

# INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATIONS

88<sup>a</sup> Meeting of the Council

November 2004

Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mrs. Carolina Barco

Mr President, Mr Director General, Mrs. Deputy Director General, keynote speakers and Delegates:

It is an honour for me to participate in this dialogue of the International Organization for Migrations. The unconditional support of the Organization to Colombia includes many different situations in which the displaced population requires support, protection and orientation.

The increasing importance of Colombian communities living abroad, the economic impact of the insertion of the migrant population, the preoccupation for the human traffic and the attention to displaced population are work areas in which the IOM plays an active and decisive role.

This is an opportunity to recognize and to value its permanent collaboration. Today, I will briefly talk about several programs that have been developed jointly, and I will stress specially the political initiative "Colombia Nos Une" program aimed to the strengthening of the relationships with the Colombians living abroad.

## **Internal displacement**

The internal displacement is a serious consequence of the combats among illegal armed groups, which affect directly the civil population. The direct aggression as well as the fear to be attacked force people to move away leaving their territories.

The Colombian Government is working in two fronts: On the one hand, it is creating a legal framework adequate to the social emergency and the Governing Principles for internal displacements, of the United Nations. On the other hand, it works in the development of interinstitutional programs that rely on economic,

technical and human cooperation of the IOM and with the support of agencies of the system of the United Nations, like the UNHCR. The Program of Post-emergency Attention for the Displaced Population and for the Receiving Communities is coordinated by the IOM and it is developed thanks to the cooperation of State institutions and civil society organizations.

This program has established 325 projects in 86 municipalities, benefiting more than 480,000 people in different areas, such as productive education, health, projects, social investment and housing. All those projects have contributed to the strengthening of the institutions and the communities in areas affected by population displacement.

The human dramatic situation generated by forced displacement generates the destruction of the social tissue, affecting heavily the most vulnerable population. Through the Program of Support to Uprooted Populations, the International Organization for Migrations has generated groupings and thematic alliances that work actively with young people who is re-integrated in the society, displaced trans-frontier populations and women who are the heads of households. The benefits obtained through these dynamic steps doubtlessly contribute to the reestablishment of the members of the society affected by the violence.

### **Colombia Nos Une**

The great international migration of Colombians, between 1996 and 2002, is an important phenomenon whose direct consequences we can appreciate as years go by. This recent international movement has meant a substantial change in the population distribution in the country. It is estimated that nearly ten percent of the Colombian population live today in foreign countries. In 2002, the Colombian Government reflected upon the necessity to approach the Diaspora that in the last years had left the country.

A first approach to the Colombian citizens living abroad requires an accurate knowledge on their social and demographic characteristics as well as their geographic distribution.

For those reasons, the political initiative "*Colombia Nos Une*" was created, with the purpose to fortify our bonds with the Colombian communities living abroad, to recognize them as active members of

our society and to create policies to benefit them. This program has had the continuous logistical and thematic support of the Office of the IOM in Colombia.

From a proactive dynamics, the program "*Colombia Nos Une*" is directed to include the migrant population, traditionally invisible for the State.

The transnational approach, according to which new types of human relationships are being created from different points of the world, uniting communities which were divided by physical and political barriers, is the main axe of this State policy. The recognition of the role of the migrant population in the social, political and economic dynamics of the country entails a great commitment for the formulation and implementation of an agreed public policy in harmony with our reality: we are a country of migrants.

Within the framework of "*Colombia Nos Une*", nine areas of thematic work have been established, including manifold interest areas both for the migrants and for Colombia. This program is directed towards the formulation of investigation and social intervention programs for which the migrant population is the target.

"Colombia Nos Une" has received the seed capital from the 1035 Facility, for the implementation of programs and public policies on migration. In 2004, the program identified the necessity to quantify the Colombian population living in London. This study has been carried out under the guidance of Professor Luis Eduardo Guarnizo on the Dominican and the Colombian population living in Europe. Additionally, the International Organization for Migrations has developed public awareness campaigns on those manifold aspects of the migratory issue.

More precisely, last September, an event took place the Second Forum For Education of Migrant Populations. In this sense the Conference has been an important instrument of regional coordination in migratory matters.

The actions of the program Colombia Nos Une are directed to facilitate the interaction between Colombia and its citizens living abroad, through a dynamics promoting the dialogue and allowing their active participation in the Colombian society as well as in the societies where they live. For those reasons, in 2005 we will

implement the organic network of Colombians living abroad that will virtually integrate the community and ensure communications among the Diaspora.

Thanks to the IOM, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the program "Colombia Nos Une" have received a permanent advisory service on international migrations, which has resulted in a greater public awareness and knowledge of the migratory phenomena and the challenges it implies.

It is fair to recognize our gratitude to the IOM's Office in Colombia, which extends also to the Member Countries of the Organization and to the countries which have shown interest in contributing of the financing the projects. With their support we will be able to continue the programs that nowadays benefit to all those that for different reasons have had to go away to rebuild their lives.

### **The impact of the insertion of migrant populations**

In 2003, Colombia received remittances of up to three billion dollars, and it is estimated that in 2004 those remittances will reach 4 billion dollars. These amounts exceed greatly the forecasts for income from traditional exports like coffee, flowers and coal. The currency transfers that the migrant workers send to their families constitute an important source of capitals for the domestic, local, regional and national the economy.

At present, the reduction of the costs of transfers and reception of remittances constitute a step that will benefit a great number of Colombians. Nevertheless, it appears as indispensable to implement productive measures that in the medium and long term facilitate the canalisation of these transfers towards investment, projects and saving.

With the purpose of obtaining a better and greater understanding of the general consequences of the migratory phenomenon and its regional impact in Colombia, the IOM has created an interinstitutional alliance in which the State, the civil society, the financial sector, the academic sector and multilateral organisms participate actively.

This Alliance, established in 2004, has done a deep quantitative and qualitative investigation to measure the impact of the migratory

networks and the direct flow of capitals related to migration. This project has not only facilitated the exchange of information but it has revealed the complexity of the present migratory processes and their implications for the countries of origin as well as for those of destiny.

Thanks to this effort, today we are conscious of the importance of managing public policies directed to the management of the transnational economy and to support and recognize the importance of our migrant workers. A reflection on the importance of the flows of capitals sent by the migrantes entails a deeper analysis of the social, political and cultural implications of population movements.

The several million Colombians who live abroad now, day to day in an anonymous way, contribute to the economies of the countries where they work and constitute transnational communities which vindicate new loyalties, new connections and identities that they conjugate there where they and the countries they left, wherever these are located.

The migrant populations mostly are individual and groups that vindicate the values of pluralism, tolerance, multiculturalism and diversity. The globalisation that narrows and contracts between the different communities in the world can be found in multicultural societies conformed by different groups that have been created thanks to the positive influence of migrantes in the world.

There is no doubt about the role-played by the IOM in the public awareness and the understanding of the importance of migrations in the world.

### **Human Traffic**

The IOM has played over the last years an important part in the analysis and tackling of the problematic of the Human traffic in Colombia. From a standpoint of a permanent support to the institutions of the State, the Organization has fulfilled its role as channelled of common efforts to confront this scourge.

In July, for example, the IOM organized in Bogotá, an International Meeting "The Application of Justice in Cases of Human Traffic – Exchange of experiences: Colombia, Dominican Republic, United States"; in which a space for dialogue was generated to strengthen

the fight against the Human Traffic and the mechanisms of support to the victims of this transnational crime.

It has worked obtaining tangible results through an interinstitutional work, which resulted in the implementation of a New Format for Report of Cases of Human Traffic in the Consulates of Colombia.

I would like to end making reference to other areas of support and cooperation between the IOM and Colombia not less important, such as:

- Programs of voluntary return from countries like Spain and the United Kingdom,
- Support to the agreements of temporary labour migration with Spain,
- Support to students who leave to study abroad,
- Support to migrants to Canada within the program of selective migration,
- Strategies for the Prevention and support to ETS and VIH-AIDS among the migrant population.

Within the context of the end of the violence and the demobilization of the illegal groups, I would like to stress specially the great importance that now has for Colombia the design and implementation of programs directed to children and young people that voluntarily have left the illegal armies, looking for new horizons, through a process in which we invest our greater effort, supplemented with the support of international organizations such as the IOM, which with a great flexibility and generosity have taken the challenge of committing themselves with this process.

All those works have facilitated the action of private and public institutions that work actively in giving a human and dignifying treatment to the migrant population.

We hope to continue working together in common projects, counting on the invaluable support of the IOM.

Thank you very much.