

38 ASSEMBLY GENERAL OAS

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Medellín, Colombia. From the 1st until the 3rd of June 2008

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Photography SP- César Carrión, Miguel Angel Solano

Design Publication office

Print Nacional Printer • August 2008

www.presidencia.gov.co

**38TH SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)**

'Our enemy is terrorism. All the peoples and governments of our brother nations are our friends'

President Alvaro Uribe Velez

INTRODUCTION

The city of Medellín was the stage from June 1 – 3, 2008, for the 38th Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), attended by the Ministers of Foreign Relations and the Ambassadors of the 34 member countries.

In the framework of this multilateral event, President Alvaro Uribe Velez participated in the Fifth Private Sector Forum. He offered a dinner in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the organization, held bilateral meetings, and attended, as host, the inauguration of the General Assembly.

During the closing ceremony of the Fifth Private Sector Forum – before 400 businessmen, representatives of the academic world, and non-governmental organizations from 34 countries of America, the Head of State emphasized the OAS's role on the continent, and said that no integration arrangement can either surpass or diminish that continental organization.



Later, during the dinner to celebrate the 60 years in existence of the OAS, the President reiterated feelings of friendship toward the people and the governments of brother nations, insisting on his call for them to support Colombia in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

«Our enemy is terrorism. All of the people and governments of our brother nations are our friends,» pointed out President Uribe, after emphasizing that Colombia does not have a tradition of aggression, nor is it acting aggressively now, nor will it ever.

On the first of June, during the inauguration of the General Assembly, the Head of State reiterated that in a democracy such as the one in Colombia, it is not appropriate to grant belligerent status to terrorist groups.

He also praised the integrating capacity of the OAS, said that its Democratic Charter «honors American democracy,» and



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highlighted that the organization's agenda is tightly in line with the five basic values of democracy.

«The OAS,» he said, «is based on the great principle of integration in favor of security, to fight against terrorism. The OAS guarantees freedoms, and is a fundamental factor in the fight against corruption. The OAS is committed to social cohesion, which, in turn, is based on democratic sustainability. The OAS guarantees transparency.»

Two of the speeches given by President Uribe in the framework of this continental event, held in the capital of Antioquia, are reproduced below.



**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ALVARO URIBE VELEZ
DURING THE INAUGURAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE OAS**

Medellín, June 1 of 2008

Thank you very much to the Organization of American States for having chosen Colombia, and this city of Medellín, for this new session of your Assembly.

Colombia as a country has had strong ties with the OAS since its birth.

Alberto Lleras Camargo, former President of Colombia, promoter of democracy in Colombia and guardian of American democracy contributed notably to the creation of the OAS and to its first successful years.

César Gaviria Trujillo, former President of Colombia, after leading the constitutional reform process in 1991 in this country, led the OAS for 10 years with tenacity, intelligence, and wisdom.

You have arrived in the city of Medellín, a city that is grieving today for the victims of natural disasters. A city that is in the midst of recovery. A city with great social capital for a century and a half, expressed in community effort and creativity in favor of health, education, scientific advancement, industry, and social cohesion.

A city that has been affected for decades by that enemy of humanity that is drug trafficking and by guerrilla and paramilitary terrorist groups, today in the midst of recovery, seeking to become the safest city on the continent.

A city that is doing a formidable job of strengthening social capital, so that it might oblige the world to remember it no longer for having suffered martyrdom at the hands of drug cartels and terrorist groups, but to rather applaud it for being an example of a city with a strong educational system, an industrial city, and a city with social harmony.

You have come to Colombia, sister to all of you. Colombia, fighting today to gain the confidence of its own people and strangers, and of all generations. Fighting today so that new generations may have full confidence that they can live here happily, and fully develop their material, intellectual, and spiritual possibilities.

Colombia, working for Democratic Security, for investor confidence based on social responsibility, and for social cohesion. These three pillars will increase confidence, and confidence, in turn, will strengthen those three pillars.

And the three pillars are intricately interrelated. Security is necessary for there to be prosperity. It helps to create the conditions necessary for investment. If it is not in place, social cohesion becomes nothing more than demagogic discourse, with no effective results.

If we have security and we have investment based on social responsibility, then we generate more social responsibility and we generate social cohesion. Social cohesion in turn becomes an imperative that legitimizes security and the rules that have generated investor confidence.

SECURITY BASED ON DEMOCRACY

Why do we talk about Democratic Security?

Mr. Secretary, Dr. José Miguel Insulza, my distinguished chancellors and delegates, we talk about it because many countries on the continent experienced the difficult season of

the national security doctrine. That search for security justified the installation of dictatorships, the suppression of dissension, the elimination of pluralism, the censorship of the press, and the annulment of freedoms.

Ours is totally to the contrary. It is security based on democracy, security in favor of freedoms. In this country we have had no governments that were enemies of freedom; our restrictions on freedoms have been imposed by terrorism.

Democratic Security is security for all citizens, for the friends of the government's position and for the adversaries of the government's position alike. Democratic Security is security for business leaders and security for union leaders.

Democratic Security is security with credibility based on public opinion. It is a state supported by public opinion, because a security project can be sustained through time only as long as it is effective and if it is transparent. And transparency has only one meaning in this context: adherence to human rights.

Democratic Security is security in a country that is open to international accompaniment.

Many countries that seek security from the context of a dictatorship justify closing off the country to international accompaniment.

Colombia has faced the biggest terrorist challenge from the wealthiest terrorism because of drug trafficking, and Colombia has always been open to international accompaniment and criticism. That gives honor to our security process.

We have made huge advancements, but we recognize all that is still lacking. You, in all of our brother nations, can be certain that what is not lacking is determination to obtain complete Democratic Security and total peace in Colombia.

THE THREAT OF TERRORISM

Why do we call the violent groups terrorists?

Because they attack a democratic nation; because they are financed by illegal drugs; because they have no consideration for international humanitarian law; because they murder minors, civilians, little girls, pregnant women, and old people; because in the last ten years 1,500 people have not returned home from the total number kidnapped by the FARC terrorist group.

There have been guerrilla groups on the continent who have benignly been called insurgents. They were somehow seen as legitimate because their fight was against dictatorships.

These guerrilla groups were not financed by illegal drugs, and the moment came when they were offered negotiation.

In Colombia our violent groups are not fighting against a dictatorship, they are attacking a democracy.

Post-war Europe defined terrorism as any violent action or any threat of violence for ideological, religious, or political reasons.

How much greater reason, then, to define a violent action against a democracy as terrorism, a terrorism that has moved from ideology to mercenary motives, from the Marxist ideal of socialism and communism to enrichment from the drug traffic.

We ask all our brother nations on the continent to consider these reasons, in order to not hesitate to define as terrorist these violent groups that abuse Colombia and are a threat to all of our brothers.

In some countries of our continent, insurgent groups negotiated when clear rules were laid down, with international accompaniment for the negotiation to occur in a democratic way. What is more, they had to negotiate, because at that time

they no longer had the financial assistance they had been receiving from outside the country, as well known in one of the processes – to cite just one – the peace process in our sister Republic of El Salvador.

Democracy in Colombia has been uninterrupted, and more pervasive every day. The obstacle for these groups to negotiate is their attachment to drug trafficking money, also leading them to scorn the peace proposals made by the international community.

My predecessor made every possible effort to achieve peace. What happened with the FARC and with other guerrilla groups? The guerrilla groups saw the efforts not as initiatives made in good faith to build peace, but as shows of weakness by the enemy government, and, according to the terrorists, they took advantage of those weaknesses to move ahead with their strategy to destroy democracy.

We ask our brother nations to regard it not proper to grant belligerent status to terrorist groups financed by drug trafficking in a democracy like the one we have in Colombia. The guerrillas have the capacity to do damage, but they lack territorial control; they find places to hide in a country where, fortunately for the planet, 52 percent of its territory is jungle, a total of 578 thousand square kilometers.

These groups have no interest in respecting international humanitarian law. At one point they wanted to deceive us by appearing to have defined hierarchical structures; today they have no such thing. And there is a prerequisite for granting belligerent status to a group, which is that the group must effectively administer justice.

Dr. Insulza, distinguished chancellors, and Ambassador, what democracy in the world can accept to substitute the 'justice' of a violent group for the state's legitimate justice system?

We Colombians would not understand granting one of these groups belligerent status, because it would be equivalent to recognizing that the group exercises justice. Please!

One of the great problems that Colombia is overcoming is the attempt by terrorists to annul and supplant the state justice system with their private justice. The justice of torture, the justice of massacre. First, the guerrilla groups, and then the paramilitary groups.

A country that is making a great effort to definitively defeat those who sought to supplant the legitimate state justice system with massacre and terrorism has every right to ask the international community to never recognize that these groups exercise justice.

A massacre is not justice and in a democratic nation the only acceptable justice is the state's legitimate justice system.

TO DATE, 48 THOUSAND FORMER COMBATANTS REINSERTED

We want to give a huge thanks to the OAS for its support for our reinsertion plans.

This afternoon, with Fundación Confianza en América, with the support of private enterprise, and with coordination by Dr. José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, we signed a new agreement to continue OAS cooperation with our reinsertion process.

In 2002 we had 60 thousand terrorists; 48 thousand have been reinserted.

Let us remember the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, when a fundamental step was taken in the peace process in Ireland. The world was given the news that 3,200 Irish people had been assassinated from 1920 to 1998 as a result of their troubles.

In the city of Medellín, in one year alone 5 thousand people were assassinated.

When we look at terrorist groups in other parts of the world and former guerrilla groups in our brother Latin American countries, comparison of the statistics will show the dimensions of our terrorism.

One European terrorist group had 118 leaders and active members, another 200. One Latin American guerrilla group had 3,500, another 2,400. We have faced 60 thousand terrorists.

The world's reinsertion processes speak to us of complexities, because in one country they had to deal with 3,000 people, in another they had to reinsert 2,400, and in yet another 700 people. Here, to date, we have reinserted 48 thousand.

Comparing that figure gives us an idea, esteemed delegates, chancellors, and Dr. Insulza, of the dimensions of the problem with which we are coping.

In the nineties, when peace processes were underway in Colombia, 4,000 guerrilla members were reinserted. During our administration more than 12,000 guerrilla members have been reinserted, for a total of 48,000 members of terrorist groups.

Many thanks to the OAS for its firm decision to accompany and monitor this process, for helping us with reinsertion.

LAW OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

Reinsertion currently takes place in the framework of the Law of Justice and Peace, approved amid controversy, but today well legitimized by its early results.

It is the first process in Colombia or on the continent, and among the world's peace processes that demands truth, justice, and reparation.

In the past atrocious crimes were committed with impunity. Guerrillas associated with drug trafficking who set Colombian justice on fire and massacred its judges, received a pardon and sincere forgiveness from the Colombian people, who have allowed them to successfully aspire to the highest positions in our government.

Under our Law of Justice and Peace there is no pardon or amnesty for atrocious crimes. It demands truth and handing over wealth in reparation to victims.

For example, the people we have agreed to extradite are reaching agreements through their relations with the United States justice system to hand over assets, and those assets should be dedicated to reparation to victims in Colombia.

We have recently issued a decree that regulates the administrative process for victim reparation and we hope to embody it in a Law of the Republic in weeks to come.

The victims that have appeared so far represent a reparation cost to the Colombian nation in the years to come of more than four billion dollars.

In the past, reinserted groups made no reparation to victims nor did they confess the truth. Our ambition is for our severity in dismantling the paramilitary phenomenon to serve as a precedent for such a time as when the ELN and the FARC decide definitively in favor of peace, so that they will also be handled within a framework that will balance justice, reparation, and truth.

The guerrilla movement was born, in its Marxist phase, with the purpose of expanding Colombian democracy and improving the country's social situation. In the measure that the Colombian institutions have grown stronger and democracy has expanded, the guerrillas, who had once requested exactly that, have behaved like paid assassins, murdering popularly elected mayors and those empowered by the democratic expansion.

Those terrorists asked for effective respect for opposition parties as a condition for negotiating. We suffered the extermination of an opposition party, the Unión Patriótica.

This matter must be analyzed in all of its dimensions. There were two errors made. Of course, the state was not effective in protecting the members of the Unión Patriótica. And there was an error that we cannot allow to be repeated. Many of the members of that party engaged in political activity, even being elected to congress, while continuing with their terrorist activities. They practiced the combination of all forms of struggle.

Democracy cannot be combined with violence.

That is why, esteemed delegates, we respectfully ask our brother nations to examine this phenomenon of guerrilla terrorism, whose ambition is to continue to combine terrorism with politics.

And not only do they want to combine terrorism with domestic politics, but terrorism with international politics. They want to deceive our brother nations, opening up paths for international relations, when in a democratic organization such as that of our continent a combination of politics and terrorism is completely prohibited.

NO PARAMILITARY MOVEMENT

We have overcome the paramilitary movement. What caused it? It was a reaction to the guerrilla movement and state negligence. What fueled it? Drug trafficking.

Why do I say that today there is no paramilitary movement in Colombia? Because the term was coined as a name for criminal groups whose purpose was to confront the guerrilla groups.

If you travel through our country today, you will find that we still have drug trafficking, criminal bands, and reinserted

combatants who have relapsed into criminal activity – which I will refer to in a minute – but there are no private groups of criminals whose purpose is to combat other criminals.

The Colombian state has recovered a monopoly that it never should have lost: the monopoly of combating criminals.

Three thousand people who have demobilized have subsequently gone back to criminal activity. Just as we have been generous with demobilization, we have also been rigorous with repeat offenders.

If we subtract those who have been put in prison by our institutional forces and those who have been killed in confrontations with our institutional forces, we have a remainder of 500 relapsed reinserted combatants still committing violent acts.

Today we are confronting them with strict severity.

Three thousand repeat offenders out of a demobilization of 48 thousand would seem a relatively low figure, but three thousand well-armed criminals represent an immense danger for any society.

The guerrilla movements, rather than contribute to a democracy that the Colombian people have continuously strengthened, have murdered its protagonists.

The social result was enrichment for the guerrillas through drug trafficking and impoverishment for the Colombian people. The social results speak eloquently.

In just a few years this country reached unemployment levels of 20 percent, with 60 percent poverty. This generated an internal displacement of two million people and a similar figure for displacement toward the international community.

Some of our neighbors and brothers, like Ecuador, have been recipients of this international displacement, caused by these terrorists. We recognize that.

We are making every effort to eliminate displacement. And we are willing to look for mechanisms to help brother and neighboring nations with obligations they have shouldered on behalf of displaced Colombians.

Nothing has worked. We have eliminated the paramilitary movement, which the guerrillas demanded as a condition for negotiating, yet today they are silent. We challenged them to negotiate, now that what they demanded in getting rid of the paramilitary movement has been done.

Nothing has worked. Colombia, through a gradual process, has engaged in a broad expansion of this democracy and the guerrillas have not wanted to negotiate.

Nothing has worked. Democratic Security has demonstrated its effectiveness in protecting the political opposition, something the guerrillas were always requesting, and the guerrillas, because of their terrorist nature, still will not negotiate.

We have undertaken a process, thanks to the Law of Truth, Justice, and Reparation and our Democratic Security policy, that has revealed political relations with the paramilitary movement, and that will reveal things that in the past were hidden: political relations with the guerrilla groups.

The great majority of those crimes were committed before our administration. The majority of the congressmen involved held their congressional offices before our administration.

We have strengthened the justice system through a larger budget and through a constitutional reform that introduced the Accusatory System and orality in penal proceedings, but we have not changed the established institutions.

We have completed the transformation of the impunity of the past into more effective justice today without changing our institutions. We have the same courts, the same attorneys, almost the same judges, and the same institutions, with the exception of the changes I mentioned.

Why was there impunity in the past but today we have effective justice? Because a great phenomenon has occurred. The Democratic Security policy has achieved that in a country where fear of terrorists was greater than respect for the institutions, respect for the institutions is now held on high while fear of terrorists wanes.

PROTECTION FOR UNION WORKERS

We have special protected groups as part of our Democratic Security policy: journalists, teachers, and union workers.

Colombia suffered through years in which 15 journalists were assassinated. Last year there was just one, which is still serious. The Justice system, which is independent from the Executive branch, believes that the motives for their murders have nothing to do with their journalistic activity. This year there has not been a single case, and journalists today are less threatened, thanks to Democratic Security.

You will find a country with full-fledged freedoms.

And in this country – and I say it not only for the ears of our brother and neighbor nations, but for all the members of the Organization of American States, and for the United States Congress - in the years prior to our administration up to 250 union workers were assassinated. And we are still being assassinated; we are not yet satisfied. We want to reach zero cases, but so far we have reduced the number to 25 cases, 60 cases, and we suffer over every case. Our goal is reach zero cases.

Under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO) we are moving ahead on an agreement between the justice system, the government, workers, and employers to do away with impunity. We now have 113 people in prison, accused of having committed crimes against union leaders.

It is good to study the causes. The guerrilla groups in the sixties and the seventies imported into this country the theory of the combination of all forms of struggle. They murdered and penetrated the workers' movement; they kidnapped and penetrated politics; they massacred and penetrated the student movement. And they grew and they were respected, and they were not combated with consistency. And they engendered an equally cruel reaction from the paramilitary movement, which used the same practices, revealed during this administration, of penetrating the institutions.

Paramilitary groups began to kill union leaders, accusing them of being guerrilla collaborators, and then the guerrillas killed union leaders who had gone over to the side of the paramilitary groups, accusing them of betrayal.

Our heartfelt commitment, expressed during our first campaign as a clear manifestation of Democratic Security, is to achieve a decrease in this rate in Colombia. Where there were years with 35 thousand assassinations, last year we were down to 17 thousand. We once had rates of 68 assassinations for every 100 thousand inhabitants, but by last year we had gone down to 36. We trust that this year there will be no more than 30. That number is still very high, and we are not yet satisfied. But we are making every effort.

We trust that this country at some point will be able to say that we do not murder union leaders in this country, that we do not kidnap businessmen in this country. We had years with more than 3 thousand kidnappings.

When Democratic Security began, Colombians flooded out into the streets, giving the impression that the community was collectively rejoicing in newly discovered freedom.

Last year we still suffered 270 kidnappings, especially in remote communities; all of this has been financed through drug trafficking.

THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING

We desire effective support from all of you to defeat drug trafficking.

Plan Colombia, which we have developed with the United States, has no element of hostility toward our brother peoples. Its only objective is to defeat the drug trafficking that sustains terrorism here and that is a threat to our brother nations.

We are moving ahead with fumigation weighed much more heavily toward manual eradication. A few years ago we introduced manual eradication, and this year we will manually eradicate 100 thousand hectares.

This country, this city of Medellín, is indeed familiar with the terrible odyssey of drug trafficking.

First it was said: 'No, Colombia doesn't produce, Colombia just benefits from the trade.' Then 5 thousand hectares appeared and the police estimated that if the measurements that led to Plan Colombia were made rigorously across the nation, in 2000 there would have been around 400 thousand hectares planted with illegal drugs.

It was said: 'That is not a problem, because in Colombia we don't use drugs.' Today we are facing a problem of approximately one million consumers. It is a factor in the generation of youth violence, and in the destruction of homes.

All of our neighbors must take into account this painful experience in Colombia. We cannot hide our concern at the growth in the use of illegal drugs in many of the OAS member countries.

We believe that we must not waver in the application of penalties. It is less difficult to prevent and rehabilitate when there are rigorous penalties, than when penalties are absent.

Even, and here we are struggling with this – and we have not been able to obtain a majority in congress – to penalize the possession of an amount for personal use. Because it is incomprehensible that in a country that has offered up so many victims to this struggle, that a country that is making every effort to defeat drug traffickers, could be permissive with drug use by decriminalizing drug possession for personal use.

There is a legal problem there and a political ethical problem. Politics require proportionality to be ethical. And proportionality is ruptured when on one side every rigor is required for extraditing and confiscating, and on the other side you refuse the possibility of penalizing a «personal dose» of drugs.

Democratic Security is a pillar supporting confidence in Colombia. Investment is another, and social cohesion must be the great legitimizer.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

I had the opportunity to tell many of you, two nights ago when the OAS closed the Americas Business Forum, about our efforts to increase the investment rate, to provide clear rules and reliable incentives for investors, and to attract private and public, domestic and international investment. We explained that it is conditioned on social responsibility.

Social responsibility on the part of the investors, which means transparency in relations with the state, in taxes, in concessions, and in the resolution of disputes.

Social responsibility on the part of investors, which is expressed through solidarity with communities on many matters, especially environmental issues.

Social responsibility that is fraternity in labor relations. We do not want the labor relations of a savage capitalism, and neither do we want class hatred. We advocate fraternal labor relations.

In this city of Medellín we celebrate Workers' Day on May first, providing some magnificent examples of fraternal labor relations. We have moved from business egoism to business solidarity and moved from the old ideological unionism of vindication and politics to a union movement of participation.

The sustainability of a business depends on solidarity. This demands full solidarity on the part of the business owner and full responsibility toward the business on the part of the worker. This can provide us with great balance in this area.

POWER, FOOD, AND INFLATION

We are concerned about the issue of power, the issue of food, and the issue of inflation.

Colombia is a country that experiences difficulties with oil and gas, but it has significant coal reserves, great potential in hydroelectric power, in wind energy, and also in biological fuels.

We understand the world debate on the conflict between food and biofuels. But the impact cannot be ignored of the price of oil on inflation and on the risk of greater misery when poor and vulnerable sectors have no food security.

We have 578 thousand kilometers of jungle and 43 million hectares of plains; and only 5 million hectares are cultivated.

Know that we have a commitment here: every biofuel project – and Colombia is the second country on the continent today,

after Brazil, in this field – must certify that it will not affect the jungle, and will not affect food security.

The conditions in our country allow us to grow the materials for biofuels and to simultaneously grow the food that will provide food security.

We are deeply concerned about inflation. World inflation of foodstuffs, of inputs, of fertilizer, and agrochemicals. Inflation spurred by oil.

How difficult for the governments and the central banks to find a point of equilibrium between the need to increase production in order to fight inflation, and the need to maintain monetary and financial measures to keep inflation under control.

SOCIAL POLICY

Our great legitimizer is our social policy. Our great commitment to young people is the constant educational revolution.

Our coverage for basic education was at 78 percent. Now it is at 94 percent. We aspire to reach 100 percent by the year 2010.

Coverage for university education was at 22 percent; that coverage is now at 30. We aim to reach 34 percent.

We have a vocational formation institute, the National Learning Service (SENA), which in a year like this one can train 6 million Colombians.

These are some of our achievements, but there is still much to do.

A million and a half poor families receive a subsidy to guarantee their children's education and nutrition. This year we dedicated 70 million dollars to public schools, in addition to the regular budget, in order to guarantee free education for the poorest sectors.

We are investing 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in education, despite our difficulties financing security.

We believe that one of the factors for social exclusion on our continent and in our country is the lack of access by the poorest sectors to institutional loans.

We have implemented a program that we call Opportunity Banks, which links the private and public sector to foundations and to the international community. It has been well supported by the Inter-American Development Bank and has increased the amount of loan resources reaching the hands of micro-entrepreneurs from 350 million dollars to three and a half billion dollars.

But there is still much to do.

This country once had 23 million people with health insurance; today there are 38 million. Our goal is to solve every problem keeping us from providing health insurance to all 44 million Colombians.

We still lack attention plans and quality in many sectors of health insurance.

We are not hiding any of our difficulties. That is why, precisely because of what is still lacking, we ask the international community for support.

THE OAS IS A GUARANTOR OF DEMOCRACY

The Organization of American States, in these 60 years, has been a determining cause in the transition by the entire continent away from dictatorships and toward democracy.

We should ask ourselves, what would have happened with that transition in the absence of the OAS?

The OAS has also been insurance to prevent a return to dictatorship from democracy.

The democratic charter of the OAS honors American democracy.

The OAS is based on the great principle of integration in favor of security, to fight against terrorism. The OAS is a fundamental factor in the fight against corruption.

I do not share the idea of dividing the continent between leftist and rightist governments. That is an obsolete concept that polarizes groups. It was logical when the theory was imported from Europe that allowed the left, in many of our countries, to fight against dictatorships. Today distinctions should focus on democratic rule. This has been left behind.

But, in addition, we find that in many countries that the left is just election discourse, subsequently forgotten by the government.

And finally, when there is full adherence to democratic rule, governments that act in good faith and with transparency all end up looking similar in their results, much more than the candidates do on the face of their campaigns.

We respect diversity – that is the importance of the OAS. Integration within diversity. But we avoid pushing people toward extremes.

Much more important than divisions that can intensify controversy is a commitment to democratic values.

I applaud the fact that today's agenda for the OAS is fully governed by the five basic values of democracy. The OAS represents fighting for security. Security is not a rightwing position; it is also an imperative of the left. Security is a democratic value and a source of resources.

The OAS guarantees freedoms. Freedoms are not a superstructure's sophism for reproducing exploitative conditions. Freedoms are a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence within diversity.

The OAS is committed to social cohesion, which, in turn, is based on democratic sustainability.

The OAS is the guarantee there will be no abuses among its peoples or its nations. It safeguards states with independent institutions that harmoniously cooperate in favor of the higher good of society.

The OAS guarantees transparency. In an assembly like this one, dedicated to youth, commitment to transparency is a priority. Without it, young people will have no reason for trust and confidence. Without it, we are missing the glue of democracy, which is the confidence of adversaries in the rules that govern all.

INTEGRATION PROCESSES

We believe we must all be deeply committed to not allowing sub regional integration arrangements to affect the OAS. On the contrary, they should strengthen its principles.

If sub regional integration arrangements should come to affect the OAS, they would end up taking away from that organization, and feudalizing instead of integrating.

If the sub regional integration processes are consistent with OAS principles, they will be an addition and an aid, in every corner of the continent, to those principles.

During these years Colombia has actively participated in the CAN - Mercosur agreement. Six years ago, silently some did not allow that possibility to flourish because they feared it, while the majority was completely disinterested.

Colombia has participated in the creation of the Union of South American Nations. It has rejected, based on the current situation, the South American Defense Council.

Colombia in recent years has joined the Panama - Puebla Plan, as appropriate for our geographic situation, making us a bridge between South America, our sister nation on the isthmus, Central America, and the vision of Meso-America.

Colombia would like to develop deeper relations with all of our brother nations in the Caribbean.

Colombia has signed a trade agreement with Chile, with Peru, and with three Central American countries. We want to do the same with all the countries of the Caribbean. We have signed agreements with Chile, with the United States – waiting for approval from Congress – and we are about to sign with Canada.

We are negotiating investment protection treaties with Chile and with India. For us, commercial integration is not everything, but it is a basic part of relations. We believe we should enter them without ideological rigors.

I would like to leave you with this reflection: the people of no nation will accept commercial integration if social aspects cannot be safeguarded.

Whoever believes in globalization with social exclusions is completely mistaken. Today's integration arrangements have an element without which they will make no progress: social guarantees for the most vulnerable sectors.

Integration processes also need, at a basic level, political dialogue and cooperation. That is what some of us countries of the Andean community are looking for with Europe.

We see in the OAS a great example of political dialogue and of cooperation. Let us strengthen the OAS; let us not allow it to weaken.

COLOMBIA HAS NOT BEEN AND WILL NOT BE AGGRESSIVE

Political dialogue must help us overcome conflicts and difficulties.

Colombia has not been aggressive toward its neighbors, is not aggressive, and will not be aggressive in the future. Colombia is a country that loves legality as a factor for peaceful coexistence. But Colombia has rebelled against 50 years of suffering from terrorists.

We feel affection toward all our brother nations and respect for the territory of our brother peoples. Our only enemy is terrorism.

I repeat today, when some believed that our attack on terrorism was an abuse of a brother nation, we said we were defending the people of Colombia today, in order to prevent future offensive moves by terrorism against our brother nation.

But we had no problem asking for forgiveness and we will repeat that request. And therefore we are profoundly grateful for the presence of the Chancellor of Ecuador (María Isabel Salvador).

The only thing we ask is for you to help us to live as you live. We are envious of how good you have it, seeing that all of our brother countries represented here do not have a terrorist problem or the drug trafficking that Colombia has experienced.

Help us Colombians to have reasons for feeling at peace as you do, esteemed representatives of our brother countries.

The agenda for youth must be an agenda for discipline, for education, for entrepreneurialism. It must be an agenda against global warming.

The fight you now see ongoing in Colombia has a reason: to guarantee the happiness of new generations of Colombians.

My generation has not lived a single complete day of peace, has not had a single moment of tranquility.

Here, today, we grieve over the avalanche produced by nature that buried many of the people here, but we have lived for many years without being able to sleep well because of the threat of car bombs.

We work for social cohesion so that young Americans can feel proud of their continent. We receive you with fraternity. When we ask you for help, we offer you something in return: the strength of our democracy.

A people living in democracy is a people with the moral authority to ask brother governments and peoples for help to overcome all factors that assault democracy.

Thank you very much for celebrating this new session of the Assembly in Medellín.

Thank you very much for having confidence in Colombia.

Our best wishes for success to all of you.