



Statement by
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THIRD COMMITTEE
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ITEM 56: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself to the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Mexico in representation of the Rio Group.

Colombia considers the advancement of women as a key factor in the realization of human rights and social and economic development. We thank the reports submitted to this Assembly, which emphasize on the elimination of violence against women. We recognize positively the consultative process developed by the Secretariat, which enabled it to know progress, challenges and successful practices and formulate important recommendations. The Government of Colombia presented relevant data to the Secretariat during the preparation of report.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General's view on the need to incorporate a comprehensive approach when preventing and responding to violence against women. This approach should include the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the general legal framework, plans and policies implemented by the States.

Based on this view, Colombia has mainstreamed a gender perspective into the various components of the National Development Plan 2006-2010, including in job creation, social equity and poverty reduction strategies. Also, legislation promoting empowerment of women has been strengthened in various fields. These actions are decisive to reduce factors of vulnerability to violence.

Likewise, the Democratic Security Policy implemented since 2002 has progressively reduced terrorist violence and all forms of criminality, consolidating a new environment of confidence and stability in Colombia. The demobilization of more than 48 thousand former members of illegal armed groups is another positive factor in the decline in violence. The Assistance to Internally Displaced People Policy continues to be strengthened; it receives an annual \$500 million budget, and incorporates a gender approach in the protection, assistance and social-economic stabilization of those affected. The participatory formulation of the National Action Plan in Human Rights with a gender perspective is also moving forward, and this will further consolidate strategies for protection of life and personal integrity.

As recognized by the Secretary-General, strengthening specific laws and action plans to address violence against women is also essential. In Colombia there are recent developments in this line, which have been possible thanks to the commitment of the governments' branches and entities and civil society.

Among them the Law that raises punishment for domestic violence. It provides an even higher penalty when the victim is a woman, and ensures that the prosecution of this crime proceeds even without allegation by the person concerned.

Legislation to prevent trafficking in persons and to strengthen the judicial action against this horrendous crime, as well as to protect its victims, has allowed also consolidating the strategic response capacity of national and local institutions.

The Code for Childhood and Adolescence, formulated also with a gender perspective, provides measures for integral protection, prevention, strict punishment for violence against children, and restitution of violated rights.

The policy "Women: builders of peace and development" led by the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equity is another example of affirmative actions. One of its intervention areas is the prevention of violence against women. The Plan for the Defense of Women's Rights in the Judiciary, the community networks of women against violence, and several strategies to raise awareness, have also helped in promoting the national agenda on this issue.

Fight against impunity has received special attention in the Secretary-General's reports. In this area, in addition to severe penalties and legal measures for redress, it is essential to strengthen the capacity of institutions responsible for law enforcement.

In the case of Colombia, the new accusatory system has been implemented in the past three years, generating more expeditious and effective criminal processes, and providing better guarantees to victims. The Judiciary also conducts training on gender issues to its staff and promotes more effective access to justice for women.

Additionally, the special legislation for Justice and Peace, being applied in the process for demobilization of illegal armed groups, has allowed significant advances in knowing the truth and redressing to victims, taking into account special needs of women and girls.

Information on gender-based violence is also crucial for designing responses. This has been showed by the Observatory on Gender Issues that monitors implementation of national laws and policies, and includes research and data collection on violence issues.

Mr. Chairman,

International cooperation is particularly valuable to support national actions in the fields of prevention of violence against women, comprehensive assistance and redress to victims, and to strengthen the capacities of States in the fight against impunity. The United Nations can play a central role in this field.

The decisions to be made in General Assembly resolutions, related to advancement of women and system's coherence, should aim at strengthening that cooperation capacity. The contribution of the United Nations, in a manner consistent with national priorities, would translate into an increasingly tangible support to the actions promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Colombia welcomes those continued joint efforts for cooperation and coordination.

Thank you very much.