

VII Forum on Minorities

Intervention of Colombia

Point 6 of the agenda

November 26, 2014

Thank you Mr. President,

Colombia values the opportunity that this Forum offers to discuss and exchange experiences on the protection of minorities, in particular the prevention of and combat against the violence they can suffer. We are thankful for the conceptual note that served as the foundation for our debates and we take into account the draft of recommendations to prevent and address the violence and atrocious crimes committed against minorities.

Colombia would like to share its national experience and the developments it has achieved, which are framed within the four central pillars for the protection of minorities.

Firstly, the Colombian Political Constitution recognizes the multiethnic and multicultural character of the country. Equally, it enshrines religious liberty and freedom of worship as a fundamental right that is not limited to the sphere of worship, and whose manifestations extend to diverse activities that also enjoy protection.

In the last decades, there has been a wide normative and legal development for the protection of minorities to guarantee the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the nation. In this framework, there has been a strengthening of institutions, through the creation of national government entities focused on the diverse populous groups of the country. Also highlighted is the existence of special indigenous and afro-heritage constituencies that guarantee the representation of these minorities in Congress.

On the other hand, Colombia has designed and implemented public policies that promote equality of opportunities for minorities in the access to the benefits of development, under the principles for the recognition of the right to difference/diversity. The National Plan for Development included specific components directed towards the improvement of the quality of life of ethnic and religious groups, and towards the recognition and strengthening of their identity.

Equally, the incorporation of a differential/diversity focus should be noted and the implementation of affirmative actions that take into account the conditions of marginalization and discrimination that have affected some minorities.

Mr. President,

Concerning security, combat against violence and protection by the state, Colombia promotes specific differential focuses that address the particular necessities of members of minority groups that have been

affected within the framework of conflict, specially the Afro-Colombian population and the members of indigenous communities.

The Law for Victims and Restitution of Lands for example, through which integral measures of action, assistance, and reparation are dictated for the victims of armed internal conflict, establish specific norms for minority groups, which were developed in previous consultation with these groups.

In the institutional sphere, the training undertaken by the Military Forces and the National Police in the matter of human rights is emphasized with the intention that the Public Forces observe, in the capacity of their operations, the guidelines imparted by the instruments for the protection of minorities and to strengthen their relationship with these communities. The creation of specific divisions inside the Ombudsman and the Attorney General's Office is also emphasized.

Finally, we would like to highlight the activities of the National Unit for Protection, the authority responsible for articulating preventative measures and promoting the rights to life, integrity, liberty and the security of persons that, given their post or in the exercise of their functions, could be in extreme risk. The Unit applies the principle of differential focus in its activities. Within the persons it protects, there are 246 representatives or members of minority groups who count with individual plans of protection.

Thank you very much.