sup>16</sup> El Tiempo, “Pastrana sorprendido”, 3 mayo 2002; Pilar Lozano, “La sorpresa de la UE”, El País, 4 mayo 2002; AFP, 3 mayo 2002; El Tiempo, “Colombia pedirá a la UE incluir a Farc en lista de grupos terroristas”, 3 mayo 2002; “Las críticas a Europa”, 2 mayo 2002; Víctor Manuel Vargas, “Diplomáticos europeos consideran ‘error’ lamentable no incluir a Farc en lista de terroristas”, El Tiempo, 4 mayo 2002; D’Artagnan, “Farc con visa”, El Tiempo, 4 mayo 2002; El Tiempo, “El despiste europeo”, 6 mayo 2002; EFE, “Presidencia española de UE apoya inclusión”, El Tiempo, 6 mayo 2002; Análisis Coyuntural, “la decisión de la UE frente a las FARC y el ELN”, 3 mayo 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Explicit declaration by the Swedish ambassador in Bogotá, Olof Skoog, to the author on May 10, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Explicit communication to the author.

<sup>19</sup> Cristina Sen, “Los Quince otorgan a Pastrana un balón de oxígeno”, La Vanguardia, 18 mayo 2002, 4; Bosco Esteruelas, “Aznar pide que la guerrilla colombiana figure entre los grupos terroristas de la UE”, El País, 17 mayo 2002, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Víctor Manuel Vargas, “Diplomáticos europeos”, El Tiempo, 4 mayo 2002.

<sup>21</sup> EFE, El Tiempo, “Presidencia española de la UE apoya inclusión”, 6 mayo 2002; ANCOL, “Asegura Pastrana: Suecia se compromete a revisar exclusión”, 6 mayo 2002; ANCOL, “Unión Europea evaluará petición”, 7 mayo 2002; ANCOL, “Lista de terroristas puede modificarse”, 7 mayo 2002. APF, May 9, 2002 “Solana qualifie les FARC de “groupe terroriste” à inclure dans la liste UE”.

tensions caused by corruption and calls for an increase of military resources,<sup>22</sup> while the Spanish presidency of the EU issued another declaration in which the following statements were inserted:

The Spanish presidency of the EU expresses its most energetic condemnation against the new terrorist action taken by the FARC on May 2... The EU has reiterated its firm condemnation of the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated by armed groups in the course of recent years in Colombia.... The EU has identified among its priorities the fight against terrorism and the need to prosecute criminal and terrorist activities that are an attempt against the state of law and fundamental liberties... In this context, the EU has adopted specific restrictive measures directed against persons and entities, in order to fight terrorism. The elaboration of a list is among these measures, which implies a continued process to be revised periodically, resulting in the eventual inclusion of other persons and entities. Decisions in this regard are made by consensus, and they are solidary and confidential<sup>23</sup>

In the course of the II EU-Latin America-Caribbean Summit held in Madrid, President Pastrana received a successful backing from Spain's premier Aznar with his promise to influence his colleagues for the inclusion of FARC in the terrorist list, while Sweden pledged not to oppose the measure.<sup>24</sup> However, in the aftermath of the election of Alvaro Uribe as President of Colombia on May 26, 2002, the ambivalence and contradictions of the different EU actors in labeling the FARC became obvious, predicting a future flexibility, according to the long term objectives. While the European Parliament delegation visiting Colombia to witness the election branded the atmosphere

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<sup>22</sup> Afp, "EE.UU. suspende la ayuda a Colombia," Diario las Américas, 10 mayo 2002; El Tiempo, "Plata antidrogas fue desviada," 10 mayo 2002; El Tiempo, "Y qué dicen de la corrupción?" 10 mayo 2002; El Nuevo Herald, "Diez mil hombres más," 10 mayo 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Declaración de la Presidencia sobre las ofensivas de las FARC (7 de mayo de 2002). The complete declaration in Spanish is as follows:

La Presidencia de la Unión Europea expresa su más enérgica condena ante la nueva acción terrorista cometida por las FARC el pasado día 2 de mayo, que ha causado más de un centenar de muertos, otro tanto de heridos, casi ciento cuarenta desaparecidos y posiblemente cuatro mil desplazados. La Unión Europea traslada su más sincero pesar a los familiares de las víctimas, a la Nación y al Gobierno de Colombia.

La Unión Europea ha venido acompañando activamente al Pueblo colombiano y al Gobierno del Presidente Pastrana en sus esfuerzos para mejorar la situación en el país. En sus comunicados, la Unión ha reiterado de forma constante su más firme condena a las violaciones de los derechos humanos y del derecho internacional humanitario que los grupos armados han perpetrado a lo largo de estos últimos años en Colombia.

La Unión Europea ha fijado entre sus prioridades la lucha contra el terrorismo y la necesidad de perseguir las actividades criminales y terroristas que atentan contra el Estado de Derecho y las libertades fundamentales. En este contexto, la Unión Europea ha adoptado medidas específicas restrictivas, dirigidas contra determinadas personas y entidades, para luchar contra el terrorismo. La elaboración de una lista se encuentra entre estas medidas, lo que implica un continuo proceso que se revisa de forma periódica, y que podría originar, en su caso, la inclusión de otras personas y de otras entidades en dicha lista. Las decisiones al respecto se adoptan por consenso y son solidarias y confidenciales.

<sup>24</sup> La Vanguardia, "Los Quince otorgan a Pastrana un balón de oxígeno," 18 mayo 2002; EFE, "Pastrana celebra que Suecia apoye incluir a las FARC en la lista terrorista," Diario las Américas, 25 mayo 2002.

as presided by “violence, fear, intimidation and blackmail,” the culprits were considered as “insurgent movements”.<sup>25</sup> While Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, expressed admiration for the democratic process, “in spite the campaign of threats, intimidations, and assassinations,”<sup>26</sup> and Josep Piqué, Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain, recognized the difficult conditions under “very serious violence threats,”<sup>27</sup> the Commission congratulated the new president for seeking dialogue with “armed groups.”<sup>28</sup> The “terrorist” label had disappeared from the declarations of the main protagonists of the EU implication, opening the door for a new setting for negotiations.

In any event, while maintaining Europe’s pledge to help Colombia, the EU’s specific programs will have to be reevaluated in accordance with the new security situation. Europe’s contribution to a lasting peace in Colombia would have to continue from a distance. Before the elections of May 20, not only did Plan Colombia seem to be taking the road to an open confrontation, but the hopes associated with the Peace Process had vanished. From good intentions, the European attitude changed to high frustration. In order to resume negotiations for a political settlement to this conflict, European involvement seems to be irreplaceable, and thus, a complete review of Europe’s perceptions and actions is in order.

### **Rejecting Plan Colombia, Betting on the Peace Process**

In mid January 2002, a highly controversial agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas over the extension of a sanctuary territory was on the verge of collapse. Under the threat of Colombian presidential ultimatums and the unpredictable guerrilla reaction, the unstable situation was in danger of degenerating into a full-scale war.<sup>29</sup> The direct potential result would be the invasion of the sanctuary awarded to the FARC. As the events of January 20 would confirm, there was an impending change in the policies and actions of the United States, widely discussed and lobbied for by various interests.<sup>30</sup> EU officials and numerous European diplomats<sup>31</sup> saw the end of their attempts to mediate a lasting peace, or at least, a partial truce in time and space. A statement on Colombia by the Spanish Presidency of the EU was categorical:

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<sup>25</sup> “Comunicado de prensa de la delegación de observadores del Parlamento Europeo,” Bogotá, 26 mayo 2002.

<sup>26</sup> “Declaración de D. Javier Solana,” 27 mayo 2002.

<sup>27</sup> “Piqué felicita al ganador de las elecciones,” Madrid, May 27, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Declaration, May 27 2002.

<sup>29</sup> As a reflection of European perception: Juan Jesús Aznárez, “El Ejército colombiano se rearma para hacer frente a las guerrillas”, *El País*, 18 enero 2002: [http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020118elpepiint\\_6&anchor=elpepuint&type=Tes&d\\_date=20020118](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020118elpepiint_6&anchor=elpepuint&type=Tes&d_date=20020118)

<sup>30</sup> *The Washington Post*, editorial, January 14, 2002, p. A16; Karen DeYoung, “U.S. eyes shift in Colombia policy”, *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2002, p. A01.

<sup>31</sup> Mostly from the Group of Países Amigos (Spain, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Mexico, Cuba, Canada and Venezuela).

The Presidency of the European Union, deeply concerned about the current situation of the dialogue process with the FARC-EP, reiterates its support to the efforts of President Pastrana and the Colombian government to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. At the same time, it calls on the FARC-EP to confirm with facts their will for peace, and to find a way to keep alive the hopes placed in such a dialogue by the Colombian people and the International Community. Meanwhile, we support the decisions adopted by President Pastrana, as the legitimate representative of the democratic will of the Colombian people.<sup>32</sup>

When the government and the guerrillas agreed to keep negotiating under extreme diplomatic pressure,<sup>33</sup> the EU confirmed its commitment to deliver assistance aid, including the funding of projects in the guerrilla-held sanctuary.<sup>34</sup> Brussels expressed its most positive statement to date on the process:

- "The European Union expresses its satisfaction at the signing on 20 January 2002 of the Consensus Schedule Agreement for the future Peace Process between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP. This opens a new period and defines the priority issues necessary to take the Process through the implementation of concrete acts of peace, with specific and verifiable deadlines.
- The European Union stresses the importance of the deadline agreed to on 7 April 2002 for a cease-fire and an end to the hostilities. It considers of utmost priority the release of all hostages by the FARC-EP. The Union hopes that an immediate decrease in the intensity of the conflict and an end of human rights violations and of attacks against the civil population will create an atmosphere of trust to boost the negotiations and fulfill commitments already undertaken by the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP.
- The Union welcomes the contributions of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations and of the Group of Facilitators in reaching the Consensus Schedule Agreement. The Union will continue to support the efforts of the international community in promoting peace in Colombia.<sup>35</sup>

The announcement<sup>36</sup> of a new schedule of talks leading to an April 7 hopeful cease-fire revealed the crucial role played by European representatives.<sup>37</sup> Although the

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<sup>32</sup>Madrid, 10 January 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Fernando Cepeda, "Facilitación internacional", *El Tiempo*, 15 enero 2002; "El papel de la comunidad internacional", Editorial, *El Tiempo*, 21 enero 2002: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip160013.html>. ABC: <http://www.abc.es/especiales/index.asp?tid=4&hid=2064&cid=2064>

<sup>34</sup> AFP, "La UE no excluye financiar proyectos en zona de las FARC", *Diario las Américas*, 16 enero 2002, p. A.; AFP, "Unión Europea y España apoyan", *Diario las Américas*, 13 enero 2002, p. 3A.

<sup>35</sup> Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the Schedule Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP (Brussels, 24 January 2002).

<sup>36</sup> For a complete text of the agreement: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip159999.html>; From the Colombian government: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/noticias/2002/enero/infenot.htm>

<sup>37</sup>*El Tiempo*, 21 enero 2002: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip159998.html>

Gonzalo Guillén, "Firmarán la tregua en abril", *El Nuevo Herald*, 21 enero 2002, p. 1A; Nancy San Martín, "Colombia peace process revived", *The Miami Herald*, January 21, 2002, 3A; *Le Monde*, <http://www.lemonde.fr/article/0,5987,3222--258520-,00.html>

armistice was no longer anticipated, the EU and European governments had invested considerable amount of diplomatic energy, political support and continuous funding of regional and bilateral projects to the Peace Process (so called in European circles, rejecting the spirit and the letter of the original U.S.-led Plan Colombia).<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the eventual total collapse of the tenuous negotiating lines represented a major setback not only for the staff of the European Union, but also for the political reputation of numerous European heads of government and state. Established on March 9, 2001, in Los Pozos (Caquetá), the Dialogue Table (Mesa de Diálogos) of 26 Países Amigos (to meet every six months), created a Comisión Facilitadora (to meet bimonthly, and later more often), composed of ten countries (Canada, Cuba, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Venezuela). An open confrontation between the FARC and the Colombian Army would also have endangered the systematic diplomatic role of European governments in the negotiations with the other Colombian guerrilla organization, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). This danger has been magnified since the February 20 breakdown.

The Colombian government saw a sign of relief in the fact that economic and social assistance has been expected to come mostly from Europe. The satisfaction in Europe and Colombia was visible when late Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, hours before the deadline, the Colombian government and the FARC confirmed (as advanced by the media<sup>39</sup>) a new agreement to rejoin the peace negotiations.<sup>40</sup> In spite of the fragility of the agreements, the role of the international community and most especially the efforts of European diplomats, was generously credited as irreplaceable.<sup>41</sup> A declaration from Brussels came in an unequivocal manner:

- "The European Union acknowledges the efforts carried out by President Pastrana of Colombia to re-launch the process of dialogue founded on the San Francisco de la Sombra Agreement, which established the need of a cease-fire and the interruption of hostilities. Likewise, the European Union condemns the kidnappings, the attacks against the civil population, the extortions and the destruction of national infrastructures.
- The European Union also embraces the work carried out by the United Nations and the Group of Facilitating Countries, particularly by the four members of the European Union, which has enabled the re-establishment of the trust needed to try to find a negotiated solution to this conflict. The International Community has carried out a very constructive and useful role throughout the negotiations, and the European Union shall support its presence in future negotiations.
- The European Union hopes that the negotiations that are being carried out shall lead to specific facts, proving the will of the FARC-EP to sincerely advance in the procedure, complying with the

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ABC <http://www.abc.es/internacional/noticia.asp?id=73143&dia=Hoy>

<sup>38</sup> For a complete chronology of this process: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip160010.html>;

ABC <http://www.abc.es/especiales/index.asp?cid=2067&did=4941&tid=4&hid=2064>

<sup>39</sup> Sol Gómez Giraldo and María Luisa Murillo, "Día de mucha expectativa", El Tiempo, 20 enero 2002: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/20-01-2002/prip159648.html>

<sup>40</sup>From the Madrid press:

[http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d\\_date=20020120&xref=20020121elpepuint\\_1&type=Tes&anchor=elpepupor](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d_date=20020120&xref=20020121elpepuint_1&type=Tes&anchor=elpepupor)

[http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d\\_date=20020121&xref=20020121elpepiint\\_2&type=Tes&anchor=elpepiint](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?d_date=20020121&xref=20020121elpepiint_2&type=Tes&anchor=elpepiint)

<sup>41</sup> AFP, "Comunidad internacional: papel clave en futuros diálogos", Diario las Américas, 22 enero 2002, p.3A.

- engagements signed with the Government. The European Union stressed its will to continue supporting democracy in Colombia and President Pastrana's efforts to achieve peace as a State policy, in the frame of democratic institutions, the State of Law and the respect of human rights.
- Finally, the European Union, once again, vigorously condemns the kidnappings, extortions and other crimes, which represent a flagrant violation of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. To this effect, it underlines that the FARC must take on a new stage, bearing in mind the will and firmness of the Colombian society and the International Community.<sup>42</sup>

The agreement, and the process that led to it, was not universally endorsed in Colombia, where a majority of the population and the leading candidates to succeed Pastrana have been critical of a policy they perceive to be awarding advantages to the FARC "with no practical return".<sup>43</sup> In the Colombian media, the role of the international community was questioned regarding its limitations, contradictions and dependency on its national interests.<sup>44</sup> Domestic and international observers denounced the limitation of the pledge made by the FARC to discontinue collective kidnappings (labeled as "miraculous fishing") but still authorize selective abductions in exchange for ransom.<sup>45</sup> The political climate did not improve, kidnappings and assassinations continued, destruction of infrastructure became a daily routine, and threats of acute urban violence were translated into an ominous reality.<sup>46</sup> History seemed to repeat itself when President Pastrana cancelled his scheduled attendance at the World Economic Forum in New York City (as a gesture of solidarity by this organization following the September 11 attacks), as he did a year earlier when he returned to Colombia from Paris, skipping his trip to Davos, Switzerland, the regular site for this meeting.<sup>47</sup>

The highs and lows of European involvement are well-established. For most of 2001, the overall agenda of the Peace Process/Plan Colombia was pending on the implementation of the latest EU official decisions. Coming off of a roller coaster that lasted more than a year, on April 30, 2001, European Commissioner for External Relations, Chris Patten, proudly announced in Brussels to an impressive gathering of international donors that the EU had confirmed a contribution of € 335 million (about \$304 million) for the Colombian Peace Process,<sup>48</sup> a sum later elevated to about \$366 million.

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<sup>42</sup>16 January 2002.

<sup>43</sup>Reflecting European opinion:

Juan Jesús Aznárez, "¡Ojalá Pastrana hubiera pedido ayuda militar a EE UU!", *El País*, 19 enero 2002: [http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020119elpepiint\\_12&anchor=elpepuint&type=Tes&d\\_date=20020119](http://www.elpais.es/articulo.html?xref=20020119elpepiint_12&anchor=elpepuint&type=Tes&d_date=20020119):

For a summary of Colombian opinions, see report by *El Tiempo*, 21 enero 2002: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip159922.html>

<sup>44</sup>*El Tiempo*, 8 febrero 2002: "Reflexiones en la encrucijada VI", Editorial: "La otra pata de la mesa".

<sup>45</sup>European sources have been very critical of this phenomenon perpetrated by both sides in the conflict. See Emilio Menéndez del Valle, "¿Adónde vas, Colombia?," *El País*, agosto 2001. See also, the impressive report issued by Pax Christi, *The kidnap industry in Colombia* (2002). International efforts have reached the UN with a resolution approved by its Crime Prevention Commission for a proposal on Colombia (*El Tiempo*, "ONU: cerco mundial al secuestro," 1 mayo 2002).

<sup>46</sup>Gerardo Reyes, "Inminente la guerra urbana en Bogotá," *El Nuevo Herald*, 3 febrero 2002, p. 1A.

<sup>47</sup>EFE, "Pastrana cancela viaje por ataques," *Diario las Américas*, 1 febrero 2002, p. 2A.

<sup>48</sup>"Colombia: an international commitment to peace", Brussels, April 30, 2001; ANCOL, "Palabras del comisionado Chris Patten ante el Grupo de Apoyo," 30 abril 2001. See also his article in Spanish entitled "Colombia: una contribución europea para la paz," *ABC*, 1 mayo 2001. From Colombian sources:

Simultaneously, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana declared in Bogotá that the much heralded and controversial Plan Colombia was financially completed.<sup>49</sup> Added to a total of \$4 billion in Colombian funds, the European Union pledge completed the external funding of \$3.5 billion. A grand total of \$7.5 billion would power the scheme destined to transform Colombia from a disintegrating society dominated by guerrilla war and drug trafficking into a full fledged democracy with a prosperous economy.

Ten months later, the overall panorama was full of enigmas and there were still dark clouds hovering overhead. The end of the process on February 20 was the final blow. The Colombian President is finishing his mandate. He has been receiving pressure from three fronts: the activity of the paramilitary forces, the ongoing terrorist and extortion policies executed by the guerrilla groups, and the suddenly-changed international strategy of the United States caused by the September 11 attacks.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, very few concrete steps towards the implementation of the European assistance had actually taken place, due to the fact that security on the ground had not been conducive for the successful execution of the recovery and development programs. Nonetheless, while uncertainty mounted due to the new cycle of violence and controversy amid rumors of U.S. intervention and expanded assistance<sup>51</sup> in early February 2002, the European Commission announced in a supreme act of confidence and optimism the disbursement of the first installment for the specific projects in the Magdalena Medio region.<sup>52</sup>

The diplomatic role of the international community, especially the European Union and its member states, has proven to be irreplaceable. This is still the case. EU leaders (such as Chris Patten<sup>53</sup> and Javier Solana,<sup>54</sup> and members of the European

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ANCOL, “Discurso del alto comisionado ante comunidad internacional”, Bruselas, 30 abril 2001: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/noticias/2001/abril/infenot.htm>.

EU website:

“Multiannual Support Programme for Colombia”, Brussels, 28 October 2000: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/intro/ip\\_00\\_1184.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/intro/ip_00_1184.htm)

<sup>49</sup> ANCOL, “El Plan Colombia ya es una realidad: Pastrana”, 1 mayo 2001. For an update of the budget developed by the Colombian government:

<http://herramientasparalapaz.gov.co/index.asp?vinculos=1&noticialD=243&programa=0>

<sup>50</sup> Coincidentally, Secretary of State Colin Powell had a visit scheduled for Bogotá on September 11: “Powell aplazó visita”, Proceso de Paz en Colombia, Colombia, 12 septiembre 2001. <http://www.procesodepaz.com/notas/Septiembre122001/B112N1.html>

<sup>51</sup> AFP, “Protegerá EE.UU. la red petrolera en Colombia”, Diario las Américas, 8 febrero 2002, p. 1A; EFE, “Grossman: se puede usar ayuda de EEUU contra guerrilla”, Diario las Américas, 7 febrero 2002, p. 3-4; El Nuevo Herald, “Washington no cree en la voluntad de paz de las FARC”, 9 febrero 2002, p. 1A.

<sup>52</sup> “Peace process in Colombia: Commission launches 'Peace Laboratory in the Magdalena Medio”, IP/02/213 Brussels, February 7, 2002.

<sup>53</sup> See news from EU sources:

“Comisario de la UE visita Colombia”, Bogotá, 22 marzo 2001:

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/noticias.htm#patten1>

“Visit of Commissioner Chris Patten to Colombia”, Bogotá, 27 marzo 2001: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/visit/pc.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/visit/pc.htm)

<sup>54</sup> See news from EU sources:

Parliament) visited Colombia in support of fact-finding missions. King Juan Carlos I extended protocol state visits to Bogotá dramatizing Spain's support of the Colombian government and the peace process. The intervention of European diplomats in January 2002 was highly instrumental in promoting the last minute attempt by the representative of the United Nations to stall what appeared to be the end of the truce between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas.<sup>55</sup>

The European diplomacy has maintained its leadership in the negotiations with the ELN. Inaugurating the Spanish presidency of the European Union, the Spanish government took the lead in the efforts to strengthen the feasibility of the negotiations with the FARC and the ELN.

### **Europe's Global Contribution: "Don't Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth"**

Partly responding to public opinion pressure and as a follow-up to its preceding policies and programs, the European Commission led the efforts for international assistance to Colombia. On April 30, 2001, the impressive show of unity demonstrated by the 27 countries and 10 international organizations convened by the IDB in the EU capital was a dream come true for world cooperation. In reality, however, only about \$100 million were contributed by the EU institutional budget.

But funding appeared to be coming from all corners in a sort of phone and television marathon competition. A year earlier, the United States promised \$1.3 billion, \$250 million of which were for social and institutional programs. Spain led Europe with a promise of \$100 million. Japan committed \$ 70 million for irrigation projects, the UN pledged \$131 million for children programs, the IMF and the international banks provided almost \$ 1 billion, and \$ 300 million were earmarked for loans awarded by the World Bank, the IDB, and the Andean Community. The Swiss reserved \$15 million and the Swedes confirmed previously pledged \$20 million. The White House promised to convince Congress to dedicate millions to Andean projects. Even the Portuguese gave about \$300,000.<sup>56</sup> The figures and scope of these contributions should not surprise

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<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/noticias.htm#solana>;

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/visit/press12\\_03.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/visit/press12_03.htm), and selection of declarations: ANCOL, "Discurso del alto comisionado ante comunidad internacional", Bogotá, 30 abril 2001: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/noticias/2001/abril/infenot.htm>

<sup>55</sup> For the new truce deadline:

ANCOL, "Gobierno adopta plan estratégico contra terrorismo", Bogotá, 31 enero 2002: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/noticias/2002/enero/infenot.htm>

<sup>56</sup> Juan Carlos Iragorri, "US\$304 millones para Colombia," *El Tiempo*, 1 mayo 2001; *El Espectador*, "Hoy se concreta apoyo europeo a la paz," 1 mayo 2001; AFP, "Anuncia la UE \$294 millones de ayuda a Colombia," *Diario las Américas*, 1 mayo 2001; Alberto Sotillo, "La UE aporta 338 millones," *ABC*, 1 mayo 2001; Gabriela Cañas, "La UE aportará 60.000 millones al proceso de paz colombiano," *El País*, 1 mayo 2001; Elisa Santafé, AFP, "Colombia completa fondos para la paz," *El Nuevo Herald*, 1 mayo 2001.



unguarded observers, but should be placed in the wider context of the EU's Andean program<sup>57</sup>:

### Contribution of the European Union and European states

	Credit	Cooperation	Total
Germany		18 million	18
Austria		0.60	0.60
Belgium		10.10	10.70
Denmark		0.60	0.60
Spain	76	24	100
Finland		2.20	2.20
France		18	18
Netherlands		7.20	7.20
Ireland		0.90	0.90
Italy	10	5	15
Norway		20	20
Portugal		0.25	0.25
United Kingdom		7.02	7.02
Switzerland		8.5+12	20.50
Sweden		4+16	20
EU COM		126	126
Total:	86	280.37	366.97

Although the figures may not look too impressive, they were of the utmost importance for Colombian officials, because the programs concentrate heavily on institutional and social strengthening, humanitarian aid and transparency. Priority zones

<sup>57</sup> Comunidad Andina and European Union, "Reunión Ministerial entre la Comunidad Andina y la Unión Europea. Comunicado de Prensa Conjunto", Santiago de Chile, 28 March 2001;

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/noticias.htm#andina>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/andean/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/andean/intro/index.htm);

For a detailed multiyear plan of EU aid to Colombia:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/intro/sec\\_1647\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/intro/sec_1647_en.htm);

For a panorama of EU's activities in Colombia;

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/noticias.htm#ayuda>;

For an overview of EU's relations with Colombia:

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/uecolombia.htm>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/intro/index.htm).

For a list of itemized projects of the EU cooperation programs implemented by European NGOs in Colombia:

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/proyecol.htm>

For an overall review of the EU's activities in Colombia, see the newsletters Euronotas:

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/euronotas/28.pdf>,

and

especially the

2001

<http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/euronotas/27.pdf>

are the south of the Bolívar region, the southeast, Macizo and Magdalena Medio. A “Fast Track” process will be used to channel the funds.<sup>58</sup>

This atmosphere of optimism was at the same time tempered by ominous clouds on the horizon. Celebrating the May 1<sup>st</sup> Labor Day, the FARC sent an internet message pledging “not a minute of silence, but a life-long of combat.”<sup>59</sup> They fulfilled this threat with a long year of violence culminating in the massacre of more than one hundred people in Bojayá, an area contested for control with the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC).<sup>60</sup> Urban terrorism spilled over to the city of Cartagena de Indias, threatening its tourist industry, a survivor in the endemic deterioration of the Colombian economy.<sup>61</sup> The United States declined requests from pacifist organizations to delay delivering military aid.<sup>62</sup> Representatives of the European Parliament reaffirmed their view portraying the Plan Colombia as a war project and not as a peace program, with which the EU should not be involved.<sup>63</sup> The fine print of the official declarations and government statements also revealed the uncertainties and conditions under which international assistance to Colombia would have to be delivered. With the impact of the massacres inflicted by the right-wing paramilitary forces and the collapse of negotiations between the Colombian government and the ELN still fresh in their minds, the EU officers demanded a more rigorous policy from the Bogotá government and the need for heightened security for the personnel designated to direct and implement the different programs in the field. As in the past, the presidency of the EU issued warning declarations denouncing the uncertain climate.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, off-the record commentaries in Brussels reiterated that the figures of the announced contributions corresponded to old projects responding to the petitions of the Colombian government. This contradictory and ambivalent context has a tortuous and long history that can be traced back to the birth of Plan Colombia.

With the deadline of January 31, 2001, Colombian President Pastrana agonized over the dilemma between negotiating with the FARC and unleashing the Army over the guerrilla-controlled DMZ territory after months of obtaining few concessions in return.<sup>65</sup> Simultaneously, the Colombian government agreed to the details of another zone

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<sup>58</sup> Olga Isabel Echeverri, “Prioridades de inversión social”. El Plan Europeo, *El Espectador*, agosto 2001, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> FARC, “Saludo de las FARC-EP a los obreros y trabajadores en su día,” 1 mayo 2001.

<sup>60</sup> AFP, “60 muertos por una bomba,” *El Nuevo Herald*, 4 mayo 2002, 1A.

<sup>61</sup> Oscar Collazos, “Terrorismo en Cartagena,” *El Tiempo*, 25 abril 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Juan Carlos Irigorri, “US\$304 millones para Colombia,” *El Tiempo*, 1 mayo 2001.

<sup>63</sup> Olga González, “Espero que haya ideas alternativas”, *El Espectador*, 1 mayo 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Declarations of the Belgium presidency (30 July 2001):

<http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom/LoadDoc.cfm?MAX=1&DOC=!!!&BID=73&DID=67597&GRP=3701&LANG=1>

<sup>65</sup> Among other commentaries and press reports, see: Miguel Angel Bastenier, “Ultimatum o rogativa,” *El País*, 2 febrero 2001; *El Tiempo*, “Tirofijo dijo sí,” 3 febrero 2001; Juan Forero, “Colombian offers to meet rebels and extend zone,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2001; Juan Forero, “Rebel to meet Colombian president,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 2001; Pilar Lozano, “El presidente Pastrana prorroga la zona desmilitarizada en Colombia”, *El País*, 1 febrero 2001; Pilar Lozano, “Marulanda, líder de las FARC, acepta verse ‘cara a cara’ con el presidente Pastrana”, 3 febrero 2001; *Revista Cambio*. “¿Quién para a los paras?”, 3 febrero 2001.

awarded to the ELN under pressure from and with the mediation of the international community. At the same time, the European Parliament (under a Conservative-Christian Democratic majority<sup>66</sup>) passed a Resolution opposing the Plan Colombia (with 474 votes in favor, only one against, and 33 abstentions), perceived in Europe as inspired by the United States with “militaristic” and counter-insurgency purposes, with the potential of danger for spillover to other Andean neighbors.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, in order to demonstrate European support for the Colombian people, a European Commission-sponsored team of experts arrived in Bogotá to evaluate social and economic assistance projects to be funded by the EU and its member states. The ambassadors of the 15 member states accredited in Bogotá sent an energetic appeal to all parties in the Colombian crisis to resume the negotiations towards achieving a lasting peace.<sup>68</sup>

This cloudy and contradictory scenario demonstrates that Europe’s involvement in resolving the endemic Colombian confrontation has been always very problematic. In spite of the heartening declarations issued by the EU and key state actors and the commitment offered to the Colombian government, the deterioration of the situation in 2000 contributed to an increasingly pessimistic view. This negative assessment equally applied to the domestic evolution of the conflict and to the prospects of a European contribution to remedy the damage and to obtain a lasting peace, either via an adhesion to the Plan Colombia or as a separate aid package. European and U.S. perceptions of the Colombian problems and their causes have been too different. A give-and-take approach between Europe and the United States and mutual negotiation in identifying priorities is the key to a (still potential but difficult) trans-Atlantic cooperation.

Although an early 2000 diagnosis might have been more optimistic, based on a good disposition of European actors to help Colombia, when the year came to an end the panorama had worsened. The long sought out European involvement in Colombia seemed to oscillate from two extremes. On one optimistic side, Europe was committed to supply the necessary political support for the task of bringing a lasting peace to Colombia by contributing around \$1 billion in funds for social and economic programs. On the other, off-the-record voices warned that, unless the United States refurbished the most polemic parts of the plan, Europe would deliver “a virtual contribution to a virtual peace plan.”

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<sup>66</sup> Insiders of the EU Parliament pointed out that a notable number of the conservative members were absent, attending a gathering of the European Popular Party in Germany.

<sup>67</sup> AFP, “UE rechaza de plano la parte militar del Plan Colombia,” Diario las Américas, 2 febrero 2001; El Tiempo. Portafolio. “Eurodiputados piden a FARC descongelar el diálogo”, 2 febrero 2001; Bosco Esteruelas, “El Parlamento Europeo rechaza el Plan Colombia por ‘militarista’”, El País, 2 febrero 2001; European Parliament, “Resolution on Plan Colombia and the support to the Colombian peace process”, February 1, 2001; European Union. European Parliament. Nielsson, Poul, “Speaking points,” Committee of Development and Co-operation,” 31 January 2001; Joaquim Miranda, President. Commission on Development and Cooperation. “Intervention” European Parliament. Plenary session, January 31, 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Vicente Arcieri, “Empresarios, dispuestos a invertir en Colombia,” El Tiempo, 3 febrero 2001; El Espectador, “Apoyo internacional a negociaciones de paz”, 2 febrero 2001.

## Plan Colombia in the European Perspective: Good Intentions

The negative European perception became more explicit once certain details regarding a potential military involvement by the United States were announced and disseminated to the general public in August of 2000 during President Clinton's unprecedented short visit to Cartagena de Indias. Consequently, an analysis of the anti-drug-trafficking efforts in the absence of sufficient attention given to social matters even further damaged the overall critical European evaluation of what, until that moment, was almost the exclusive domain of governments and specialists.

Ironically, since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy is the factor that very often provides cohesiveness to the Old World position. All it takes is for the United States to offer the Europeans an easy prompt, a project, an excuse. In this case, it was a plan. They will speedily trigger an impressive show of coherence to demonstrate a coordinated approach, independent from that of the United States. Three conditions are necessary to make this alliance possible.

The first is that the policy that becomes the question of discord be affordable, with little cost to the European governments or organizations. The second is that the European resistance should be assisted by some sort of U.S. domestic opposition to the policy proposed or implemented by the U.S. government. The home front then becomes a European ally. The third condition is that the items on the agenda that are the subject of disagreement are not to be of a highly sensitive nature for any of the parties (U.S. or European) and of a global nature like the September 11 attacks. In other words, they may not constitute a serious threat to any of the new fundamental European security concerns (energy, migration, radical nationalism) or the special issues affecting any of the Member States. In this scenario, an ad hoc European opposition platform would fall apart at any given moment when the national interest of one of the European partners would seem to be at risk.

Europeans also need to have allies in the U.S. home front, either in public opinion, partisan politics, think tanks, or the academic community.<sup>69</sup> Until September 11, Plan Colombia fit this bill perfectly. Regarding political and economic cost, it was affordable to contest it. It is regionally localized. It has been opposed already in important parts of the U.S. home front, especially by conservative columnists.<sup>70</sup> It helps if

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<sup>69</sup> For a comprehensive review, see the volume edited by the Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales, El Plan Colombia y la internacionalización del conflicto, Bogotá: Planeta, 2001.

<sup>70</sup> For a selection of columns and press articles, see: Jane Bussey and Juan O. Tamayo, "Colombia drug aid runs into delays", The Miami Herald, October 10, 2000, 1A; Karen de Young, "U.S.: Colombian abuses continue," The Washington Post, January 20, 2001; Steven Dudley, "Battle brews over Plan Colombia," The Washington Post, September 20, 2000; Juan Forero, "Europe's Aid Plan for Colombia Falls Short of Drug War's Goals", The New York Times, Oct 25, 2000; Andrés Oppenheimer, "Latin America sees U.S. drug policy as hypocrisy", The Miami Herald, October 22, 2000, 12A; William Pfaff, "El equipo de Bush debe reconsiderar la intervención en Colombia", Diario las Américas, January 14, 2001, 6A; Carol Rosenberg, "Personnel cap in U.S. aid to Colombia a concern", The Miami Herald, October 10, 2000, 12A; Robert E. White, "The Wrong War", The Washington Post, September 12, 1999, B02; George F. Will, "Policy on Colombia is barren", The Miami Herald, September 13, 2000, 7B; The New York Times,

Colombia's Latin American neighbors are also in disagreement with the U.S. policy.<sup>71</sup> This coherent scenario, however, suffered the impact of the September 11 events. It remains to be seen if European states will side with the United States in an expanded intervention in Colombia.

It is also understandable that an issue as complex as the Colombian crisis is the subject of an internal debate among the leadership of the European Union institutions and the core of tactical disagreements between some Member States. The negative perception has never been monolithic. Some European sectors and governments are more prone to express unconditional support than others. Others are freer to vent their concern and irritation over some of the most polemic aspects of the Plan or its various interpretations. As a general rule, most of the Member States are very skeptical of a project that they perceive as U.S.-inspired. They also have difficulty understanding objectives of an operation that borders on *injerencia* in the internal affairs of another country. Although European officials are usually tame in their public declarations, they believe this conflict can only be resolved by Colombians. Government corruption, social injustice and the abandonment of state obligations are signaled as the causes of the crisis. However, at large, a general picture survives. Plan Colombia has been a candidate for a cohesive European response. On the one hand, the Europeans oppose the rationale of the military-security strategy pursued by the United States. On the other, they struggle to design a joint policy. In sum, the major point of departure between the European and the U.S. point of view regarding terrorism is the attempt to equate the FARC with Al Qaeda. Europeans share with the U.S. and the Colombian governments the need to combine political, social and military analyses. The degree of each of these ingredients is what separates Europe from the U.S. views.

Once the details of the U.S. backing were more explicitly known, the reaction in Europe could be described as a one-two movement of arms and hands; a sort of warm-up exercise. First the Europeans lifted their arms and placed their hands over their heads in disbelief and fear. Second, they positioned their hands in their pockets trying to secure their purses and wallets. After the first shock, European diplomats and government leaders were ready to check if their money was still in place. They felt that they were asked to pay for what could be described as big "incidentals", becoming larger than the core projects. For example, in some construction projects the original budget balloons to stratospheric heights. European financial help would be needed once the military hardware and munitions were exhausted and the last drop of blood of the last Colombian man was wasted, as one Colombian scholar illustrated a few hours before President Clinton arrived in Cartagena de Indias.<sup>72</sup>

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"Containing Colombia's Troubles", editorial, January 15, 2001; The Washington Post, "The Colombia Commitment", editorial, August 30, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Juan O. Tamayo, "Ecuador feels fallout from Colombia's narcotics war", The Miami Herald, November 12, 2000, 1L; Stephen Buckley, "South America frets over Colombia", The Washington Post, August 31, 2000.

<sup>72</sup> See articles by: Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, "Hasta el último gramo de cocaína y el último hombre colombiano", El Tiempo, Bogotá, 28 agosto 2000; and Joaquín Roy, "Fins a l'últim home, l'últim dòlar i l'últim gram de cocaína", Avui, Barcelona, 5 septembre 2000. See also: Pilar Lozano, "Clinton presenta su plan antidroga en una Colombia dividida", El País, 30 agosto 2000; Andrew Reding, "Plan Colombia: Un

In sum, Europeans perceived that they were called upon to pay the expenses of a war that they did not perpetrate, did not expand, and did not make worse. For decades, U.S. involvement in some parts of the world, most especially some regions of Latin America, has been described as the movements of a well-intentioned elephant. The United States tries to have an impossible low profile, anchored to the terrain with slow, clumsy movements, prone to knock down the pole of the circus tent with tragic consequences. Plan Colombia fit this scenario.

The global panorama contributing to this European perception has been complicated by the many successive versions and interpretations of the Plan Colombia officially announced by the Colombian government.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, not happy with the two complementary approaches developed by Bogotá and Washington to sell the same product to two different audiences (basically, the Colombian population and the U.S. Congress), Colombian authorities were eager to respond to the concerns of Europeans over the original plan and ideas by inviting Brussels to propose a “special plan for Colombia,” an invitation that the Europeans were ready to take. This was exactly what happened as early as May 19, 2000, when Colombian Foreign Minister Fernández de Soto met with EU Commissioner Chris Patten. He pointed out that the Commission’s concerns centered around the military component, the lack of involvement of the parties in dispute, not properly addressing the human rights issues, and the land reform and tax problems.<sup>74</sup> The avoidance of the label “Plan Colombia” became part of the European agenda and discourse. The use of expressions such as Peace Process became the rule.

Having expressed these concerns, Patten took the lead in the pursuit of a solid European response to Colombian needs, expressing “disheartened”<sup>75</sup> sentiments and dismay (if not irritation) when some of the Member States dragged their feet in offering contributions and support. The External Affairs Commissioner was very blunt: “I am also concerned that some Member States want to disassociate European support from Plan Colombia. I fully understand, and even share to some extent, the criticisms of Plan Colombia. But it would send a worrisome political signal if we granted EU aid to projects which did not fit under the Plan.” Patten himself stated to Fernández de Soto that the Commission intended “to do everything in its power to continue the process” and proposed to the “member States that a European aid programme for Colombia be set up,” offering the services of the Commission to coordinate this joint effort.<sup>76</sup> The record shows that this task was accomplished.

The European Union, the governments of the most influential members (by virtue of their historical linkages with Colombia, or because of the volume of their aid programs

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túnel demasiado largo”, *La Opinión*, Los Angeles, 20 Oct 2000; Javier Valenzuela, “Estados Unidos teme verse envuelto en un largo conflicto en América Latina”, *El País*, 27 agosto 2000.

<sup>73</sup>See official web site: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/plancolo/index.htm>. For a complete review of its development, see volume entitled *El Plan Colombia y la internacionalización del conflicto*.

<sup>74</sup>Internal communications and interviews with EU staff.

<sup>75</sup>Letter to Josep Piqué, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, September 19, 2000.

<sup>76</sup>Internal communications.

to Latin America, or both), and also the governments of other countries that are outside of the Union (Norway, Switzerland) have expressed an extreme degree of concern for the Colombian crisis. They also have pledged, in different terms and conditions, considerable resources. It seems that Colombia is a hot item. Not since Vietnam or the bloody clashes in Central America has Europe had a chance to become more involved in a conflict that erupted after the Cold War's end. The urgency to act and cooperate in solving the pressing problems of Colombia has attracted the attention of all the influential European governments and organizations, with virtually no exception. Without a doubt, the narco-trafficking dimension has contributed greatly to this interest. Europe is suffering as much as the United States from the consequences of the trade and consumption of drugs.

Two (different in nature) pivotal protagonists of European assistance are under scrutiny and pressure to be successful: Spain and the European Union institutions. Other governments (especially France and Germany) are caught between the need to speak up and pressure to cooperate in some way. Other states need to better express their positions.

## **Major Actors and Secondary Partners**

### **The European Commission in the Driver's Seat**

The Colombian scenario has been scrutinized by the EU Commission as one of the priorities in the region.<sup>77</sup> External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten has played a very difficult role in listening to the complaints of the critical member states (and the European Parliament)<sup>78</sup> over the Plan Colombia, welcoming the enthusiasm of others, especially the Spanish government, to offer cooperation, and at the same time not necessarily irritating the U.S. government. More explicitly than in other obscure and boring official documents, the view of the European Commission on Colombia and its justification for the need of European involvement were lucidly stated in a short piece published as a newspaper column by Patten.<sup>79</sup> In an exclusive interview given to Bogota's El Espectador, he insisted on correcting the perception that the role of Brussels

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<sup>77</sup> For a comprehensive view of the Commission's assessment of the Colombia crisis and the EU contribution, see Colombia. Country Strategy Paper 2001-2006 (2002).

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/csp/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/csp/)

In a candid language, Brussels outlines some fundamental problems: social inequality, injustice, corruption, impunity and poverty... [where] the cancer spread progressively and generalized to such point that the role of the State and its institutions has been dramatically reduced".

<sup>78</sup> For a sample, see documentation of the debates of the Committee of Cooperation and Development of September 12, 2000 (most especially an intervention of Colombian journalist Alfredo Molano Bravo), and the Resolution of the Parliament "Derechos humanos: violaciones de los derechos humanos en Colombia": Alfredo Molano Bravo, "El Plan Colombia y el conflicto armado", Revista Número, 12 septiembre 2000.

<sup>79</sup> Chris Patten, "Colombia: una cita por la paz," El Mundo, Madrid, and El Espectador, Bogotá, 24 octubre 2000.

was limited “to using its wallet”, conditioning aid to the respect for human rights. The EU Commission wanted to minimize the differences with the United States, but confirmed its participation in the Peace Process, not in what is officially known as Plan Colombia. European assistance will be concentrated on alternative rural development and institutional strengthening.<sup>80</sup>

In statements that need not be read with the typical disclaimer that his opinions do not reflect the view of the Commission (they do), Patten pledged maximum support for the main protagonists of the peace process: Colombia and the Andean states. The process needs a regional focus, to be originated in the region, in a balanced and integrated fashion, because the problems are larger and more complex than the domains limited by national borders. The main challenges are the violations of human rights, the lack of respect for the rule of law, and the deterioration of the role of the state caused by drug trafficking. Europe not only has an interest at stake, but also a responsibility. However, in spite of some signs of progress, the European commissioner for external affairs has a realistic view of the endemic conditions that need to be addressed with a deeper structural response. Violence is not only the cause of the problem, it is also the consequence of the prevalent situation in the country. That is why the EU Commission has to denounce the violations of human rights, whomever the perpetrators are, and demand their punishment.

Trying to put his money where his mouth is, Patten pledged political support for the peace process with concrete financial backing in the amount of about €105 million, in addition to the standard humanitarian aid that was being provided. The overall contribution then amounts to about the US\$300 million that were confirmed on April 30, 2001. Confirming other declarations, three areas are the priority of the European Union’s attention: the promotion and defense of human rights, the reduction of the socioeconomic disparities, and institutional reinforcement.

As in other EU declarations, the philosophical key for European involvement and modality is highlighted in Patten’s opinions. When observers of the new situation remember precedents of European involvement in Latin America with the corresponding disagreement with the United States, the clash over Plan Colombia brings back memories of the European opposition to how the United States dealt with problematic Cuba after the Cold War, especially regarding extraterritorial laws such as Helms-Burton.<sup>81</sup> However, the European agenda in this case seems much better propelled by the perceived successful case of Europe’s participation in the negotiations to solve the Central American crises of the 1980s. The San José process and the conviction that the conflict was not caused by Soviet-Cuban involvement, but by social inequality, is the model that seems to be a candidate for application through a Plan Colombia II (the European view).<sup>82</sup> The explicit reference to the model of the Central American cooperation is

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<sup>80</sup> “No es simplemente sacar nuestra billetera”, “El Plan Europeo”, *El Espectador*, especial, agosto 2001.

<sup>81</sup> For a sample of research, see Joaquín Roy, *Cuba, the United States and the Helms-Burton Doctrine: International Reactions*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.

<sup>82</sup>For background on the model of the role of the European Union in Central America: Henrique P. de la Vega, “En busca de la paz perdida”, *Proceso de Paz en Colombia*, Colombia, 7 enero 1999. <http://www.procesodepaz.com/notas/Enero071999/A1007N1.html>



obvious in Patten's column. As in that case, peace in Colombia is regarded as an enterprise calling for regional Latin American dimensions, in need of the contributions "by many people in many countries," which former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias stated in his 1987 Nobel Peace Prize speech regarding his efforts to bring peace to Central America. In any event, the above considerations are reflected in the official declarations of the European Commission.<sup>83</sup>

In an effort to build a base for the identification of thematic sectors feasible as EU-sponsored projects, the Latin American Group of the REPER (permanent representatives of the Member States) agreed on a series of "principles":

- recognition of the Colombian civil society and local communities as fundamental actors,
- the understanding that the Colombian government needs to contribute financially to the projects,
- non-intervention of armed groups in the identified regions for EU activity,
- neutrality and transparency in all EU-sponsored programs,
- close relationship with national programs,
- an expectation that the success of programs will not be possible without an impeccable respect for human rights and the modification of the redistribution system of wealth and resources.

Among some concrete measures and locations, the following are outlined:

- EU activities should be inserted in a wider context of international assistance, most especially in the fight against drug production and trafficking. Massive utilization of fusarium axysporum should be banned.
- The EU should use its diplomacy in the fight against chemical products used as a base for drug production, the intensification of inter-regional cooperation in drug-trafficking control, and in the fight against money-laundering activities.
- Some specific regions are identified as a priority: the Choco, the Macizo colombiano, the South (Putumayo, Caquetá, Nariño), the Magdalena Medio (which became the star of EU efforts in subsequent months) and the Cartagena del Caira.<sup>84</sup>

However, observers could detect a double discourse between what Europe is asked to do and how Europe responds in public and off-the-record. European governmental analysis shows a worrisome, but understandable, double face. Governments maintaining a cordial relationship with the Colombian government are careful not to portray in public what in private and in confidential communications they consider an alarming picture. They describe the situation as endemic. They do not consider it simply as a conflict between government and guerrillas, sort of a cops and robbers pursuit in a tropical scenario, but of a society which is terminally fractured. This double discourse also applies to commentaries on an apparent agreement between the United States and Europe.

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<sup>83</sup> Communication from Mr. Patten and Mr. Nielson to the Commission, "Multiannual support programme for Colombia", Bruxelles, 17 octobre 2000

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/intro/sec\\_1647\\_3.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/intro/sec_1647_3.htm)

<sup>84</sup> Group AMLAT, "Appui de l'Union Européenne au Processus de Paix Colombien", 7 September 2000.

When engaged in informal, off-the-record conversations, European officials tend to be forthcoming and clear. European governments and organizations are under the impression that they are called on to pay for a social and economic bill, while at the other side of the Atlantic the problem is reduced to a drug-trafficking and military problem. One graphic Spanish expression is characteristic of the reactions to the financial proposal. As a commentary on the section of Plan Colombia regarding the contribution of the international community,<sup>85</sup> one senior diplomat made this comparison to the role of the EU: “poner la pasta (shelling out the dough).”<sup>86</sup> In cruder terms, never detected in documents or veiled declarations, there is the prevailing European impression that the Colombians have been contributing the dead, the Americans supplying the military hardware and the Europeans giving the money to defray the cost of the social and environmental damage caused by the other two. This European assistance is perceived as a sort of remedy once the implementation of the U.S.-led military plan is terminated. This feeling is shared in corridors and after-hours meetings by many European diplomats in Madrid, Paris and Brussels and has permeated several reports and commentaries with an amazing cohesiveness. Expressions used by U.S. researchers match the picture given by European commentators. “With our economic cooperation they [Colombians] are going to clean up the dirty mess left by the Americans when they leave.” This harsh picture of the role to be played by European assistance<sup>87</sup> worsened after the breakdown of February 20.

In spite of all these difficulties, as a first concrete European Commission-controlled and coordinated project, the EU executive signed on February 7, 2002, the Financing Agreement to implement the Magdalena Medio Peace Laboratory, for the amount of € 34.8 million. Commissioner Patten expressed the EU’s views with clarity: “The European Commission today takes a concrete step in support of a negotiated solution to the Colombian conflict by encouraging the active participation of civil society organizations in the pacification of the country. This program is a concrete expression of the EU’s firm support for the peace process. We want to contribute to a wide national consensus in favor of peace. If this pilot program proves to be successful, we could establish a similar peace laboratory elsewhere in the country.” In an example of trust and cooperation, in agreement with national authorities, the Commission has delegated the implementation of the first phase to the Development and Peace Corporation of the Magdalena Medio (CDPMM), just awarded Colombia’s National Peace Prize, with a long record of intervention in the Magdalena Medio, and high credibility among the Colombian population. This innovative project will encourage the broad participation of citizens in the search for peace. It will focus on “reinforcing local institutions, supporting civilian actors engaged in promoting peace and fostering economic and social development.” It will have an impact on 13 town councils of the region, including the capital, Barrancabermeja. The “Peace Laboratory” concept builds on the participation of

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<sup>85</sup>For a complete listing of the projects presented for international financing, see: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/plancolo/volumen2/doc1.htm>

<sup>86</sup>Source: conference notes. See confirmation of this perception in Patten’s interview in *El Espectador*: Chris Patten, “Colombia: una cita por la paz.” *El Mundo*, and *El Espectador*, 24 octubre 2000.

<sup>87</sup> Expression quoted by James Petras, “El Plan Colombia y sus críticos”, *El Mundo*, 26 julio 2000.

citizens at the grassroots level, by exploring “ways to defuse the conflict and to bring about sustainable development.”<sup>88</sup>

### **The Controlling Role of the European Parliament**

With the end of January 2001 approaching, the deadline for the continuation of the DMZ given to the FARC as inducement for peace negotiations was looming over the minds of all protagonists. Dramatizing even further the seriousness of the moment, President Pastrana cut short his trip to Europe and returned to Bogotá under rumors of military pressure to intervene in the FARC-controlled area. At the same time, the Colombian government decided to give final approval to the details of another “despeje” zone for the benefit of the ELN. With the changing of the guard in Washington, speculation about a change of course towards Colombia abounded. Not by coincidence, the Committee of Development and Cooperation of the European Parliament took the lead and enacted a plenary session resolution of the European parliamentary body. The content of the declaration was read in different ways according to the inclinations of the Colombian actors and observers and it will be the subject of study in the future as a result of the course of events.

The Commission reaffirmed its position through an intervention by Commissioner Poul Nielson, a Danish Social-Democrat who holds the portfolio of cooperation. This is another slightly significant detail because first it shows that the interest of the EU is wider than the monopoly of one commissioner’s portfolio. Second, the approach taken by the international assistance portfolio since the latest expansion of the European Union reflects the impact of the Nordic countries views, equipped with a strict attitude toward accountability, efficacy, transparency and stress on human rights and democratization. Reminding the audience of the political and financial support for the Colombian peace initiative, Nielson again expressed the concern of the Commission for the “military component” of the Plan, confirmed the endorsement of the 1998 UN approach to the treatment of the drug problem, and pledged the support of the EU institution for positive measures in demand reduction and the strengthening of the rule of law. He committed € 105 million for the period 2000-2006, with an additional 10 million in 2001, and announced the arrival of the EU experts to study projects in the Magdalena Medio region, earmarking another € 20 million. He also confirmed the political support of the EU through the Group of Friends in securing the negotiations regarding the “despeje” zones and in the efforts to avoid the spillover of the conflict to other countries, advocating a regional approach.<sup>89</sup>

The Resolution of the Parliament was prompted by a harsh intervention of a United Left member of the parliamentary body from Portugal, Joaquim Miranda, as

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<sup>88</sup> European Commission, February 7, 2002.

<sup>89</sup> Poul Nielson. European Union. European Parliament. “Speaking points. Committee of Development and Cooperation”, January 31, 2001.

president of its Cooperation and Development Committee. He first stressed that the EU cannot remain indifferent to the Colombian crisis or assume “ambiguous positions.” In his view, a crucial element of the present situation is the Plan Colombia, calling on the Commission and the Council to “distance” themselves from it, due to four main reasons: its “militaristic character,” its lack of “linkage process” in the Colombian society, its lack of recognition of the “paramilitary phenomenon,” and the fact that the Plan “endangers the negotiation process.” He recalled that the Council on September 9, 2000, called for a specific European plan, and he insisted on the need to differentiate it from the Plan Colombia, with a veiled criticism of the “only European government” [referring to Spain, as discussed above] publicly and financially committed to its support. He finally stressed the need for drastic social and economic reforms in Colombia to redress the historical causes of today’s problems.<sup>90</sup>

In this context, the plenary session of the European Parliament approved one of the strongest declarations ever made on the situation of a Latin American country. Besides insisting and elaborating on the above items and repeating portions of the declarations made by commissioners and parliamentarians (endemic crisis, violation of human rights, inadequacy of Plan Colombia, shared responsibility in combating drug trafficking) the text outlined a mandate for the EU to support a peace process with the objective of reinforcing the institutions, alternative development, and humanitarian and social aid. NGOs and civil society should be empowered for this task. Wealth redistribution is a must in a system where peasants do not own the land. In sum, the EU must implement its own “non-militaristic” strategy, with “neutrality and transparency,” and with the participation of civil society in the negotiation process. It urges the Commission to commit the necessary financial resources and receives with satisfaction the plan of the Council to evaluate the situation every six months. A regional approach and international cooperation to stop the trafficking of drug-producing substances and money laundering need to be part of the total package, calling on all armed to cooperate, and to the neighboring countries to contribute to a comprehensive solution. Most especially, the text expressed alarm by the fact that since the opening of the peace negotiations, acts of violence and terrorism (assassinations, kidnappings, massacres) have increased. Impunity has presided over the frustration and impotence of the population, while international observers (such as UN representative Mary Robinson) have certified the inadequacy of measures against the paramilitary groups, calling for an EU commitment to the protection and financing of human rights organizations.<sup>91</sup>

In recent months, the Parliament’s blame on violence has not been reserved for any one party, but evenly targeted on all factions. It has also come from different sides of the EP’s political spectrum, with the conservatives stressing the abuses committed by the guerrillas<sup>92</sup> and the socialist members (collectively or on an individual basis) pinpointing

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<sup>90</sup> Joaquim Miranda. President, Commission on Development and Cooperation. “Intervention”. European Parliament. Plenary session. January 31, 2001.

<sup>91</sup> European Parliament, “Resolution on Plan Colombia and the support to the Colombian peace process”, February 1, 2001.

<sup>92</sup> For a sample of a result of a fact-finding mission, see: Emilio Menéndez del Valle, “¿Adónde vas, Colombia?” *El País*, agosto 2001.

the deep roots of the conflict in the social inequality and collapse of Colombia's state system, by endorsing domestic analysis critical of the status quo.<sup>93</sup> With the precedent of a declaration of support for the peace process on October 4, 2001, the European Parliament approved a Resolution on March 16, 2002, summarizing its perception of the recent events around the end of the truce and the legislative elections. Among other items, the EP "condemned" the assassination of senator Martha Catalina Daniels, the kidnapping of five other senators and presidential candidate Betancourt since 2000, lamented the return of an open armed confrontation, and blamed the FARC for the renewed violence. While backing the decision of Pastrana and recognizing his efforts towards peace, the EP insisted that the Colombian president cannot "tolerate" the actions of the paramilitary. Finally, the EP, "in contrast with other views," considered that the EU must continue supporting a negotiated and pacific settlement, including the necessary social reforms.<sup>94</sup> As a further sign of the EP Parliament concern for the Colombian crisis, a five-member delegation presided by Spain's EP member José Ignacio Salafranca visited Colombia to witness the election of May 26, 2002, and offer a subsequent report and recommendations to the EU.

### **Spain: A Special Relationship**

Spain's perception of the Colombian crisis can be described as an apparent contrast between two attitudes. On the one hand, Plan Colombia generated a very critical reaction in the Spanish public opinion,<sup>95</sup> in the NGO network, and in the think-tank and academic community. If ideological lines were expected to appear in the analysis of conflict where Marxist-leaning guerrillas are involved, with the subsequent critical view of the Spanish conservative press, no such fracture has occurred in the case of Plan Colombia. On the other hand, observers may be puzzled by the publicly stated enthusiasm expressed by the Spanish government in participating with political support and funds in all avenues of the Plan. This apparent contradiction would make Spain the exception to the rule of the critical reception of Plan Colombia in Europe. However, this can be explained on two grounds. First, in the case of the Spanish government, the implementation of the double discourse was activated because it was convenient for the accomplishment of an effective public relations campaign vis-à-vis the Colombian and the U.S. governments simultaneously. However, while public declarations are respectful of the Colombian government and all sides in the conflict, in private the picture is as harsh as the one shown by the rest of the Europeans.

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<sup>93</sup> Pedro Santana Rodríguez, "Colombia: la crisis política", Leviatán, Madrid, otoño/invierno, 2001, pp. 65-74.

<sup>94</sup> Resolution of the European Parliament, March 16, 2002.

<sup>95</sup> For a selection of the most critical early commentaries in the influential Spanish daily El País, see articles by: Miguel Angel Bastenier, "Ultimatum o rogativa," El País, 2 febrero 2001; Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Colombia", El País, 1 septiembre 2000; Herman Tertsch, "Mal plan el de Colombia," El País, 18 noviembre 2000; Javier Valenzuela, "Estados Unidos teme verse envuelto en un largo conflicto en América Latina", El País, 27 agosto 2000.

The second justification for the apparent magnanimity and generosity of the Spanish pledge is grounded in two factors. The most convincing explanation for Spanish support continues to be the historical and cultural commitment of Spain towards the development and democratization of the Latin American continent after the Spanish transition was consolidated and became a point of reference. The governmental commitment is also explained by a less scientifically demonstrable factor known to witty observers as “the syndrome of signing up for everything” [apuntarse a todo] that still affects Spain after decades (if not centuries) of isolation. It works in a similar way to the European gut reaction to grab an issue to oppose the United States in order to counteract the overwhelming presence of the one and only superpower. In search of issues to demonstrate international protagonism, Spain is the opposite of an isolationist middle power. Colombia is an ideal issue. The novelty in the last part of the century is that Spain has returned to the Americas in a similar fashion as the one sported by the galleons in the times of Conquest. Spain has become the leader of European investment in Latin America. Although Spanish investment in Colombia is not as high as in Argentina or Chile, the spillover effect of the Colombian crisis has alarmed Spanish investors and consequently has propelled the Spanish government to act accordingly. Damaged by its political crisis, Colombia ranks as the second worst Latin American economy in a survey of Spanish firms, in terms of efficiency of public administration, economic and business prospects, enterprise business community efficiency and environment for business.<sup>96</sup>

It is a known fact that the diplomatic establishment of Spain has several ideological profiles. The conservative view that dominated the ranks of the Spanish foreign service in the 50s, 60s and 70s has been pushed aside by a more liberal and left-leaning attitude towards the world’s problems as a better way to protect the national interests of Spain. In contrast with some European countries, a critical view of the U.S. foreign policy is not the monopoly of the Spanish left, but also a natural attitude of the right since the United States defeated Spain in the 1898 intervention in Cuba. When it comes to U.S. policy in Latin America and its link to the reactionary governments in the area, the Spanish diplomatic service is very critical at large. The Colombian crisis has served to consolidate both lines of thought.

In general terms, the view of a notable number of Spanish diplomats, matching the perception of NGOs, academics and media, includes a picture of a fractured Colombian state, lacking legitimacy and territorial control, unrecognized by a society that demands justice. Among the urgent structural problems to be addressed are a culture of discrimination and social exclusion, a persistent armed conflict that equals a civil war, a society plagued by common crime, a will to modernize without democracy, an endemic impunity and absence of justice, and the overwhelming presence of the narco-trafficking culture. The result of all this is that politics are rejected as an undesirable activity. Plan Colombia fails to answer a central question: is it exclusively geared to terminate the drug-trafficking activity, or is it proposed to address other issues?

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<sup>96</sup> ABC, “Chile, el mejor mercado valorado de Latinoamérica”, 7 enero 2001.

The resolution of the Colombian situation offers three variables: an improbable victory of one of the parties, the very plausible continuation of the conflict, and a process of political negotiation, an option that seems more feasible in the medium term. However, the Colombian government should be warned that in negotiating with the guerrillas, the aim of accomplishing peace requires that the opponents come out with their heads up to guarantee their reinsertion into the society. Terms of surrender and sudden demobilization are to be avoided if the objective is solid negotiation between the government and all sectors of the society on one side, and the insurgent groups on the other. This negotiation should include all of the pending issues plaguing Colombian society: the agrarian problem, the management of energy resources, political representation, social policy, regional powers, the role of the police and military, and a policy to protect the safety of the population.

This diplomatic view is realistic, too. A short-term solution is not predicted. The construction of a truly democratic government will not be possible if important sectors of the society are excluded. All sides have to cooperate to counteract inertia when a government is floundering, lacks credibility and territorial control. The challenge is to create a new state.

In answer to President Pastrana's petition for international cooperation, Spain's diplomats have been doubly concerned. On the one hand they took note of the critical approach of their colleagues in the European Union, who have another sensibility for Latin American issues. On the other, they saw that Spain may appear isolated once the critical sectors manage to swing the general attitude. The Plan Colombia was perceived as imprecise, militaristic and dictated by the United States. Spain's diplomats suggested that the Colombian government should be persuaded to delay the selling and implementation of the Plan, deleting all items that have to do with the fight against drugs or the eradication of illegal crops. As a substitution, Colombia was invited to present another plan composed almost exclusively of projects for social and economic development, agrarian reform, improvement of justice, and the fight against corruption.<sup>97</sup>

In any event, Spain's specificity in answering Colombia's plea is shown in terms of Madrid's early response and in volume. The special relationship that is the trade mark of Spain's links with Latin America has a special profile. The specific linkage between the Spanish government and Colombia is framed in the General Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship signed on October 29, 1992, and the Act of the Joint Commission signed on March 15, 1999, confirmed by the declaration of the Spanish government issued on July 7, 2000, pledging all available help in support of the peace process.<sup>98</sup> Spain

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<sup>97</sup> The above items, comments and recommendations are a summary of several conversations conducted during the months of July and September of 2000 and July of 2001 with Spanish diplomats with direct knowledge and duties in the area, and are supplemented with the consultation of pertinent documentation. All arguments included were proposed, circulated and discussed several months before the official dissemination of the Plan and the trip of President Clinton to Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) in August 2000.

<sup>98</sup> It is interesting to note that personal support is not limited to the unquestionable backing of Pastrana's actions. Leading candidate Alvaro Uribe has received the protection of the chief of security of Spain's president (Semana, "Protección de Aznar," abril 29, 2002, p. 23).

committed then more than \$100 million for the 2000-2003 period, about a third of the sum committed by all of the European states and from the EU budget. As previously described, roughly \$76 million are in loans (FAD), \$12 million for microcredit programs and about \$12 million in direct donations. Six principal areas were identified: social needs, human development, poverty reduction, environment, good governance, and conflict prevention. Three lines of action are present in all sectors: fight against poverty, equality between men and women, and environmental protection. Coordination with NGOs and international organizations is a priority. In addition to this basic funding, other programs managed by the International Cooperation Agency were implemented for the approximate amounts of \$12 million in 2001 and a similar sum in 2002. Spain's local and regional cooperation programs with Colombia received about \$6 million in government grants for 2001. In total, Spain's contribution has matched the pledge announced at the meeting of donors held in Madrid on July 7, 2000.<sup>99</sup>

Nonetheless, the general picture of actual financial support is unclear. Observers may be well advised to scrutinize the details of the Spanish pledge in terms of funding projects to be backed and items to be financed. As in other cases of Spain's development assistance programs (not an exception in the overall European picture) the pitching of Plan Colombia became the selling of the contribution of real and virtual programs and projects. In the absence of detailed documentation, as we have seen, the bulk of the total package (between US \$100 and \$124 million) may ultimately be a composite of current projects with the addition of commercial lines of credit. Let's keep in mind that seventy percent of the funds pledged belong to credits controlled by the Ministry of the Economy, while only 24 percent are to come from the funding of projects directly administered by Spain's aid agency. When pressed for details of the specific Spanish package to be presented in coordination with other European donors, data and documentation on specific projects have not been available.<sup>100</sup>

### **Other European Institutions and Partners**

As in any other political family, there are members more inclined to show radical attitudes than others. Facing Plan Colombia, some EU member states have distinguished themselves by maintaining a sharper antagonistic view. Belgium and Germany have been leaders in insisting that the EU should distance itself from Plan Colombia and that European assistance should be limited to a set of conditions.<sup>101</sup> Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria and Denmark have been at the forefront of insistence on program funding for the protection of human rights and the involvement of civil society. However, some members (Germany, Austria) have been concerned by the fact that strong declarations and politically-imposed limitations may hinder the effectiveness of existing projects in Colombia, making the contribution of some states very problematic because

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<sup>99</sup> Embassy of Spain in Bogotá, "Nota informativa sobre la cooperación española en Colombia," OTC Colombia, abril 2002.

<sup>100</sup> Information derived from European Union sources (January 2001).

<sup>101</sup> COLAT, "Council of the European Union. Meeting", September 26, 2000.



they are not ready to provide “fresh money.”<sup>102</sup> These shortcomings reveal the dependency of European assistance on national programs, or in the context of sub-groupings.

The Grupo de Países Amigos has been at the forefront of international involvement that contributes to facilitate agreements and contacts between the Colombian factions. The group was designed with a clear strategy to reflect that it has the European Union as a nuclear axis (Spain and France), but it also includes states that have either a reputation for being neutral (Switzerland) or with considerable experience in serving as a bridge (Norway). Cuba is the Latin American representative and this reflects its sincere commitment to resolve the crisis as it is also a strategy which demonstrates it has more to lose if problems become worse. The top Cuban leadership (including Fidel Castro himself) has been actively involved in obtaining the most important diplomatic successes in dealing with the ELN. In sum, most of the important agreements between the Colombian government and the FARC have been crafted with the support and diplomacy offered by the Group.

Members of the Group are very critical of the attitude of the ELN, but they did make efforts to engage the guerrillas in the negotiations during the last two years, culminating in a series of agreements crafted in a meeting held in Havana on January 12, 2002. Under the auspices of the Spanish presidency of the EU, the main parties (the Colombian government and the ELN) committed themselves to meet in Havana from January 29-31, accompanied by the members or representatives of the “Facilitating Commission” and the National Convention, the presidential candidates, the UN, and several sectors of Colombian society. This initial Havana conclave was held with notable media exposure and its opening was presided by Fidel Castro himself,<sup>103</sup> who in turn was ready to serve in a similar process of mediation with the FARC. All this happened while alleged links between Cuba and international terrorism (such as the IRA and ETA) were aired in the press and energetically denounced by different governments and right-wing interests in Colombia.<sup>104</sup> This dimension received close attention during the hearings held by the U.S. Congress in late April 2002.<sup>105</sup>

A number of thematic forums were subsequently scheduled. The first one on humanitarian law hosted by Switzerland (Feb-25-27), the second on participating democracy and the State in Spain (March 25-27), followed by agrarian reform in France (April 29-May1), energy resources in Norway (May 27-29), ending with a last one on the economy and social problems in Havana (June 24-26). France and Spain conditioned the issuing of visas to the end of kidnappings and other violations of human rights in the ELN-controlled zone, while this guerrilla group was given notice of the strict Common Positions delivered by the EU on international terrorism, as a result of the new

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<sup>102</sup> COLAT, “Council of the European Union. Meeting”, October 2, 2000.

<sup>103</sup> For a sample of media repercussions: EFE, “Castro en cita de paz con las FARC,” El Nuevo Herald, 31 enero 2002, p. 15A.

<sup>104</sup> Gonzalo Guillén, “El corredor clandestino del terrorismo,” El Nuevo Herald, 3 febrero 2002, p. 1A.

<sup>105</sup> AFP, “EU relaciona a Farc con IRA,” El Herald, 25 abril 2002; AP, “Nexos del Ira y las Farc,” El Universal, 25 abril 2002; Sergio Gómez Maseri, “Nexos Ira-Farc no convencen,” El Tiempo, 25 abril 2002.

international climate. When the ELN representatives claimed that the policy of kidnapping was dictated by “financing necessities” the EU representatives stated that this notion was unacceptable.<sup>106</sup> Subsequently, the series of forums were cancelled.<sup>107</sup>

The development of Plan Colombia caught Paris in a triple capacity. First, France was holding the presidency of the European Union during the second semester of 2000. France is also a Member of the Group of Friends. In 2002, the French Ambassador Daniel Parfait<sup>108</sup> held the presidency of this international group supporting the peace efforts. In addition to this diplomatic dimension, France has been traditionally an influential leading force in Latin American affairs, especially where French cultural and economic interests (French investment is the leader in Colombia) are most prevalent. The French government could not afford to miss this opportunity to strengthen its somewhat weakened position in the world after the end of the Cold War. In spite of this evidence, French officials insist that France’s involvement in Colombia is a matter of principles. In the French view, Colombia is experiencing a loss of values similar to the way France did at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. The key is the identification of the balance between “liberty and equality,” with the proper insertion of “fraternity”.<sup>109</sup> While in some dimensions of domestic policy the influence of conservative President Jacques Chirac is present, in most avenues of foreign policy France still seems to reflect the lines of François Mitterrand. This becomes most obvious in France’s attitude toward sensitive Latin American angles of U.S. foreign policy. For example, the cases of Cuba (opposing the extraterritorial reach of U.S. laws, such as Helms-Burton and D’Amato’s ILSA) and Central America (leading Europe in the design of policies of cooperation assistance during the 1980s). The French government is also backed by its vocal pro-leftist and liberal press, led by the influential Le Monde<sup>110</sup> and by the traditional leaning of its academicians towards the causes of the marginalized<sup>111</sup> and the need of identifying the real victim of the conflict, the Colombian society.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Draft of a COREU, January 12, 2002.

<sup>107</sup> In this context, see report by Pax Chisti and its critical view of the role played by European interests (mostly insurance companies) in strengthening the “industry” of kidnapping through the payment of ransom and the absence of a solid EU legislation. See also, interview with Liduine Zumpolle, representative for Latin America, in Marisol Gómez Giraldo, “Piden firmeza de UE contra el secuestro,” El Tiempo, 1 mayo 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Para una muestra de sus opiniones, véase su intervención en una conferencia sobre valores celebrada en Cartagena (“Palabras claves para valores esenciales,” El Universal, 27 abril 2002.)

<sup>109</sup>“Palabras claves para valores esenciales,” El Universal, 27 abril 2002.

<sup>110</sup>Le Monde <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/ameriquelatine/>. For a sample of individual analysis, see: Marie-Laure Colson, “Le plan Colombie isole Pastrana”, Libération, 18 Nov 2000, p.12; Patrice de Beer, “Washington accorde à la Colombie une aide financière exceptionnelle”, Le Monde, 20 Oct 2000, p. 3; Patrice de Beer and Marie Delcas, “Bill Clinton se rend en Colombie pour soutenir le plan de lutte antidrogue”, Le Monde, 31 Aug 2000; Alain Devalpo, “Le ‘plan Colombie’ sur la sellette”, l’Humanité, 12 Jul 2000, p. 10; Christian Kazandjian, “Les Dangers du ‘plan Colombie’”, l’Humanité, 20 Jul 2000, p. 10; Maurice Lemoine, “Plan Colombie, passeport pour la guerre”, Le Monde diplomatique, Aug 2000.

<sup>111</sup>See the dramatic appeal crafted by the Latin American scholarly community of Paris in the document entitled “Un llamado para Colombia.” See also, for example, essays by: Pina Cusano, “Geopolítica delle mafie caraibiche”, Limes, Roma, 2, 2000, pp. 133-146; Antonio Sema, “Come si combatte in Colombia”, Limes, 2, 2000, pp. 99-109; Ramón Mantovani, “Italia ed Europa possono aiutare a pacificare la

In this line of thought, speaking while holding the presidency of the European Union, Ambassador Renaud Vignal, director of the Americas department of the Quai D'Orsay, endorsed with clarity the overall assessment of the European Commission and measured the consensus of the most vocal member states. The program of European support of the Peace Process, as Europe's response prefers to be known, confirms that the search for peace is the only hope that Colombia has. This is a process that needs time, patience and a dose of compromise for all parties involved in the conflict. According to his statement, there is no other alternative. Echoing other European voices, there is no military solution that would guarantee a lasting peace that can only come from a general agreement. He then pledged a complete package to be carried out with the cooperation of other organizations, based on the following points: support of the state of law, defense of human rights, fight against the causes of violence, environmental protection, and consolidation of regional cooperation. The example of European integration can be used in gathering the contribution of neighboring states.

For the last two years, the United Kingdom has expressed its commitment to the peace process in Colombia in the form of unequivocal declarations to contribute to the efforts of international organizations and NGOs, to distance itself from the most controversial aspects of the original Plan Colombia, and with the delivery of funds. The UK has translated its commitment to the Colombian peace process with concrete contributions to the programs of the UN Human Rights Office in Bogotá. Since March 2000, more than £348,000 have been disbursed, including £50,000 to the UN Trust Fund. Since a trend-setting speech given by President Pastrana in London on April 13, 2000,<sup>113</sup> British public opinion and the actions of the Foreign Office have confirmed a traditional line of action, well outlined in public documents,<sup>114</sup> and shared with private organizations.<sup>115</sup>

On the linkages with the U.S.-led Plan Colombia, first the British government has declared that it is the Colombian government's program to tackle Colombia's interconnected problems. "Neither we nor the EU have made a contribution to the Plan." The Guardian aptly illustrated a general opinion: "Nobody wants to be seen at the tag end of a US plan – particularly when some countries don't agree with the military."<sup>116</sup> In public declarations and private communications, this line of thought has been consistent:

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Colombia", Limes, 2, 2000, pp. 127-132; Thomas Gómez, "Il paese introvabile", Limes, 2, 2000, pp. 117-126.

<sup>112</sup> For a review of the most influential studies of a leading French expert on Colombia, see Daniel Pécaut, Guerra contra la sociedad (Bogotá: Espasa Hoy, 2001).

<sup>113</sup> Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, Address at the Canning House. London, April 13, 2000.

<sup>114</sup> For a sample: Foreign and Commonwealth Office News, "Foreign Office hosts international meeting on Colombia, 16 June 2000; Foreign and Commonwealth Office News, "UK support for Colombian peace process, 28 June 2000; Foreign and Commonwealth Office News, "Ministers press for peace in Colombia," 6 September 2000; Foreign and Commonwealth Office News, "Relations between the UK and Colombia," Speech given by FCO Minister of State, John Battle, to the British-Colombia Chamber of Commerce, Canning House, Wednesday 11 October 2000.

<sup>115</sup> Colombian Newsletter, "Why Colombia has achieved its objective, UK vote of confidence in Colombia," June 2001; Colombian Newsletter, "Human rights action must continue", November 2001.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Hodgson, "Pastrana seeks European cash for cocaine war", April 13, 2000, p. 13.

“There is no UK Government financial involvement in Plan Colombia, either bilaterally or through the EU. No expenditure is planned by the UK Government to support the Plan.”<sup>117</sup> However, British public opinion and leaders recognize the responsibility of the international society in creating part of the problems of Colombia.<sup>118</sup> General Michael Rose, who became very well known in the pacification process of Yugoslavia, recalled that “we conveniently forget that it is our social habit of taking drugs that has wrecked a country, destroyed large areas of the Amazon rainforest, killed 24,000 people in 1999 alone, and blighted the lives of millions of Colombian people”. Consequently, he considers that “the international community is proceeding with undue caution – mainly because of the past human rights record of the Colombian security forces. He also considers the EU financial support as “niggardly compared with the high level of drugs money flowing into Colombia from Europe.”<sup>119</sup>

British high officials have expressed their opinion and attitudes in public and in different statements made in private on some specific issues regarding the Colombian crisis. In the first place, the British government has always been very concerned about increasing levels of violence, particularly that directed towards trade unionists and human rights defenders, and therefore, it has raised its concerns with the Colombian authorities. Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law is seen as a pre-requisite for advancing the peace process and an indispensable basis for expanded international support. London considers that the best way to secure and improve human rights in Colombia is through progress in the peace talks between the Colombian Government and the main guerrilla groups. Among the initiatives suggested are actions to help combat the appalling practice of child soldiers. Central to the British strategy has been to support the efforts of Jan Egeland, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for Colombia. In the EU context, the British representatives have urged the Commission to channel as much aid as possible through reputable international and local NGOs with a proven track record in delivering humanitarian assistance. In this direction, the UK places high importance on the accountability and transparency of EU assistance. On the other hand, London does not believe that the Commission should impose a blanket ban on aid to the Colombian government.<sup>120</sup>

More specifically, the British government is very concerned about the continuing high-levels of violence committed by the illegal paramilitary groups against members of NGOs and the allegations of harassment from the Colombian armed forces. However, the UK does not distinguish between their atrocities and those of the FARC and the ELN. It is perceived that they are all involved in illicit drug production, and are all responsible for mass kidnappings, extortion and murder. There is no evidence that the FARC enjoys popular support among large sections of the Colombian population. Moreover, British officials consider that the Colombian government, in agreeing to the existence of a zone for the FARC, has shown itself to be much more serious about its intentions to find

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<sup>117</sup> Private communication from high official of the Foreign Office, 2 October 2001.

<sup>118</sup> Owen Bowcott, and Martin Hodgson, “British generals join the war on drug producers,” *The Guardian*, 18 April 2001, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup> *The Times*, “How the West has wrecked Colombia,” 15 December 2000, p 9.

<sup>120</sup> From internal communications by Foreign Office officials.

peace.<sup>121</sup> The events of February 2002 have confirmed this view, generally shared by other European partners.

As a member of the Group of Friends, and most especially as a guardian of the Geneva Convention, the Swiss government has been instrumental in providing an added credibility to European efforts to facilitate the peace process. In successive declarations, Switzerland has stressed the need for obtaining a lasting peace, using all kinds of efforts. Reaffirming the views of the other European partners, Switzerland places among its priority points compliance with international human rights agreements, a general consensus generated by all sectors of the Colombian people, and a careful analysis of environmental damage. Consequently, Swiss representatives express difficulty in accepting the military component of the Plan and the indiscriminate crop eradication program. With a pledge of \$12 million (later expanded to \$20 million) to be dispersed over three years, the Swiss have claimed that they will contribute to the following areas: assisting the displaced people, the protection of human rights, the negotiation with the ELN, the establishment of the office of the Defender of the People, and diverse support for NGOs.<sup>122</sup>

Few observers can deny the important influence of Germany not only in EU affairs but in the overall global scene. In a very systematic way, the Federal Republic of Germany has regained its central place in world affairs since its near self-destruction as a result of World War II. German leadership also understood the message of Robert Schuman and, as a west Federal Republic and as a reunified country, has been at the forefront of the EU presence in the world. It is not surprising that the Colombian crisis, in view of the overpowering presence of German investment in Latin America and the generosity of its development assistance programs (30% of the total EU activities), has caught the attention of the German government. To sum up Germany's attitude toward Plan Colombia it can be stated that it supports the efforts of the government and the Colombian people to create peace in the country within the framework of bilateral agreements. Germany does not want its activities to be identified with Plan Colombia. It supports the peace process along with other Europeans in their own European program.<sup>123</sup> These principles reflect the evolution of an attitude expressed in several individual declarations and adhesions to the EU positions. In the recording of EU official meetings, Germany "insisted on making very clear in the text that the EU distance itself from Plan Colombia."<sup>124</sup> Negotiations are the only way to obtain peace. Germany backed this view with a 50% increase (10 million DM) in its financial contribution to Colombia, which today has totaled 1.57 billion DM (almost \$ 800 million).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> From internal documents, 18 December 2001.

<sup>122</sup> Statement by Victor Christen, Ambassador of Switzerland, "Segunda Reunión del Grupo de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz en Colombia. Programa de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz en Colombia, Intervención de Suiza", Bogotá, 24 octubre 2000.

<sup>123</sup> Explicit declaration by the German government to the author via its Consulate in Miami, Jan. 12 2001.

<sup>124</sup> Internal communications of the Commission (13 October 2000).

<sup>125</sup> See speech by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Volmer, delivered in the Bundestag in Berlin on July 5, 2000; statement by German delegation at the conference on the Colombian peace process on 24 October 2000 in Bogotá.

One of the most vocal opponents of the U.S.-inspired version of the Plan, Belgium, has been leading the European voices that believe the causes for the Colombian crisis lay beyond the guerrilla activities and drug trafficking. Pointing out the “inequality, low living standards and inadequacy of the government to meet the demands”, the Belgium government is “diametrically opposed” to the Plan as presented by the Colombian government, wishing a more “integral solution” and pledging the support of social programs through funds distributed by Belgium NGOs. Figures have amounted to BF 100 million in recent years, the pledge of a loan of BF 23 million for conflict prevention programs, extra funding of BF 50 million for 2001, and there are similar expectations for 2002. Total contribution amounts to about US\$ 8 million.<sup>126</sup>

Sweden has distinguished itself in two areas: its independent political view and the volume (\$20 million) of pledged contributions, which is the second highest among the EU countries. This contribution consists of all new direct assistance and loans, without including credits. In political terms, Sweden is a force to influence EU decisions and protect member state autonomy in foreign policy, setting the tone for the Commission’s actions. A balance between the work of the Group of Ten and a coordinated policy of the EU is the ideal Swedish attitude. A political solution based on a careful analysis of all social, economic and military dimensions is the best policy to follow, keeping the door open for a renewed negotiation with the FARC. This is reflected in Sweden’s resistance to the inclusion of the guerrillas in the EU list of terrorist organizations, an act that would have made future negotiations much more difficult.<sup>127</sup>

Although not a member of the European Union, Norway is the second largest European provider of direct assistance to Colombia. Oslo has pledged to transfer \$20 million to NGOs for human rights and humanitarian projects. This contribution was committed as early as July 2000 in Madrid and was earmarked for the on for the period 2000–2002. Norway has been at the forefront of insistence on program funding for the protection of human rights and the involvement of civil society. Previously, Norway’s funding made possible the opening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogotá in 1997. Most especially in the ELN negotiations, Norway is participating to support the efforts of bringing about fundamental political, economic and social reforms as a prerequisite for lasting peace in the country and to reduce violence and the suffering of the civilian population. Norway also contributes with diplomatic and political efforts as a member of the Group of Friends, and with humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict. Norwegian funding also supports initiatives to mobilize a stronger participation of the civil society in the conflict resolution processes and to promote and protect human rights. The funds are to be channeled exclusively to the United Nations and other international organizations, Norwegian and local NGOs, with no funds committed to Colombian government programs, due to the fact that Norway has no bilateral cooperation agreement with this government.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> See Hedí Boutmans, "La cooperación al desarrollo contribuye a una paz duradera en Colombia", noviembre 2000.

<sup>127</sup> From EU and Sweden sources.

<sup>128</sup> Data from EU and Norwegian sources.

Among individual European states, Denmark has pledged \$0.6 million, Austria promised \$0.6 million for social and institutional development, Finland announced \$2.2 million for human rights programs under the UN programs, Italy committed \$10 million for a “Culture of Peace” and local institutions projects, and Portugal has reserved \$250,000 for social development and institutional strengthening.

### **NGOs and Civil Society: Initiative and Watchdog**

Heavily dependent on government funding, private organizations and grass-roots movements have a long history of contributing to the development of Latin American countries, fighting against violations of human rights and oppression, and participating in the peace processes. While material actions are limited by the terrain and political circumstances, the influence of these organizations and private citizens has grown since the explicit announcement of Plan Colombia.<sup>129</sup> Among the European organizations, Pax Christi has taken the lead with fact-finding missions and reports. Cuba and Colombia have been the subjects of recent missions. The Colombia project took place in the first part of 2001, and its conclusions are still mostly valid, reflecting a view that can be described as shared by many independent European perceptions, critical of the social and political conditions in Colombia, the inadequacy of U.S. participation, and the slowness and vague commitment of Europe and the international community at large.<sup>130</sup>

The visit of Pax Christi’s commission “was intended to provide an additional impetus to European solidarity with the victims of the Colombian conflict”. Its “main

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<sup>129</sup>For example: Drugs and Conflict: <http://www.tni.org/reports/drugs/debate1.pdf>; Amnesty International, “Amnesty International’s Position On Plan Colombia”, Paper No. 1, June 2000:

<http://www.amnesty-usa.org/news/2000/colombia07072000.html>; Ricardo Vargas Meza, “Europe and Plan Colombia, Drugs & Conflict Debate Paper,” *TNI*, no. 1, April 2001: <http://www.tni.org/drugs/research/plcoleu.htm>. From Human Rights Watch, Brussels: Lotte Leicht and José Miguel Vivanco, HRW Appeal to EU to Suspend Aid to Colombia, *Human Rights Watch*, September 1, 2000: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2000/09/eu-ltr0911.htm>

For a supplementary, balanced U.S. view: United States Institute of Peace Library, *Plan Colombia: Plan for Peace, Prosperity, and the Strengthening of the State*, May 15, 2000:

[http://www.usip.org/library/pa/colombia/adddoc/plan\\_colombia\\_101999.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/colombia/adddoc/plan_colombia_101999.html). For an early assesment of Plan Colombia: Ingrid Vaicius, Adam Isacson, and Abbey Steele, “Is Plan Colombia dead?”, *Center for International Policy*, October 27, 2000: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/102701.htm>

<sup>130</sup> International Delegation of Pax Christi Netherlands in Colombia, “Peace in Colombia; a matter of civil initiatives”, *Pax Christi*, February 22-March 10, 2001: <http://www.paxchristi.nl/colpax2001ukr.html>. As a sample of other minority organizations based in the Netherlands that oppose the Plan Colombia: Stop Plan Colombia, <http://www.stopplancolombia.nl/>. A sample of Radio Netherlands commentary: Saskia van Rheenen, “Plan Colombia Divides Europe and US”, *Radio Netherlands*, March 1, 2001: <http://www.rnw.nl/hotspots/html/colombia010302.html>

objective was to promote international aid to the local peace initiatives by citizens.” The report reflects that the “people of Colombia are rightly proud of all that is still good in their country, but there is an urgent need for international recognition and aid.” However, “the political climate in Colombia has not improved since the start of the peace negotiations between the government and the armed resistance. There is skepticism surrounding the effectiveness of president Pastrana's peace strategy, his good intentions notwithstanding. The guerrillas demanded and have been granted far-reaching concessions, but have responded with mass kidnapping and structural extortion. The calls from many sections of the population for more effective, bolder measures are becoming louder.” Nevertheless, the report points out that the “people are aware that peace will only be achieved through negotiation, and that it will be years before the parties are able to sign a final peace accord.”

On President Pastrana’s call for help from the international community, Pax Christi recalls that the United States only became involved “on a military level within the framework of the 'War on Drugs’”. In contrast, “the EU has only distanced itself from the American approach, but has offered no alternative.” The report emphasizes that “very little has come of the planned Colombian contribution to Plan Colombia of US\$ 5 billion”. “Partly as a result of intensive lobbying, Europe spoke out against the entire Plan Colombia, referring to the military element being performed by the Americans. They did indicate a willingness to fund social projects, and focused on areas similar to the social component of Plan Colombia - crop substitution, peace developments, a reinforcement of the constitutional state and economic development. Most of the international contribution comes in bilateral aid”.

Moreover, “there is no joint European policy for how the contributions will be spent, and the details of these projects remain largely unclear. The European Commission itself is bearing only US\$ 90 million of the social development projects (3.6% of the international community's total). The details are also almost entirely unknown”. Furthermore, the report demands, “Colombia would benefit from rapid payment of the project monies. The government institution for crop substitution, PLANTE, for example, is carrying out the current projects with American aid funds (US\$ 102.5 million through USAID). These budgets, however, are insufficient in total to finance the crop substitution. The PLANTE institute has as yet heard nothing concrete from the EU.”

As a consequence, “support from the EU to Colombia has so far been limited, fragmented, unclear and slow.” This is “partly explained by mistrust of the Colombian government and the American military support to Plan Colombia. But another significant fact is that interest in Latin America is fading in Europe. For various reasons, EU foreign policy and development cooperation officials are focusing their attention on other parts of the world.” Pax Christi Netherlands, however, “is of the opinion that Dutch and European attention for Colombia is essential.”

Other aspects of the report include the following:

- Europe is involved in various ways in the conflict, and cannot view the specific drug issue in isolation from European society. After all, Europe is an important supplier of the chemicals for



drugs production, forms an important market for Colombian drugs, and part of the drugs income is laundered through European banks.

- Many Colombians are now pinning their hopes on the EU, because they associate the United States mainly with military involvement. Until now, however, this hope has been unjustified, and the United States - surprisingly enough - has been acting more effectively than a divided and slow Europe in the areas of crop substitution and even human rights (pressure on the army).
- The prospects of a structural, national peace will remain slight as long as the armed parties continue to have considerable economic interests in sustaining the war. The international community therefore has an obligation to tackle these interests, both in Colombia and elsewhere.
- On the other hand, in the absence of a national peace agreement, the international community must provide support to citizens who gain freedom at a local level every day against the interests of the armed parties. It would appear that socio-economically stronger municipalities are far more resilient against the advancing armed parties who threaten them with forced drugs growing, recruitment and violence with impunity. In this sense, economic development programs with a social dimension make a contribution to practical peace efforts. Basic organizations such as church and social bodies, NGOs and cooperatives are collaborating to an increasing extent in the development of the region. This relates to projects in the areas of crop substitution, agricultural projects for small farmers and other employment projects.
- The European agricultural policy, with its import restrictions that include Latin American countries, hinders the development of alternative agricultural crops in Colombia. Many farmers are also interested in the development of organic farming. But access to the European market is also essential for organic crops. In addition, technical training and (organic) certification will be necessary.

The report offers some concrete recommendations for the role of the European Union:

- In view of the seriousness of the conflict, the effect it has on the region, and the European involvement in the Colombian drug issue the European Union is morally obliged to make a contribution to possible solutions.
- Europe should set its own course with respect to Colombia, separate from the bilateral activities of the United States and Colombia. This relationship could be given form both inside and outside Plan Colombia.
- The ambassadors must play a role in the design and implementation of this joint European policy. Their recommendations must be based on a permanent dialogue with local social organizations, the church, the Colombian government, the armed parties, the military and the economic elite.
- The European Union (bilateral and the EC) should conduct a permanent joint policy with respect to Colombia directed to a structural approach to the causes of the conflict: socioeconomic development, manual eradication and crop substitution, agricultural reform, combating corruption, encouraging good administration, environmental policy, supporting native societies and reinforcing the legal system. Also the public educational system and the health care system should be given full attention, because the Colombian government gives higher priority to military projects.
- The EU has shown signs of an ambivalent position with respect to Colombia. On the one hand, the EU has distanced itself from the military component of Plan Colombia, but on the other hand, the financial commitments made by the EU are too limited to result in serious crop substitution and socioeconomic development. This support is indispensable for the peace process, especially on a local level.
- The Plan Alterno (crop substitution and social development) of the governor of Cauca deserves special recommendation. The future European Observation Committee must play a supplementary role in the identification of useful projects and local peace initiatives.
- The concrete substance of the current European commitments (bilateral and from the European Commission) is fragmented, unclear and slow. The associated EC decision-making must proceed transparently, and a more rapid effectuation of the aid funds is necessary.

- The Colombian government has indicated that the support from that EU can be channeled through 'the basis' (church, local NGOs, etc) as well as through the national government. The local church bodies could be a useful instrument for channeling aid funds, despite their limited capacity. The fact is that the Roman Catholic Church in Colombia enjoys sufficient moral authority among the various Colombian parties, has excellent contacts with the basis and takes responsibility for the continuity of the activities.
- The joint European policy must also contain a guideline for the international committees who are to negotiate with the armed parties (the FARC, the ELN and probably in the future with the paramilitaries). Important components of these guidelines must be: respect for international humanitarian law by the armed parties (humanitarian agreement) and bringing an end to the funding of the conflict by the drugs trade.
- The EU must enter into a dialogue with the military and economic elite in addition to the negotiations with the armed parties. Both groups have an obligation to make realistic proposals for peace and socioeconomic development. The economic elite could make a substantial financial contribution to their execution.

### **Conclusions: The Needs, Limitations, and Prospects of European Support**

In spite of the worsening situation as a result of the decision of February 20 to terminate the peace process with the FARC, once the security situation permits, the European commitment will not falter at least in the political and humanitarian sectors. The pressure to participate will continue, in spite of formidable obstacles, from a series of related factors.

Among the positive factors, the following should be outlined:

1. First and above all, European participation has always been welcome in Latin America in general and especially in unique crises such as the one in Colombia. European contributions are seldom perceived as cases of "injerencia". In fact, if the European involvement in Central America serves as a comparative base, the participation of the European Union, its Member States, or European NGOs is not a procedural mandate that needs to be monitored for reasons of justifying budgets and expenses. The blue emblem with the twelve stars very often functions as a shield of excellence and a guarantee, in clear contrast with the ambivalence towards the identification of programs funded by U.S. agencies. This may be an unfair treatment of the overall contribution record of U.S. actors but it simply reflects the damage inflicted by past mistakes. The use of the mediating, facilitating, and monitoring services of the European states and agencies is considerable political capital that can successfully be used in the future.
2. U.S. government sources, think tanks, and academics, agree with the Colombian government that Europe is an indispensable actor. In view of the complexity of the Colombian crisis, it needs to be addressed by a multiplicity of contributors.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Among the impressive number of reports that stress the need of a coordinated international action with the inclusion of European actors, see the impeccable study drafted by the International Crisis Group, La esquiwa búsqueda de la paz en Colombia (Bogotá, 26 marzo 2002).

- No commentator questions the pivotal role to be played by the European actors regarding international assistance to Colombia, either under the umbrella of the European Union, delegating their humanitarian functions to the NGO networks, or using the corresponding autonomy of the foreign policies of the Member States.
3. Before September 11, the role to be played by European actors would probably be enhanced and receive more impetus if a more cautious U.S. policy in Colombia was implemented as a result of a reformed view of the new Bush administration.<sup>132</sup> Then and now, a more diplomatic implementation of the Plan Colombia (or its variances after February 20, 2002) may give more breathing room to the European impetus, free from an entanglement in a complex scenario worsened by the priority status given to military arguments.<sup>133</sup> The flair of “negotiation” (a textbook case of potential cooperation) between the United States and its European partners facilitated by the “retreat” of the most irritating aspects of the original Plan Colombia provided both parties with a sense of accomplishment. For the United States government, this might have been obtained at the cost of blaming the projects of the previous administration. For the Europeans, the reduction of the military aspects of the Plan was the base for selling a more generous package of aid. A common strategy developed by the U.S. government and the European Union on pressuring the Colombian government for more effective control of the paramilitary forces was still in order.<sup>134</sup> However, instead of simply opposing Plan Colombia, European observers have been keenly pointing out that the results of fumigation have been even questioned by internal evaluation of intelligence agencies of the United States. Some evaluations advice to replicate (or cooperate with) the European programs, focusing on the Magdalena Medio projects.
  4. Once the peace process is resumed, a greater European leading role, backed by development assistance funds and investment nurtured by a better economic climate, would provide them with a much needed pressure base to be used vis-à-vis the guerrilla factions to come to the table for real negotiations beyond cease fires and neutral zones. The events of January 2002 confirmed this thesis, dramatized by the breakdown of February 20.
  5. It may well be that the precedent of the Central American experience still allows us to have hope. Granted the end of the Cold War might have contributed to the resolution of the Peace Process to a greater extent than the pressure exerted by the European contribution through the tenacious road traveled during the San José Process. It is also true that the negotiations and an end to the bloody conflicts did not eradicate the socioeconomic causes of the civil wars, although the massacres ended. The complexity of the Colombian crisis and its subsequent spillover effect in the Andean region may present an insurmountable obstacle, too large to be solved by the assistance given by European-led aid. At least putting an end to the mutual massacres may be a reasonable goal to be achieved. After February 20, the urgent objective is diplomatic mediation.

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<sup>132</sup> Sergio Gómez Maseri, “Informe de Clinton da garrote y zanahoria,” *El Tiempo*, 27 enero 2001.

<sup>133</sup> *The New York Times*, “Combustible Colombia”, Editorial, January 28, 2001; EFE, “Bush backs training Colombians,” *The Miami Herald*, Jan. 27, 2001, 3A.

<sup>134</sup> Scott Wilson, “Chronicle”, “Ejército de paramilitares, amenaza para el país”, 28 enero 2001.

Among the major difficulties, the following still must be addressed:

1. For most of 2001 and 2002, European involvement has been presided over by a double discourse, dictated by a combination of declarations and a wait-and-see attitude. The matter presented a more positive outlook after the January 31, 2001, deadline forced the renewal of talks between President Pastrana and FARC leader Marulanda. More positive developments occurred before and after Colombian officials met Europeans in Brussels to iron out the details of the European contribution, following the recommendations issued by the team of European experts who toured Colombia in a mission of identifying and evaluating projects to be funded.<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, the Colombian scenario and its agenda until the February 20, 2002, fiasco were still dominated by the commentary offered by a high representative of a European government: “We will make a virtual contribution to a virtual peace plan.”<sup>136</sup> This was confirmed by the declarations that led to the Resolution of the European Parliament. Nonetheless, at the same time, this message has served, then and now, as pressure on all parties to sit down and negotiate.
2. The second problem for the implementation of European aid has always been, before and after February 20, the security limitations presented by the activities of the guerrilla organizations (the ELN in a wide zone targeted for EU pilot programs; the FARC in the rest of the country), and by the threat presented by the right-wing paramilitary groups. Without a relatively peaceful climate and protection guarantees, independent NGOs can do very little to improve local conditions. The Colombian government has been unable to prove that it can maintain even a minimum level of security for the implementation of important projects as estimates regarding the size of national territory under government control range between 30 and 40 percent, and state security is not even visibly present in provincial capitals.
3. In addition to the above shortcomings, observers in Brussels and the diplomatic representations in Bogotá consider that the local Colombian organizations (government and private) do not have the capacity (or the honesty) to manage the impressive amounts announced. Setting this precedent for humanitarian and development aid is accompanied by a certain degree of skepticism regarding the ability of the agencies to deliver the assistance because of the traditional setbacks including: delays in receiving funds and resources, competition among the different groups, lack of coordination and the so-called “absorption capability.” In order to overcome this handicap, Colombian leadership will have to come up with concrete plans to be offered to the international actors in sensitive areas such as cession of sovereignty, cooperation with international justice, and transparency.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> El Tiempo, “Unión Europea: sin diálogo, ayuda no tiene sentido”, El Tiempo, 19 enero 2001: <http://www.analitica.com/va/sintesis/internacionales/5498260.asp>

<sup>136</sup> From European Union sources.

<sup>137</sup> For a sample of some novel proposals, see the conclusions of the workshop held in Cartagena de Indias, April 25-26, 2002, by the Fundación Ideas para la Paz.

4. In short, “good intentions,” the title of a classic analysis of international assistance, is the fitting label to be applied to the balance of global aid to Colombia.<sup>138</sup> However, it is also true that European contributors hold high expectations, and this should not be considered unusual, but standard in international relations.

In sum, some conclusions are in order:

1. In spite of these difficulties, the most optimistic observers believe that the prevalent uncertainty, international alarm, and the feeling of powerlessness in obtaining substantial military results will finally force the parties to come to terms and negotiate a lasting peace, which apparently was the background of the impasse and subsequent agreement of January 20, 2002. Since mid 2001, all efforts endorsed by the international community have come from that direction. Arrangements have included the exchange of prisoners, sick and injured combatants, and the pressure of the United States and the international community on the Colombian government to negotiate with the ELN.<sup>139</sup> Meanwhile, the government has reciprocated with a frequent message of “normalcy” to continue life as usual, a pattern that has been labeled as denial and an obstacle to finding a cure for the national ills.<sup>140</sup> This confluence of factors coexisted with the continued climate of violence, a social atmosphere laced by kidnappings, the confusing internal conflict of the paramilitary leadership,<sup>141</sup> and the sensation of fighting against time, at the end of Pastrana’s term, waiting for the next president to inherit the problems. The new president of Colombia should not make the mistake of confusing the fading of Europe’s fascination with the guerrillas with an endorsement of paramilitary actions. The best policy for obtaining the backing of Europe is to accept the reconstructive aspects of Europe’s “Plan Colombia,” in view of the predictable failure of the military solution.<sup>142</sup> In the context of the

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<sup>138</sup> Among other papers and opinions issued by Fernando Cepeda on this aspect, see: “Más allá de las buenas intenciones”, El Espectador, agosto 2001. See book by Sherman Forman and Steward Patrick, Good Intentions: Pledges for Aid for Postconflict Recovery, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000.

<sup>139</sup> AFP, “Insta EE.UU. a iniciar en breve diálogo de paz”, Diario las Américas, 10 junio 2001, 3A.

<sup>140</sup> Nothing dramatized this approach better than the decision to hold the soccer Copa América in Colombia in the summer of 2001. See Andrés Pastrana Arango, “Palabras del Presidente de la República”, 1 mayo 2001: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/discurso/2001/infedisc.htm>; Ana María Salazar, “Colombia: la Copa de la Paz,” La Opinión de Los Angeles, 8 junio 2001; Nora Alicia Estrada, “La Copa América: una bomba de tiempo,” La Opinión de Los Angeles, 4 junio 2001.

<sup>141</sup> Sibylla Brozinsky, “Colombia’s civil war may get more violent,” The Miami Herald, June 7, 2001, 8a.; AFP, “Anuncian las normas para la zona desmilitarizada del ELN,” El Nuevo Herald, 27 enero 2001.

<sup>142</sup> For a representative sample of this view, see Miguel Angel Bastenier, “Europa y las elecciones colombianas,” El Tiempo, 28 abril 2002.

May 26 election, most influential European observers and U.S. counterparts coincided in this thesis.<sup>143</sup>

2. Throughout the crisis, the European Commission has been optimistic because the conditionality of aid based on the respect for human rights permitted this institution to focus in that area, where most of the projects funded by the EU are concentrated.<sup>144</sup> This agenda is fully backed by the Member States, who ultimately dictate the policy, either as individual governments or in coordination through the decision-making mechanism of the EU. After all, “la esperanza es lo último que se pierde,” a feeling shared by numerous Colombian organizations in search of an exit to the crisis.<sup>145</sup> With this objective, Europe has continued on betting for Colombia’s future. The temporary accords of January 20, 2002, harvested the results. It is expected that, in the event of a lessening of the confrontation after the breaking of the truce on February 20, the role of Europe will come back to center stage. For the time being, the recognition will be the most coveted award.<sup>146</sup> While recognizing the imperfections and limitations, this paper tries to pay a minimum of justice to this European effort, whatever is the final result of the Colombian crisis. Most foreign observers feel that the impossibility of a total military success of either the Colombian Armed Forces or the guerrillas will finally give the spotlight back to the international community for a lead role in the negotiations towards a political settlement. This need was further dramatized by the plea made by President-elect Alvaro Uribe when he called for the mediation of the United Nations in solving the conflict.<sup>147</sup> Paraphrasing Madeleine Albright’s labeling of the United States as the “indispensable” nation of the post-Cold War era, the European contribution will be duly recognized as the “irreplaceable participant” in the recovery of Colombia.

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<sup>143</sup> Alain Abelard, “Les limites de l’option militaire face à la guerrilla,” Le Monde, May 25, 2002; Richard Feinberg, “La encrucijada colombiana,” El Tiempo, 26 mayo 2002; James Wilson, “The quiet Colombian,” Financial Times, May 26, 2002; M.A. Bastenier, “Ni paz ni guerra,” El País, 26 mayo 2002

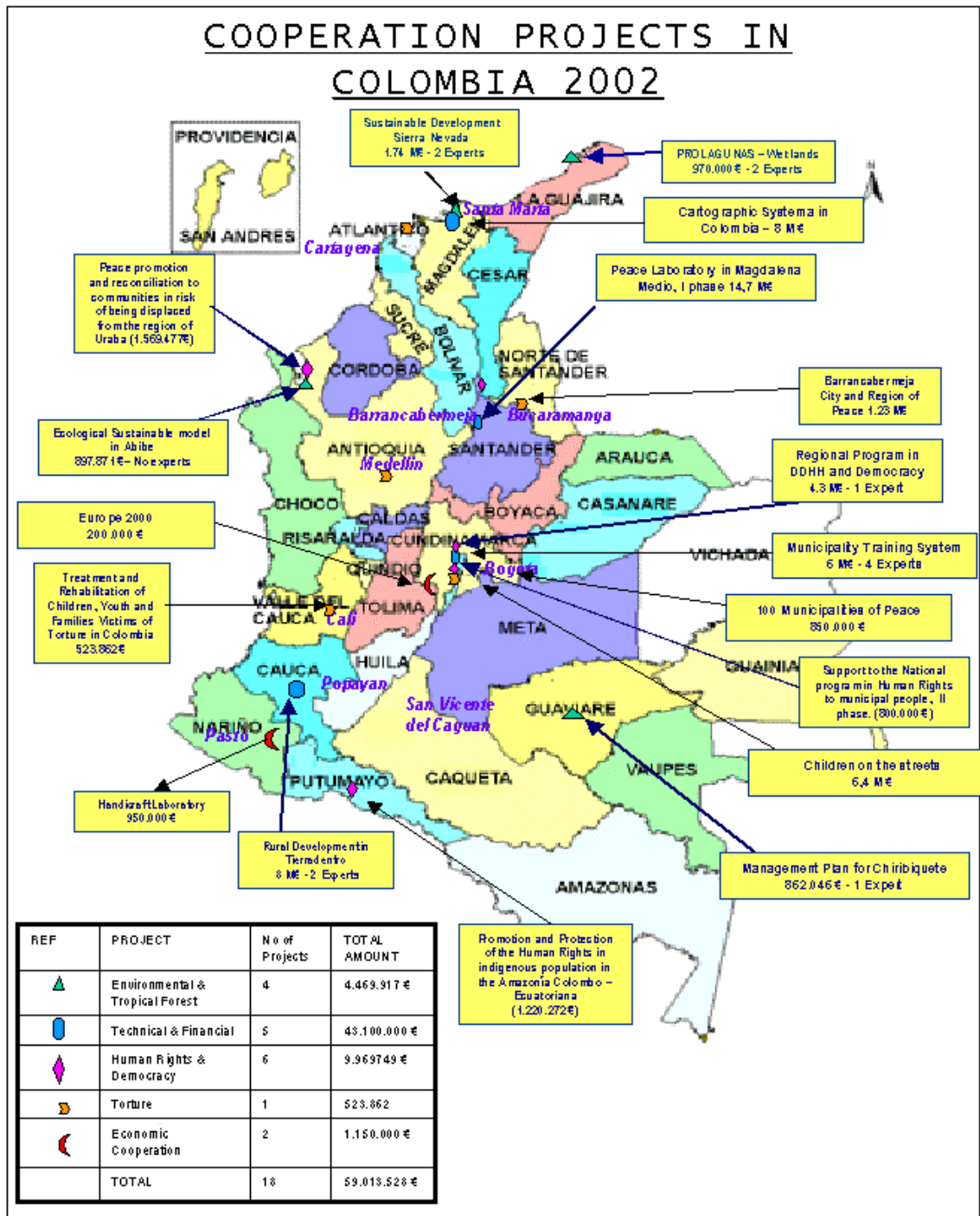
<sup>144</sup> AFP, “UE rechaza de plano la parte militar del Plan Colombia,” Diario las Américas, 2 febrero 2001.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, the periodic reports of the Fundación Social to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, Algo todavía ocurrirá (Bogotá: 2001).

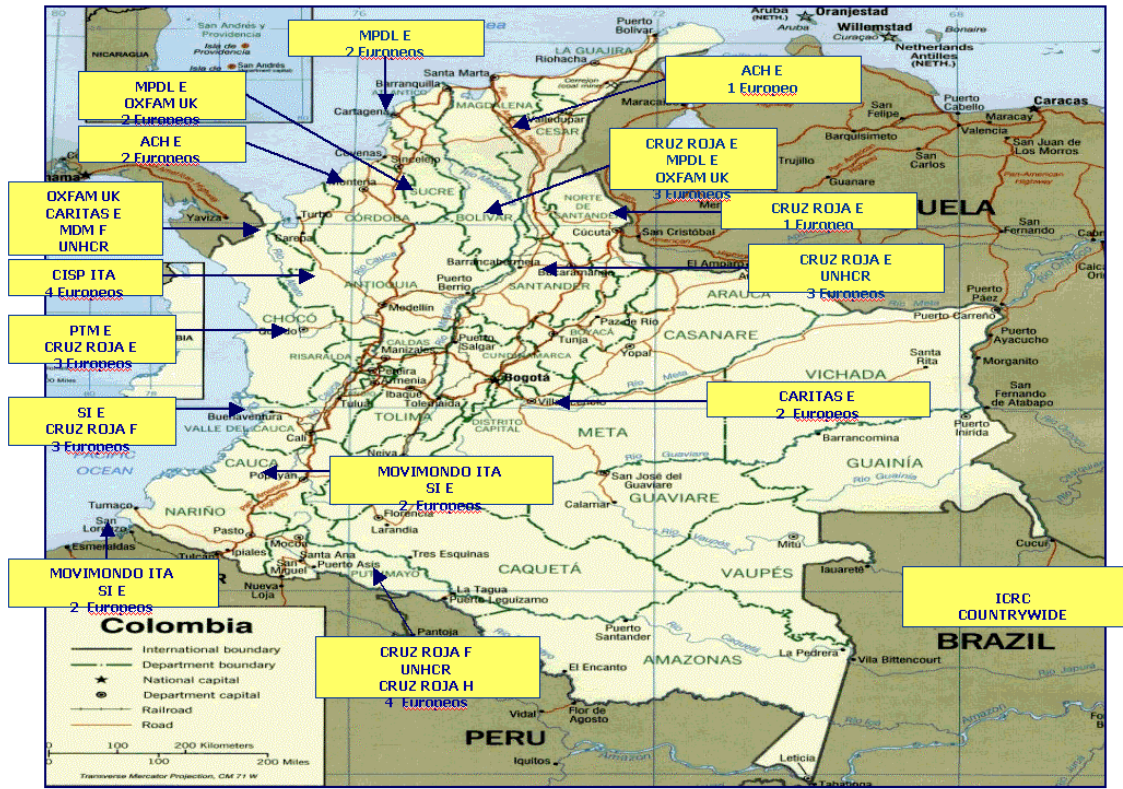
<sup>146</sup> “El papel de la comunidad internacional”, El Tiempo, Bogotá, 21 enero 2002: <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/21-01-2002/prip160013.html>

<sup>147</sup> Frances Robles, “Uribe backs peace talks –if rebels halt violence,” The Miami Herald, May 28, 2002, 1A; AFP, “Negociación es la única salida,” Diario las Américas, 30 mayo 2002, 10A; The Miami Herald, May 29, 2002, editorial, 6B.

## Appendix



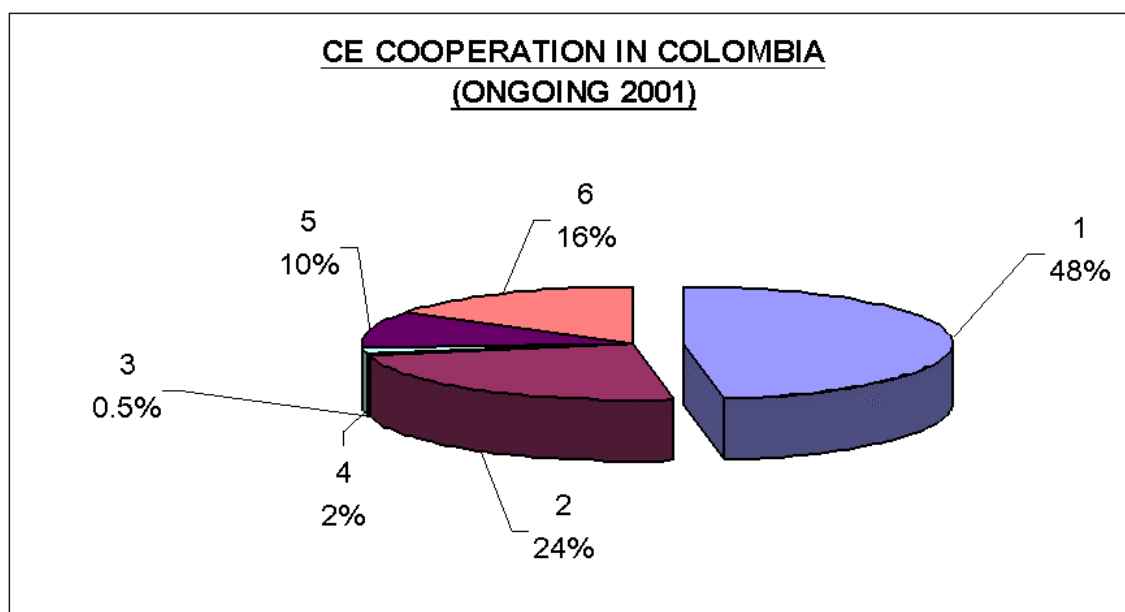
# PROYECTOS DE ECHO COLOMBIA





**EC COOPERATION - COLOMBIA**  
**ONGOING 2002**

	<b>Program Lines</b>	<b>No. De Proyectos</b>	<b>Aporte de la CE</b>	<b>Porcentaje %</b>
1	Technical and Financial Cooperation	3	20.400.000	47,45%
2	Humanitarian Aid - ECHO	2	10.327.000	24,02%
3	Economic Cooperation	1	200.000	0,47%
4	Human Rights and Democracy	1	850.000	1,98%
5	Environmental and Tropical Forest	4	4.434.892	10,32%
6	NGO co-financing	12	6.777.665	15,77%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>42.989.557</b>	<b>100%</b>



## EC COOPERATION – COLOMBIA ABOUT TO START 2002

	<b>Línea Presupuestaria</b>	<b>No. de Proyectos</b>	<b>Aporte de la CE</b>	<b>Porcentaje %</b>
1	Financial and Technical Cooperation*	3	29.100.000	48,10%
2	Humanitarian Aid - ECHO	1	8.000.000	13,22%
3	Economic Cooperation	2	1.920.000	3,17%
4	Human Rights and Democracy	7	9.979.299	16,50%
5	Environmental and Tropical Forest	2	2.300.781	3,80%
6	NGO co-financing	5	3.098.269	5,12%
7	HIV/AIDS	1	1.800.000	2,98%
8	Up-rooted people	1	4.300.000	7,11%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>60.498.349</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Including the Peace Laboratory Project, Phase I (14,7 M€) as a support to the peace process

**CE COOPERATION IN COLOMBIA  
(ABOUT TO START 2002)**

