

# European policies on Colombia

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IPIS background paper<sup>1</sup>

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## Introducing a context

At the turn of the millennium, Latin America received about 11% of all Official Development Aid (ODA) that all OECD countries taken together donated to development countries.

The larger share of external resources that were being made available to Latin American socio-economic development endeavours was seen to originate in Europe. The sum of all European Union member states' bilateral aid to Latin America and the Caribbean make that Union the largest source of ODA available to the region. Other significant external donors to the Latin America region are – in that order - multilateral aid budget lines (in their turn, partly funded from European budgets as well), the United States, Japan, the European Commission and Germany.<sup>2</sup>

As of 2002, the relative share of European resources spent in Latin America decreased, to the benefit of what was spent in lower income countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. These changes in allocation patterns have been explained in terms of these continent's respective income averages, in the following way: “La razón esgrimida por los países cooperantes para disminuir la ayuda externa a América Latina ha sido la de considerar que la region tiene, en terminus relativos, más ingresos que otras. Por tal motivo, no es considerada como prioritaria en la estrategia orientada a la lucha contra la extrema pobreza”.<sup>3</sup>

Perceptions of problematic income averages cannot explain changes in how resources were allocated to different Latin American countries and sub-regional blocks. The bulk of these resources came to be shifted away from relatively low-income Central American countries and from Mercosur countries, while more resources were being made available to the Community of Andean Nations (CAN),<sup>4</sup> where pro-media income is calculated to be relatively high, especially in one of the five CAN-nations to which Europe has been devoting special policy attention, Colombia.

The policy attention that this particular Andean country was awarded in the last half-decade is motivated by considerations of various kinds. Some of these considerations are discussed throughout this paper. In order to put European policies on Colombia in a broader perspective, the next introductory paragraphs refer to trade and related economic indicators and incentives, and to international cooperation strategies and integrative processes in which European actors and the state of Colombia are involved.

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<sup>2</sup> Federico Negrón, “Tendencias de la Ayuda Oficial para el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe”. In: *Mito y Realidad de la Ayuda Externa: America Latina al 2004*, Brussels: ALOP & The Reality of Aid, November 2004, pp.14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p 17. The CAN-region received a third of EU-budget allocations to Latin America, about EUR 843 million from 1999 to 2002, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/andean/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/andean/intro/index.htm).

### \* CAN and commerce

Colombia is one of the five nations that comprise the Community of Andean Nations (CAN).<sup>5</sup> This organisation for regional integration was formed in 1969,<sup>6</sup> it engaged in institutionalised bi-regional relations with the European Union (EU). The CAN-region as a whole ranks 29<sup>th</sup> among EU trading partners, representing 0,8 % of total EU trade, mostly in commodities that are not seen to have large strategic importance.<sup>7</sup> As such, the region does not rank high on European priority lists.

On the side of these Andean countries, the EU is not usually perceived to be the prime reference point, especially not on the political front, as these countries happen to be located in “a part of the world where the U.S. presence is overwhelming. This notwithstanding, the EU and its member states combined are the largest humanitarian aid and development cooperation donors to the CAN countries, and the Andean region is the only one in the world with which the EU has a special high-level dialogue on drugs”.<sup>8</sup> That dialogue began in 1995, with high-level meetings in Rome (1996), Brussels (1997), Cartagena (1998), Lima (2000), Brussels (2002) and again in Cartagena (2003). In that cooperative framework, precursors agreements were signed between the EU and each Andean country separately, and a process was installed to monitor implementation of these agreements.<sup>9</sup>

Commercial relations and cooperation between Colombia and Europe became embedded in a process of CAN regional integration and in arrangements whereby the CAN-region as a whole interacts with the European Union. These relations were formalised by a first EU-CAN regional framework agreement that was signed in 1983, and revived in 1993 by a second framework agreement.<sup>10</sup>

The most encompassing arrangement this far is the EU-CAN Agreement on Political Dialogue and Cooperation that was signed in Rome in 2003,<sup>11</sup> but that is yet to be ratified. This last Agreement seeks to support the process of regional integration, good governance and poverty alleviation in CAN-countries. It extends the scope of dialogue and cooperation between the two regional blocks to ‘new common priorities’, such as migration and the fight against drugs, money-laundering and related organised crime, and

<sup>5</sup> The other CAN-countries are Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

<sup>6</sup> *Acuerdo de Integración Subregional Andino*, signed in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on 26/5/1969. Cf. Marcos Alvarez Garcia (ed) *Integration et cooperation en Amerique latine – Le cas du Pacte Andin*. Brussels: CERCAL-ULB, 1987, 369p.; Aline Frambes-Alzérreca, *Der Andenpakt – Wandlungen einen Integrationsprozesses*. Marburg: Verlag Arbeiterbewegung und Gesellschaftswissenschaft, 1989, 511p.

<sup>7</sup> Trade figures provided by European Commission departments indicate CAN-export to the EU consists mainly of coal, bananas, flowers, coffee, ferrous alloys and fish, and does not include Venezuelan oil.

<sup>8</sup> *Increasing Europe's Stake in the Andes*, International Crisis Group Latin America Briefing, Quito & Brussels, 15/6/2004.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/drugs/coc.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/drugs/coc.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Signed in Copenhagen and ratified by the EU no earlier than 7 April 1998 (Council Decision 98/28278, as published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 29/4/1998 as L 127/10).

<sup>11</sup> Negotiations for the Agreement were concluded on 15/10/2003 in Quito, Ecuador. The Andean partner was aware that EU interest in negotiating a regional agreement was only rekindled after the Doha Trade Round failed to conclude a global arrangement. Cf. former CAN secretary-general Guillermo Hernández de Soto, *La ilusión posible – un testimonio sobre la política exterior colombiana*. Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2004, especially relevant is chapter VIII, “Una nueva agenda para la integración andina”, pp. 363-444.

suggests fortifying cooperation against terrorism. Last but not least, the arrangement through which the EU and the CAN region cooperate, is expected to become upgraded in the near future. It would then move on to become an association agreement, which is to incorporate a free-trade area.<sup>12</sup>

CAN imports into the European markets have benefited from a favourable tariff regime, which the EU granted to countries most affected by the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. This regime, the so-called ‘GSP drugs’ was created in 1991 and prolonged twice,<sup>13</sup> and presented a specific category to the EU generalised tariff preferences system. It implied a full import tariff waiver to some 90% of the imports coming from eleven countries in Latin America, including all CAN countries.

The GSP drugs regime was granted to Pakistan as well, the country believed to source the ‘heroin route’. This arrangement eventually caused a case to be brought before the WTO by India, Pakistan’s competitor on many export products, forcing the EU to reconsider the GSP-drugs system in 2004 and to end it in December 2005. A ‘New Special GSP +’ arrangement will become implemented by January 2006, whereby the EU seeks to grant preferential treatment to ‘vulnerable countries’ that source relatively small percentages of total EU-imports, and have signed and by December 2008 have ratified 27 international conventions, including ILO Conventions and instruments to promote sustainable development and good governance.<sup>14</sup>

Colombian exports to the European market have been expected to qualify for the ‘New Special GSP +’ arrangement.<sup>15</sup> In that case, preferential treatment continues, as has been the case in the past decade and a half under the GSP-drugs regime. Nevertheless, banana exports to the European market - representing 65% of Colombian banana exports - would become affected by the intention of the EU trade commissioner to triple banana import tariffs for non-ACP countries. That intention is currently being disputed before the WTO.

Overall volumes of EU-Colombian trade declined towards the end of the millennium, and from 2000 onwards fell behind the volumes and values of Colombian intra-CAN trade. The (enlarged) EU is expected to resume the position of Colombia’s second most important trade partner in the near future.

Colombian trade relations with individual EU member states differ considerably in size and with respect to the kind of commodities being traded. Patterns of Colombian exports into the EU market are also seen to shift over the years. Trade statistics reveal how by 2004, the Netherlands had jumped onto the scene as the most prominent importer of Colombian commodities (coal).<sup>16</sup> Germany and Belgium remain the main importers of Colombian coffee, over 55% of Colombian bananas continue to enter the EU market

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<sup>12</sup> *Joint communiqué* from the meeting of the EU Troika and the Heads of State of the Andean Community, issued at the Guadelajara summit on 29 May 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No2211/2003 of 15 December 2003, extended the scheme of generalised tariff preferences to 31 December 2005, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 19/12/2003.

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *Facts and Figures on the New EU Scheme of Trade Preferences*. Brussels, 20/10/2004, cf. [europa.eu.int/comm/trade/issues/global/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/issues/global/index_en.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Colombian Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo, “Colombia, satisfecha con nuevo reglamento del SPG”. *Noticias del Ministerio*, 22/10/2004.

<sup>16</sup> Delegación de la Comisión Europea en Colombia, *Evolución de las Relaciones comerciales Colombia – Unión Europea 2001 - 2004*. Bogotá, 2005.

through Belgium, and Colombian ferronickel is imported mainly through Italy.<sup>17</sup> The bulk of EU-exports into Colombia come from Germany, France and Italy.<sup>18</sup>

### \* Controversy on what to do about Colombia

The arrangements that are geared at commercial and related economic themes can henceforth be referred to as a background, against which European political strategies are set to help alleviate conflict-induced crises in Colombia. When these political strategies are brought into focus, Colombia is a case that stands quite apart.

The question ‘what to do about Colombia’ has inspired a large variety of actors within Europe to do many different things, which have not in all instances added up to coherent European action and policy. Other-than-governmental actors have been heavily involved in this policy-making process and action, and have contributed to giving it a specific dynamics.

That dynamics, moreover, bears witness to the fact that Europe is not the only region to engage in political discourse and conflict-management activities in Colombia. The United States have a more assertive policy than do Europeans. Moreover, a range of activities is being deployed to address what the United States takes to be the core problem with Colombia, that is the illegal drugs produced in that Andean country, and more particularly still, the fact that a large portion of those illegal drugs eventually get exported to the lucrative illegal US narcotics drugs market, and feed problematic American illegal narcotics consumption patterns.

The least that can be said about US counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism policy is that it appears coherent, but it is far from uncontroversial. European actors quite consistently positioned themselves at a distance of US policy on Colombia, and even came near to be united in that stand.

These European reservations about the United States’ foreign policy, and most notably about that country’s Colombia policy, are a factor to take into account when positioning the case of Colombia in a European perspective.

An equally relevant factor to take into account is the large variety of European actors and activities that address the conflict(s) in Colombia, or that at the least comment on these activities. The way Colombia stands out as *sui generis* item for European Union ‘policy’ – if the term can be used at all – is best appreciated in differentiating between actors on the following levels, that this paper addresses in the next three main sections:

- Non-governmental and civil society organisations;
- The European Union in its capacity of a supranational institution;
- The conglomerate of individual European Union states and governments.

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<sup>17</sup> Delegación de la Comisión Europea en Colombia, *op.cit.*, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Civil society

Colombia-related civil society activity in Europe is varied, both in form and in contents. That activity emanates from a wide range of non-state or private actors. Some of these are commercial in orientation or are organisations that promote commercial activity in a specific economic sector (e.g. trade in Colombian export commodities). The majority of these actors, however, are of a non-commercial type. These actors appear to be the most relevant to European endeavours for addressing the conflict(s) in Colombia – at least at first sight, that is, they meet the eye most easily.

European civil society actors of a non-commercial type and with an interest in Colombia range from large international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), over medium-size non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other non-profit outfits that are based in one of the European member states and there gather private and governmental budgets for funding their own activities in Colombia or for funding the activities of a Colombian partner organisations, to low-budget organisational constructs which support special interest advocacy work in Europe. Concern about the large number of Colombian unionists assassinated in the past decade, moreover, has motivated European unions and the international unions headquarters based in the Heart of Europe to participate in some of that advocacy work. That advocacy work is directed at European governmental actors, both on national and supranational levels, which is discussed in the sections below. When looked upon from a party-political perspective, European politicians termed ‘progressive’ are targeted most consistently, both in national politics and in the European Parliament. In that last institution, Colombia-related advocacy work with a special interest in a certain interpretation of the human rights problematic, tends to focus on the socialist group and the smaller group of *Gauche Unitaire Européenne* and Nordic ecologists.<sup>19</sup> Business groups with an interest in Colombia, meanwhile, lobby with right-wing members of the same Parliament.

### \* Constructive vs. advocacy NGOs

Both large and small European NGOs support socio-economic development activities and humanitarian aid in Colombia, by way of sending over their own people and by way of transferring money and technology to Colombia. In this, their modus operandi is similar to what these same organisations are doing in other parts of the South. These European development NGOs financially support their Colombian partner NGOs’ endeavours at local civil society capacity building. A variety of European NGOs, however, are either directly or indirectly involved in other activities than the promotion of socio-economic development activities, including advocacy work. Quite a number of young Europeans

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<sup>19</sup> The group is known by the acronym GUE/NGL and presently counts 41 members of various nationalities elected to the European Parliament.

become involved in the activities of the British NGO Peace Brigades International (PBI),<sup>20</sup> when volunteering to accompany NGO workers and communities in Colombia. The presence of these Europeans (though mostly the satellite phone they carry with them) is said to ensure a level of security of the Colombians they accompany, in zones where human rights (used to) stand a high risk of being violated by paramilitary *autodefensa* groups.<sup>21</sup> On the ground in Colombia, PBI-workers explicitly aspire at political neutrality. That neutrality label, however, does not seem to be required when choosing the NGOs and other groups in Colombia that PBI opts to grant company, nor can PBI activity in Europe be termed politically neutral, as it includes advocacy work of sorts, especially on human rights situations.

Concern for human rights violations in Colombia is manifest in many other European civil society activities. That concern is articulated in advocacy activity performed in Europe by networks and special interest groups, such as the *Oficina de Derechos Humanos – Acción Colombia* (OIDHACO). The initiative to establish this non-governmental Human Rights Office dates back to a February 1995 ‘Conference on Human Rights in Colombia’, organized by civil society actors that gathered in the European Parliament, and as such is a product of previous activity that civil society actors had been engaged in. This Conference, along with encouragements by certain Colombian NGOs, gave rise to the April 1995 *Acuerdos de Londres*, which set the framework for OIDHACO to work in. OIDHACO is not an NGO in its own right, but quite literally an office, that was installed in Brussels in the mid 1990s and has henceforth been staffed with both Europeans and Colombians. At least 16 European NGOs have contributed to funding OIDHACO,<sup>22</sup> most of these are large European NGOs that foster socio-economic development projects in Colombia rather than work as or for human rights defenders. OIDHACO, as such, would be said to pool some of its funding organisations’ concerns, and engage in advocacy work that its funding organisations do not engage in directly or individually. The mission of OIDHACO is to support different European NGOs’ Colombia-related advocacy work vis-à-vis European Union institutions and the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.<sup>23</sup> To that end, the Office’s basis in the Heart of Europe makes it practicable to attend and organise activities in the European Union institutions’ buildings.<sup>24</sup> OIDHACO staff attends the Human Rights Commission’s

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<sup>20</sup> PBI has several offices in several countries, and an advocacy office based in Brussels. In this sense, the organization can be considered an international NGO (INGO) in the definition given by Bas Arts et al. (eds), *Non-State Actors in International Relations*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001, 318 p.

<sup>21</sup> A remarkable eyewitness account of such activity is Steven Dudley, *Walking Ghosts – Murder and guerrilla politics in Colombia*. New York & London: Routledge, 2004, 253p.

<sup>22</sup> The organizations that have contributed to funding OIDHACO were identified through <http://www.11.be> as the Belgian NGO-network that goes by the name ‘11.11.11’, the Belgian NGO ‘Broederlijk Delen’, OXFAM-chapters in Belgium, the UK and Holland (where that NGO is known as NOVIB), the French and German chapters of ‘Terre des Hommes’; the German Christian foundations Misereor and Diakonie – EKD; ‘Secours Catholique’ (France), ‘Christian Aid’ (UK); the Swiss coordination of CARITAS; TROCAIRE (Ireland); CCFD (France); CIVIS (Sweden) and still others.

<sup>23</sup> [www.ddhhcolombia.org/portal/mision.htm](http://www.ddhhcolombia.org/portal/mision.htm)

<sup>24</sup> A forum organized by OIDHACO on 22/10/2004 in the European Parliament and facilitated by Flemish socialist member of the European Parliament Anne Van Lancker, sought to advocate strong conditions be set to European aid to Colombia (full compliance with UN Human Rights Commission recommendations). The forum’s timing was optimal for addressing decision-makers on a European policy paper on Colombia, such as European Member states’ Permanent Representatives to the Council of the European Union.

activities in Geneva as well, and lobbies with European governmental delegations to this Human Rights Commission. ODHACO is also observed to send out instructions to civil society organisations about opportunities and themes for advocacy work with embassies and with ministries and parliaments in the countries where these organisations are based.

Content-wise, this advocacy work has not been seen to be particularly supportive of the Colombian State and government - to put it mildly. That State continues to be perceived as allied with paramilitary self-defence groups, whose atrocious acts are systematically denounced by ODHACO, quite like other organisations and individuals denounce these same acts. Most of these organisations have come to also denounce atrocities ascribed to Colombian guerrilla groups. As these guerrillas are understood to oppose the Colombian State in a capacity of illegal, armed non-state actors, the instruments of international public law, such as the UN Human Rights Commission, do not offer a framework from which to address their activities. Many human rights organisations therefore continue to focus their criticism on the Colombian actor that can be addressed within the traditional human rights framework, that is the Colombian State, even if that State cannot be said to be the main perpetrator at the human rights front. The latter is consistently criticised in certain fora that are based in Europe, such as the Geneva Human Rights Commission. The Colombian State, then, is criticized for failing to prevent human rights violations that non-state actors commit on its territory, be the offenders guerrilla or counter-guerrilla 'paramilitary' self-defence groups.

Far from all in Colombia and Europe consent in that this approach does justice to the complexity of the situation in Colombia, even if many agree that the instruments for human rights protection that are in place today offer little alternative. As a consequence, 'what is the case in Colombia' is analysed in a way that is amenable to established intergovernmental human rights mechanisms, at the cost of alternative analyses that may do more justice to the situation but give few leads to advocacy and other action on the established human rights scene. The option to focus on that analysis of the problem only, while obscuring other discourse on the matter, including the Colombian State's efforts to regain its monopoly for controlling violence on its territory and over the gravest human rights offenders, is therefore seen to be a political option.

In this politically inspired approach to Colombia's human rights problem, ODHACO activity does not differ from that undertaken by Colombia-desks at large international non-governmental human rights organisations; nor is all European advocacy work on Colombia orchestrated by ODHACO. It is one among more actors on that scene.

### **\* Colombia in Europe**

Colombia-related activity in Europe is not the province of European civil society organisations and networks only. Representatives of several Colombian organisations - some of which are funded by European NGOs - have been regular visitors on the European human rights scene, from the late 1980s onwards. An important move in that direction was made in 1988, when a *Comisión colombiana de Juristas* was set up as a branch of the Geneva-based *Commission Internationale de Juristes*. Before that date, only the Colombian guerrillas and Communist Party were seen to regularly attend the

annual sessions of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva.<sup>25</sup> To date, the founder of the *Comisión colombiana de Juristas* continues to be active at the annual sessions of the Geneva Human Rights Commission.<sup>26</sup> That organisation obtained consultation status before the United Nations in 1999, and is presently (co-)funded by European NGOs.<sup>27</sup>

The *Colectivo de abogados José Alvear Restrepo* is another example of a Colombian lawyers' organisation that gained high visibility at the European human rights scene. As has been the case with the aforementioned organisations, this was achieved with the aid of certain European NGOs.<sup>28</sup> A member of this Colombian *Colectivo*, Dr. Alirio Muñoz Uribe, received the Martin Ennals Human Rights Award in the wake of the 2003 Geneva Human Rights Commission.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Muñoz and some of his colleagues, frequent European NGO offices,<sup>30</sup> His organisation has been observed to branch out beyond the realm of human rights protection to plainly political advocacy work.<sup>31</sup> It also contributed chapters to *El embrujo autoritario - Primer año de gobierno de Álvaro Uribe Vélez*,<sup>32</sup> such as "Hacia un Estado autoritario".<sup>33</sup> This assessment of the first year of the Alvaro Uribe Administration was launched in September 2003 at an event attended by representatives of several European NGOs, who helped to distribute the report's findings widely.

A similar procedure was followed in 2004 with the publication of *Reelección: el embrujo continua*, an assessment after two years of the Uribe Administration. The publication of an English version of that report was also used as a vehicle to carry NGO activity in the

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<sup>25</sup> Sophie Daviaud describes the rise of such and similar Colombian human rights activism in Geneva and in France, in "L'internationalisation des réseaux des droits de l'homme colombiens", chapter 10 of her doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne (forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, for an anthropological description of his activities in the Geneva *Palais des Nations*.

<sup>27</sup> Including ODHACO. Budgets that European NGOs contributed to ODHACO were made available for financing a member of the *Comisión colombiana de Juristas* to travel to and within Europe.

<sup>28</sup> A Belgian chapter of Oxfam has been funding this *Colectivo de abogados* for more than a decade, as did the Catholic Belgian NGO *Broederlijk Delen*.

<sup>29</sup> Homage to Dr. Muñoz was paid by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia on 23/5/2003, cf. [www.hchr.org.co/publico/pronunciamentos/ponencias/ponencias.php3?cod=23&cat=24](http://www.hchr.org.co/publico/pronunciamentos/ponencias/ponencias.php3?cod=23&cat=24)

<sup>30</sup> "Entrevista a Alirio Muñoz Uribe", 26/3/2003. The interview was taken at the Brussels offices of Amnesty International, and is accessible through [http://risal.collectifs.net/imprimer.php3?id\\_article=47](http://risal.collectifs.net/imprimer.php3?id_article=47). This hosting site is the "Reseau d'information et de solidarité avec Amérique latine" (RISAL), based in Belgium as well. It tends to provide articles on Colombia and other Latin-American countries that discredit governmental policies, while strongly supporting the current government in Venezuela. Also based in Belgium and of similar political persuasion, are the *Asociacion de Refugiados de Latinoamerica y del Caribe* (ARLAC) at [www.arlac.be](http://www.arlac.be); *El Andino*, a 'cultural' initiative that emanates from Latin American residents in Belgium but has political activities nevertheless ([www.elandino.be](http://www.elandino.be)); and *Comité pour le respect des Droits Humains 'Daniel Gillard'* (cf. *infra*).

<sup>31</sup> Amnesty International (AI) staff fit that description rather than conform to AI's mission of political neutrality, e.g. in a 6/10/2003 speech at European Parliament facilities in Brussels, and the 22/10/2004 ODHACO forum. AI groups were observed to lobby with European governments against support of socio-economic development programmes in Colombia, and against a Spanish sale of military equipment.

<sup>32</sup> The collective author of this 176 pages report is the *Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo*, which identifies itself on p. 7 as 'a network of 80 NGOs and social movements in Colombia'. When a similar assessment report was published in September 2004, as *Reelección: el embrujo continua*, the author platform had extended to 90 organisations, cf. coverage in *El Tiempo*, 9/9/2004.

<sup>33</sup> *El embrujo autoritario. op. cit.*, 2003, chapter 2, pp 15-24.

European Parliament at the eve of a plenary Parliamentary debate on Colombia in December 2004.<sup>34</sup>

In his public response to the publication of the first of these *embrujo* reports,<sup>35</sup> president Uribe had differentiated between “respectable and serious human rights organisations” versus certain other organisations that have a particularly biased mode of ‘informing’ the international public opinion about what is going on in Colombia.<sup>36</sup> The president referred to this last category of informants as ‘human rights traffickers’ suspected of siding with the guerrilla and as ‘defenders of terrorism’.<sup>37</sup> No organisations were named but some clearly felt addressed by the presidential words.<sup>38</sup> The presidential response was covered by several newspapers and magazines,<sup>39</sup> and triggered a dense stream of *comunicados* by NGO networks in Colombia, the US and Europe. These presented Uribe as ‘brutally attacking’ the NGOs and human rights defenders in particular. Weeks later, the president was reported to have tempered the commotion in Colombia and the US. The same was not achieved in Europe, where – according to cynical Colombian sources – ‘NGOs are near to untouchable’.<sup>40</sup>

#### \* Anti—state advocacy and action

That old continent, however, is ill presented as uniform in its orientations on Colombia. Even if an important section of the civil society scene focuses on human rights issues in a way that does little justice to the complexity of the Colombian situation, and even if their activity is coordinated on a national level in some European countries, these coordinating endeavours are diverse in form, in size and in political orientation. Moreover, these activities do not encompass the entire civil society spectrum. A *Coordination des ONGs françaises* groups no more than 10 French NGOs, under the leadership of *Secours Catholique*. A Dutch coordination of Colombia-related activity (*BreedColombiaOverleg*) is organised by *Bureau Beleidsvorming Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*, an institutionalised advocacy outfit that has an intermediary position between the Dutch NGO community and the governmental (funding) agencies. This last coordination structure encompasses a larger section of the Dutch civil society than does the French Colombia coordination, and in its turn, it is less radical in political orientation than is the *Coordination belge pour la Colombie*.<sup>41</sup> The Belgian coordination, in its turn, brings together representatives of several Belgian NGOs, international NGOs’ Brussels lobby offices and still other civil

<sup>34</sup> Session on ‘the Human Rights Situation in Colombia’, 1/12/2004, organized at the European Parliament by the International Human Rights Federation, *la Coordination Paysanne Européenne* (CPE), ODHACO, *les Comités Ingrid Betancourt*, *la Coordination Belge pour la Colombie* (CBC), *la Fédération Générale des Travailleurs de Belgique* (FGTB) and *la Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens de Belgique* (CSC).

<sup>35</sup> “Texto del discurso de Álvaro Uribe en el que se refiere a las ONG”. In: *El Tiempo*, 9/9/2003.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, and repeated in a speech a few days later while denouncing a FARC bomb attack.

<sup>38</sup> “Preocupación de las ONG por respuesta de Álvaro Uribe”. In: *El Tiempo*, 9/9/2003.

<sup>39</sup> An overview was made in “Con la piedra afuera”. In: *Revista Cambio*, 15/9/2003.

<sup>40</sup> *Revista Cambio*, 6/10/2003: “los derechos humanos son a Europa lo que el narcotráfico a los Estados Unidos (...) por este motivo en Washington no aceptan nada que ver con perdón para los narcotraficantes, así como en el viejo continente no quieren saber de gobiernos del Tercer Mundo que descalifiquen a quienes trabajan en temas de derechos humanos”.

<sup>41</sup> This coordination endeavour is explained at <http://cbc.collectifs.net>

society groups. These meet on a monthly basis in the heart of Europe. However, the coordination does not encompass all organisations with Colombia-related activities that are based there and even ‘discourages’ some from attending, especially those who put in a genuine analytic effort to see clear in what may be the case in Colombia today. These Brussels-based ‘selective coordination meetings’ are organised by the very small but active *Comité pour le respect des Droits Humains ‘Daniel Gillard’*.<sup>42</sup> People associated with this *Comité*, including Colombian nationals who enjoy political asylum in Belgium, are explicit in their criticism of Colombian State action.

This same *Comité*, acting on behalf of the Belgian Colombia coordination, orchestrated a range of protest activities when president Alvaro Uribe visited Europe in February 2004. The organisation had already pulled off similar protest rallies when the Colombian vice-president attended fora in European Union institutes and an academic event in Brussels, a few months earlier.<sup>43</sup> The Belgian-based *Comité* also orchestrated action in France, at the European Parliament’s Strasbourg seat. When Alvaro Uribe spoke for that parliament on 11 February 2004, members of ‘progressive’ political groups appeared to have been incited to protest against his presence. In Germany, the Colombian president had to endure similar insults a few days later.<sup>44</sup> These incidents went by largely unnoticed in Europe, but were reported upon in detail in Colombian media.<sup>45</sup> Some in Colombia took the situation to illustrate how Colombia and its misery is a bargaining chip, that the real Powers That Be in Europe allow extremist ideological groups to monopolize, so as to keep these groups from meddling in matters that have more strategic importance to the EU.<sup>46</sup>

The crudest form of European civil society support of Colombian illegal armed non-state actors to come to the light this far occurred in Denmark. In protest against the Danish anti-terrorism law, an organisation named *Oprør* orchestrated a fund-raising party in Copenhagen and transferred part of that money to the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), and defines that Colombian group in Danish as ‘*oprørsgruppen*’ and ‘*befrielsesbevaegelser*’ (‘liberation movement’).<sup>47</sup> The matter raised consternation both in Colombia and Denmark,<sup>48</sup> and cannot be seen as representative of Danish NGO and other civil society activity on Colombia.

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<sup>42</sup> The *Comité* is named after a Belgian priest who was killed by the Colombian police in 1985, when the car he travelled with refused to stop at a checkpoint. It orchestrates meetings, demonstrations, debate nights (e.g. with the *Colectivo de abogados José Alvear Restrepo*) and fora in the European Parliament.

<sup>43</sup> Information on this event is provided in the Conference Proceedings of *A Dialogue on Reconciliation and Democracy*, [www.ipisresearch.be](http://www.ipisresearch.be). The online document also demonstrates evidence of the *Comité de DDHH Daniel Gillard’s* call to go undermine that academic conference.

<sup>44</sup> “Alemania/ ‘vemos con mucho respeto los esfuerzos de Uribe’: Schroeder”. In *El Tiempo*, 14/2/2004.

<sup>45</sup> A summary article of Uribe’s European tour was published in *El Tiempo* on 15/2/2004.

<sup>46</sup> Author interview in Bogotá, February 2004.

<sup>47</sup> The activity is explained at the news section on [www.opror.net](http://www.opror.net).

<sup>48</sup> Hugh Bronstein, “Colombia may extradite FARC donors from Denmark”. *Reuters AlertNet*, 25/10/2004.

“La organización no gubernamental Asociación Rebelión de Dinamarca les donó a las FARC 8500 dólares”. In: *El Tiempo*, 22/10/2004.

### \* The other civil society

Far from all European civil society interest in Colombia collides with this strand of anti-State activism. The civil society scene is more accurately represented as divided. Some networks are even seen to obstructed the activities organised by other non-governmental organisations in Europe, such as the spring 2002 launch of the Pax Christi Holland campaign to advocate a coherent European policy vis-à-vis kidnapping (of Europeans) in Colombia.<sup>49</sup> A pre-launch of the same campaign document had been received favourably at a meeting organised by the *Red de Academicos europeos por Colombia* in Paris at *La Sorbonne* on 19 and 20 March 2002.

This last network presents yet another example of European civil society activity. The views which these academics express on Colombia tend to be more refined than is the case with special interest and single-issue advocacy products, such as a large portion of the human rights groups' and similar 'single issue' communiqués that circulate in Europe. Content-wise, the human rights situation in Colombia is but one amongst many topics of their scholarship.

A disinterested academic insight into the Colombian case balances out politicised 'single-issue' and other less-refined strands of civil society activity in Europe. Matters actually get balanced out as well within the European NGO community, where people working for constructive socio-economic development projects in Colombia represent a far larger - but less assertive and less visible - group than do the small, politically and ideologically defined 'special interest' networks that restrict their activities to lobbying, organising demonstrations and obstructing.

The conglomerate of radical political activity on the one hand, and on the other hand, the politically disinterested academic work and several politically neutral arrangements that promote 'constructive' socio-economic cooperation activity in Colombia, is represented in how the European press and governmental and supranational EU policies on Colombia are being inspired. These policies are discussed in the next sections.

## The European Union

Diversity and dissent marking civil society activities has been mirrored in European Union policies on Colombia for considerable time. An exemplary case that merits to be explored in this respect occurred in the 1999 – 2001 period. It concerned the debate on the support that the then Colombian president Andrés Pastrana Arango (1998-2002) expected from Europe. Pastrana originally asked for a one billion dollar contribution to his multi-annual development plan, which came to be known as Plan Colombia.

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<sup>49</sup> The publication informing the campaign was *The kidnap industry in Colombia. Is it any of our business?* Utrecht, 2001, 120 p.

### \* Controversy on Plan Colombia

Andrés Pastrana's endeavour to obtain financial support from the international community related to his presidential programme, approved by the Colombian Congress in 1998. That programme was budgeted at U.S. \$ 7.5 billion, and aspired at getting a peace process going with Colombian guerrilla, while at the same time fortify the State institutions and curb the drug economy. Invoking a 'global responsibility' for the course the drug economy and related problems had taken, and as such an international interest to support his Administration's 'peace diplomacy', Pastrana expected the international community to provide some 45% of the budgeted resources through donations and loans, leaving Colombia to finance the remaining 55%. The Colombian presidential tours to promote this Plan included an October 1999 speech at the European Parliament's Strasbourg seat, where he called upon Europe to 'invest in Colombian peace'.

Europe was not impervious to Colombian needs that Pastrana and Colombian presidents before him raised awareness of,<sup>50</sup> especially not where investment in socio-economic development and humanitarian assistance was presented as a way to solve needs. In fact, Europe had and has consistently been the most important donor of aid moneys and commercial investment in Colombia, as continues to be the case to date in the rest of Latin America.<sup>51</sup> The EU-CAN regional framework agreements that were mentioned in the introductory section are relevant to bear in mind in this respect as well, including the presently applicable EU-CAN Agreement on Political Dialogue and Cooperation that is especially relevant for Colombia.

Moreover, from the mid-1990s onwards, the European Commission and separate European Union member states had already been increasing their budget allocations to multilateral agencies, humanitarian programmes, university cooperation and civil society organisations in Colombia.<sup>52</sup> Colombia stood out as the 'main zone of operations in South America' for the European humanitarian aid agency (ECHO). In the 1997-2003 time-span, ECHO channelled some EUR 34 million in emergency and other humanitarian aid to Colombia, working locally through international organisations and European NGOs. The total European Union cooperation budget for Colombia in the 1999-2000 time-span amounted to almost EUR 200 million.<sup>53</sup> Given that president Pastrana's one billion request was to contribute to a development plan, that was set in a six-year time frame, European contributions on the whole would not have to rise substantially in absolute figures to comply with his request. However, most of this European support tended to enter Colombia by way of indirect actors (such as NGOs), rather than in bilateral cooperation with governmental institutions, and as such had low visibility in Colombia, as it had in Europe. That situation was not about to be altered.

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<sup>50</sup> President Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) was portrayed as having been active on that front as well, resulting in the EU-Colombia 'Barco Plan' or Special Co-operation Plan, cf. European Commission's Delegation to Colombia and Ecuador, [http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/en/eu\\_and\\_colombia/political\\_relations.htm](http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int/en/eu_and_colombia/political_relations.htm).

<sup>51</sup> In 2002, Europe was calculated to have contributed some 63-65% to all aid and investment in Latin America. At the event of the European Union-Colombia meeting in May 2003, European Commissioner Chris Patten was still considering European aid and investment in Colombia to be the largest by far, in his speech posted on [http://europa.eu.int.comm/external\\_relations/colombia/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int.comm/external_relations/colombia/intro/index.htm).

<sup>52</sup> The contributions are calculated in detail in the annexes to the *Colombia – Country Strategy Paper*, which the European Commission first published in 2001 and further elaborated in 2002.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, Annex 6.

President Pastrana adapted his strategies for obtaining financial resources and other aid from the international community in support of his governmental programmes. By early 2000, different versions of Plan Colombia were circulating. Different potential donors were being addressed different versions of the Plan, i.e. versions believed to be in line with the respective addressees' concerns, funding and cooperation modalities. A 'European version' of the Plan invoked Europe's co-responsibility to certain Colombian problems, and more particularly the drug economy. The Plan requested European assistance 'to strengthen institutions and socio-economic development programmes'. Some of these programmes were ascribed a potential for 'rooting out the economic basis' of the problematic Colombian drug economy. In this, the Colombian policy-makers and diplomats referred to a common European understanding of that drug economy, according to which coca and poppy farmers would not be lured away from growing these illicit crops, unless they were offered economically sound alternatives.

Colombia's Washington Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno used a different version of Plan Colombia to tap into the well-budgeted U.S. anti-narcotics strategies, agencies and programmes, and was quite successful at it. The Clinton Administration that Moreno dealt with set out to ask US Congress for substantial budgets to support Plan Colombia. Notwithstanding human rights organisations lobby against support for a thus-conceived Plan Colombia, Congress decided to allocate budgets for that support in June 2004, after which Washington announced to pledge US \$ 1,3 billion, only 238 million of which was not earmarked for military aid.<sup>54</sup>

This announcement was not met with universal satisfaction. In fact, some saw it to conduce to 'further militarization' of the Colombian situation. As such the US pledge met with harsh criticism in certain circles within the US, Colombia, and Europe. In this respect, Plan Colombia's appeal in Washington would even prove to undermine the possibility to obtain European funding for Colombian endeavours.

The Independent was one of many European voices to criticize Prime Minister Tony Blair for having made commitments at president Pastrana's April 2000 visit to London, since by June 2000, it had become clear that "Washington wants Mr Pastrana to accept military aid instead of the Marshall Plan he had hoped for".<sup>55</sup> Spanish promises to support Plan Colombia, such as by the then Prime Minister José Maria Aznar, and the European Union's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana, were being criticized as well. Henceforth, Europeans believed that Plan Colombia had sprouted a military component, which they assumed would boost the US military-industrial complex more than it could possibly support the Colombian peace process. Meanwhile, other donors – such as Europe - were asked to fund a socio-economic 'soft' part to that same Plan. This perception did not go down well, for even at that time, few in Europe would voluntarily be associated with a U.S. inspired military adventure in Latin America (or elsewhere). Meanwhile, many in Europe remained suspicious of the human rights track record of the Colombian regular forces that were to receive substantial U.S. military aid.

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<sup>54</sup> By mid 2004, disbursements made from U.S. budgets to support Plan Colombia, amounted to 2,4 billion.

<sup>55</sup> "The Last Thing Colombia Needs is More Weapons". In: *The Independent*, 23/5/2000. The press was far from the only institution to formulate this criticism. Civil society organisations in Colombia, Europe and the US voiced similar objections.

Spain nevertheless organised an international Donor Conference to seek funding for a non-military part of Plan Colombia on 10 July 2000. Colombian president Pastrana there obtained fewer pledges from the international community than he had hoped for. Japan offered US \$ 70 million in soft loans, and another US \$ 100 million could be obtained at international banks. United Nations commitments in actual donations totalled US \$ 131 million. Spain promised to disburse a US \$ 100 million donation within the next 6 months, and Norway pledged another US \$ 20 million – an offer assumed to be inspired by Norwegian Jan Egeland, who was at that time the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Advisor on Colombia. The European Union as such, and its member states other than Spain, abstained from making formal pledges at that time, notwithstanding the fact that the European Union CFSP High Representative had already demonstrated his willingness earlier on to accommodate Pastrana’s requests. In fact, the whistle was blown on Javier Solana for these commitments, which had not been duly consulted with European Union institutions.

A Second Donor Conference on Colombia was organised in Bogotá, on 24 - 25 October 2000. It was attended by representatives of both the European Commission and presidency, but failed to conclude on formal European Union commitments. Swedish and Belgian government officials were heard to be the most explicit in their opposition to Plan Colombia.

European hesitation to fund Pastrana’s Plan need not be ascribed to a concerted civil society advocacy campaign. Still, lobbyists would have met with little difficulty to tap into European aversion of US military attitudes and expenditures, and the possibility was widely hinted at that the large US pledges to the war on drugs would soon extend to support Colombia’s ‘war’ *tout court*. Even if that last assumption proved premature (the U.S. Administration would not lift the ban to use US-sponsored combat helicopters and U.S.-trained brigades for operations other than anti-narcotics, until the end of 2002), Europeans gave themselves plenty to be upset about: US aid was seen to be conditional on an anti-narcotics strategy that insisted on aerial fumigation of illicit crops by chemical and biological agents. Europeans,<sup>56</sup> in line with certain Colombian experts,<sup>57</sup> believed that eradication strategy to be dangerous and counterproductive: Farmers who were lured away from coca cultivation on so manifestly an involuntary and unsustainable basis, could be expected to move on and replant even larger plots of illicit crops elsewhere to compensate their losses. As such, they would cause ever worse damage in delicate ecosystems, such as the rainforest they were seen to be colonising at an alarming rate. Moreover, chemical and biological eradication agents which the U.S. demanded the Colombians use, were feared to contaminate Colombia’s spectacular nature and endanger

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<sup>56</sup> The European NGO Council on Drugs was active on this theme ([www.encod.org](http://www.encod.org)). Campaign documents were published by the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute, such as *Vicious Circle* and “Fumigaciones y conflicto en Colombia - al calor del debate”. In: *Drogas y conflicto Documentos de debate* n°2, Amsterdam: TNI Briefing Series, 2001. Some of these documents were launched at the April 2001 “Forum on Colombia” at the European Parliament in Brussels, and in Stockholm (Sweden held the European Union Presidency in that semester). Many civil society representatives from Colombia attended these fora.

<sup>57</sup> Some of them, such as the editor of the *Acción Andina* journal, are in close contact with the ENCOD network, and receive funding from organisations in that network. *Acción Andina* can be accessed through [www.encod.org](http://www.encod.org) via a link to the Transnational Institute.

the country's biodiversity – themes that rank high on European nations' list of concerns, as on the European Commission's Agenda 2000.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from these considerations, Pastrana's governance and planning did not strike members of European parliaments, policy makers and taxpayers as paragons of seriousness. It was already becoming obvious that the peace talks with the FARC guerrilla did not appear to go anywhere; governmental strategies to improve the human rights situation proved unconvincing while reports continued to circulate linking the Colombian state to paramilitary groups with atrocious human rights records; evidence abounded that corruption remained rampant and that the better-off Colombians continued to pay very low tax rates – if any at all – and were contributing very little to the national budget required for public investment in social development.<sup>59</sup>

Last but not least, Colombian needs were seen to compete with those of others in dire need of European aid, especially in Africa, and the European Union was gearing up for its enlargement with 10 countries that would require massive investment.

President Pastrana could be concluded to have over-estimated his and/or Colombia's bargaining potential for urging Europeans to dig deeper into their pockets than they had already been doing, with or without the 'Plan Colombia gone military' debacle. In fact, this latter debacle came to serve as an eloquent argument for not diverting more European resources to Colombia than the amount of money the United States had earmarked for what Europeans considered to be 'real aid', that is socio-economic investment rather than subsidised military contracts.

#### **\* European support of Peace Processes**

Some of the above-recorded concerns and considerations were articulated in a debate at the European Parliament on 31/1/2001, where Poul Nielson, the then Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid and Chief Executive Officer for EuropeAid, was quoted as follows: "We are well aware of the concerns that the military component of Plan Colombia has created especially among representatives of civil society both in Colombia and in Europe. The European reservations about some aspects of Plan Colombia are well known to President Pastrana and to his government. The Commission does not intend to take part in any initiative with a military dimension".<sup>60</sup> On the next day, the European Parliament voted its 1/2/2001 Resolution on 'Plan Colombia and support to the Colombian peace process', with an overwhelming 474 votes to 2 and a few abstentions. This Resolution called for support to a peace plan for Colombia, hence NOT to Plan Colombia, that was seen to be a 'war plan' by certain members of the European Parliament.<sup>61</sup> In the actual words of the European Parliament Resolution: "Plan Colombia

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<sup>58</sup> European Commission, "For a stronger and wider Union". In: *Agenda 2000*, Volume I. Strasbourg: DOC, 1997, p. 7: "The Union must increase its influence in world affairs, promote values such as peace and security, democracy and human rights, provide aid (...) prevent major damage to the environment and ensure sustainable growth with an optimum use of world resources".

<sup>59</sup> Observations voiced at meetings, at Dutch and Belgian Foreign Affairs Ministries throughout 2001-2002.

<sup>60</sup> Proceedings of the *Debate on Plan Colombia* at the European Parliament, 30/1/2001.

<sup>61</sup> The quote was ascribed to the Portuguese delegate Joaquim de Miranda, then President of the European Parliament's Development and Cooperation Commission, member of the United Left fraction (GUE/NGL).

is not the product of a process of dialogue amongst the various partners in society and whereas acceptance of the strategy for peace by all of the country's institutions would be a most welcome development which should involve not only action to combat drugs production and trafficking but also a strategy for social and economic recovery, the strengthening of institutions and social development". Along with this and similar observations, the Resolution questions the fact that "one of the objectives of Plan Colombia lies in stamping out drug trafficking and the spread of illegal crops by means of a strategy which favours aerial crop-spraying and the use of biological agents, methods which are leading to the forced displacement of families and communities and are seriously affecting Colombia's rich biodiversity". In that context nevertheless, the European Parliament "1. Reiterates its firm support for the peace process initiated by President Pastrana (...) 2. Takes the view that, in addition to a military dimension, the prevailing situation and conflict in Colombia have a social and political dimension whose roots lie in economic, political, cultural and social exclusion; (...) 5. Considers that the European Union must support the aspects of the peace process, which involve the strengthening of institutions, alternative development, humanitarian aid and social development, since these are the ones that are most in accordance with its cooperation strategy (...) 9. Stresses that European Action should pursue its own, non-military strategy combining neutrality, transparency, the participation of civil society and undertakings from the parties involved in the negotiations; (...) 13. Welcomes the proposal by Commissioners Patten and Nielson to grant substantial support for the peace efforts in Colombia amounting to EUR 105 million for the period 2000-2006 (...)".<sup>62</sup>

This last proposal was not that substantial actually, when compared to the Commission's EUR 90 million factual cooperation budget for Colombia in 1999-2000, and it could not be mistaken for 'support to Pastrana's Plan Colombia'. Earlier on, in the Conclusions of a 9 October 2000 European Union Council meeting, aid to Colombia had already been relabelled the "European programme of socio-economic and institutional support for the peace process in Colombia, aimed at promoting and protecting respect for human rights, humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms, improving the living conditions of local populations, encouraging the cultivation of alternative crops and the protection of biodiversity and supporting the introduction of structural reforms in all fields which fuel armed conflict".<sup>63</sup> In the months following the February 2001 Resolution, European Union member states were to put forward their pledges to complement the Commission's aid commitment. Civil society groups, meanwhile, organised large fora in Stockholm and in Brussels,<sup>64</sup> addressing representatives of the presidency of the European Union.

A 'Third Meeting of the Support Group of the Peace Process' (rather than a 'Third Donor Conference to fund Plan Colombia') was organised jointly by the European Commission and the Inter-American Development Bank. The meeting was held in Brussels on 30 April 2001. Swedish State Secretary for Cooperation Gun-Brit Andersson formally

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This small political fraction should not be confounded with the Socialist fraction, which is the largest left-wing political fraction in the European Parliament but is not homogeneous in Colombia-related standpoints.

<sup>62</sup> European Parliament Resolution of 01/02/2001. The full text of this Resolution is available at [www.europe.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/colombia/doc/ep01\\_02\\_01.htm](http://www.europe.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/doc/ep01_02_01.htm)

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem, § 10.

<sup>64</sup> Paz Colombia, *Dossier: Colombia en el centro de Europa – Foro público en el Parlamento Europeo*, 26/4/2001.

announced the concerted European Union support to Colombia's peace endeavours at that occasion. She stated that for the European Union, the first objective of the meeting was "to grant full political support for the peace-efforts of President Pastrana".<sup>65</sup> Some European countries had by that time become facilitators of the presidential talks with guerrilla groups and had been asked to become even more involved in the near future. Nevertheless, "it is this political support that should also be backed in terms of financial commitments to back the peace-process".<sup>66</sup> To that end, the European Union presented a multi-annual and overall support package worth more than EUR 330 million.<sup>67</sup> Commissioner Chris Patten confirmed the contribution which the European Commission had announced a few months previously and had topped up in the meanwhile to EUR 140 million (105 million programmable aid and another 35 million of non-programmable aid). The remaining EUR 190 million was pledged by different European member states. The more important contributions came from Spain (both in cooperation donations and in loans), Sweden, France and Germany. Small countries such as Belgium and Holland made relatively substantial pledges too (each EUR 10 million). These commitments were to be disbursed in the 2000-2006 timeframe, with an emphasis on the first 3 years of that term. That time-frame extended the European Union aid programme by all means into the next Colombian presidency, to begin in August 2002. In practice, many of these European pledges and programmes could be recognised as a refocusing - and in some case a mere re-labelling - of the support that Colombia had been receiving until then, through 'non-concerted' European aid strategies.

As of April 2001, the concerted European aid programme did come to include a few new items, such as support for so-called peace laboratories. In a first phase, such support concentrated on one particular Colombian region, namely Magdalena Medio. Projects for up to EUR 43 million on Commission funding were announced to start that same year, to "support the implementation of peace agreements" by fostering local institutions, civil actors promoting peace, economic and social development. This set of projects was referred to as the 'Magdalena Medio Peace Laboratories'. The choice of that particular area, rather than another, was not explained very convincingly in the European documents. As it was the area formerly dominated by Colombia's smaller guerrilla group, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), Magdalena Medio was at that time expected to eventually come to host a *zona de encuentro* where that particular guerrilla could negotiate a demobilisation deal with the Colombian government. Expectations that peace agreements would be reached and implemented there, however, proved highly premature. The Magdalena Medio valley would in actual fact come to see fierce fighting from then on, whereby guerrilla dominance of the area was usurped by the paramilitary counter-guerrilla or 'self-defence' *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). That activity transformed the area in a difficult and dangerous place to carry out projects. European preference for investing in Magdalena Medio nevertheless, may have been motivated in that this particular region had already been benefiting from previous World Bank and

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<sup>65</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Support Group of the Peace Process – Overview. The document is available at [http://www.europe.eu.int/comm.external\\_relations/colombia/3msg/index.htm](http://www.europe.eu.int/comm.external_relations/colombia/3msg/index.htm)

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>67</sup> The figure was not arbitrary. At the exchange rate of early 2001, EUR 330 million was just a bit more than the U.S. \$ 238 million share in the American aid that was NOT earmarked for military spending. At the current exchange rate, EUR 330 million is worth rather a lot more than US \$ 238 million.

other international assistance, so that a support infrastructure was in place, e.g. the projects run by the charismatic *padre* Francisco de Roux.<sup>68</sup>

Documents distributed at the afore-mentioned 30 April 2001 donors' meeting indicated that the European aid packet could come to fund a similar set of projects later on,<sup>69</sup> preferably in the area where the Pastrana government tried to have peace talks with the larger Colombian guerrilla, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). That area had been 'demilitarized' from 1999 onwards in order to have it serve as the locus where the government and guerrilla could meet.<sup>70</sup> This so-called *zona de distensión* was located in the Caquetá and Meta departments. However, the intention to provide European funding for projects in that zone would not be concretised as the presidential attempts to talk with FARC were aborted in February 2002. A second series of European-funded 'peace laboratories' was set up nevertheless in the early 2004, in municipalities spread out over three Colombian regions, Norte de Santander, Oriente Antioqueño and el Macizo Colombiano.

Apart from peace laboratories, the concerted European aid packet provided for resources to "combat violence and human rights violations", and to "relieve the social impact of conflict (displaced people,<sup>71</sup> children involved in conflict and alternative development in areas where manual eradication of drug crops takes place)". This last type of activity was difficult to match with the more aggressive US sponsored anti-narcotics approach that the Pastrana government was to implement. American aid to implementing Plan Colombia, meanwhile, was managed through a different Colombian governmental agency than was the European Aid. The latter aid and still other international donations and loans, involved the *Agencia Colombiana de Cooperación Internacional* (ACCI).<sup>72</sup>

The concerted European aid packet, that was formally put together in 2001 and to be implemented in the next years, also provided for human rights activities, even if funding for that activity was to come from individual EU member states operating within the framework of the concerted EU aid. These activities were termed "Actions to increase the respect for human rights and stimulate a peace culture", and would come to be funded by Sweden, Finland, the U.K. and Belgium. Resources earmarked for this part of the concerted European support to Colombia were disbursed to Colombian public institutions and to civil society organisations active in the defence of human rights and international humanitarian law, and to academic institutions, but the largest share of the European resources for human rights activity went to international and multilateral institutions, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in

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<sup>68</sup> The Magdalena Medio Peace Lab continues to attract support from more than the European Commission, as witnessed by Francisco de Roux, *Pertinentes hasta el 3 de septiembre del 2003* (emailed to the author).

<sup>69</sup> Documents obtained from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referring to the preparatory *Groupe AMLAT* session dated 24/4/2001.

<sup>70</sup> The demilitarization of the zone was undone as of February 2002.

<sup>71</sup> This type of support was not new to the European aid arsenal. The Commission had been granting an annual EUR 24 million in non-programmable aid to displaced persons in Colombia since 1997.

<sup>72</sup> At the end of 2003, this Agency would come to be fused with the one managing the U.S. sponsored Plan Colombia, "la fusión de la Acci con el Plan Colombia puede producir serias inquietudes a nivel internacional. Es dudoso que en Europa sea visto con buenos ojos reunir bajo un solo techo la ayuda norteamericana, parte del plan de guerra contra el narcotráfico y la guerrilla, con los fondos que las mesas de aportantes y otros financiadores extranjeros, a través de la Acci, ponían para paz, derechos humanos y desarrollo". In: *El Tiempo*, 12/11/2003.

Bogotá). As such, this part of the EU aid packet was not entirely new. Following an agreement between the United Nations and the Colombian state in 1996, a permanent office for a Human Rights High Commissioner had already been established in Bogotá that would from then onwards come to operate largely on European funding.<sup>73</sup> The High Commissioner for Colombia, interestingly, has been a Swedish national ever since the very first Commissioner in Bogotá, the Spanish diplomat Almudena Mazarrasa, collapsed under conflicts with and criticism from human rights NGOs and resigned in 1998. The person who replaced Mrs. Mazarrasa in Bogotá as the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, was the Swede Anders Kompass. Kompass, in his turn, was replaced in October 2001 by Michael Frühling, who until then had been heading the Swedish embassy in Bogotá. The Swedish state also began to fund human rights-related research endeavours. One of these studies would later be published under auspices of the UNDP as El conflicto, callejón con salida.<sup>74</sup>

The concerted European aid programmes in support of a peaceful resolution of the armed conflicts in Colombia, which were formally announced on 30/4/2001 and began to be implemented soon after. The term set to these programmes extends to 2006, thereby continuing into the Uribe Vélez presidency (as of mid 2002) and even into the presidency to be elected in May 2006. In fact, the European Commission cooperation strategy that had been elaborated at the time of the Pastrana presidency, had only just been confirmed at the time of Uribe Vélez' election in May 2002. This European Commission mid-term strategy for supporting Colombia was defined in the EU Commission Country Strategy Paper.

#### \* **The London Declaration**

EU support, in its turn, is part of an ongoing and more encompassing international community endeavour to help resolve the conflicts and the crisis in Colombia. The encompassing endeavour continues to be steered at donor conferences at the highest possible level, such as those organised in Madrid, Bogotá and Brussels in 2000 and 2001, and a conference that was organised in London on 10 July 2003.

That last conference brought together representatives of Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the European Union, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the UN and a number of its agencies, but also the Andean Development Corporation, Inter-American Development Bank, IMF and World Bank. At this conference, European delegates did not differ from other attendants in expressing “their full support for the democratically elected Colombian Government and for all efforts to develop the fully functioning institutions of a democratic state throughout its territory, based on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and the welfare and safety of all citizens, and to reform the country’s institutions”.<sup>75</sup> They also gave their full verbal support to “the Colombian Government in its fight against conflict-related violence and

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<sup>73</sup> Colombia extended the mandate enabling that office to operate on a yearly basis until 2002, when it was extended for the full four-year period of the Uribe Vélez presidency.

<sup>74</sup> *Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano 2003*, published 11/9/2003.

<sup>75</sup> *London Meeting on International Support for Colombia* (‘London Declaration’), 10/7/2003.

illegal drug production and trafficking, underlining the need in so doing to respect the rule of law, human rights and, when applicable, international humanitarian law (...) They welcomed President Uribe's commitment to seek a negotiated solution to the internal conflict in Colombia including through direct engagement with those illegal armed groups prepared to negotiate a peace agreement, [and] underlined the importance of the contribution of the UN (...) They expressed their willingness to provide practical help to the Colombian Government and the UN in peace efforts, (...) called upon all the illegal armed groups to agree to a cease-fire and to enter a serious negotiating process to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. They condemned all violent acts against the civilian population and elected representatives and called for the release of kidnap victims, and the halting of narcotics trafficking (...) They expressed deep concern about the humanitarian crisis in Colombia, particularly the plight of internally displaced persons, as well as the grave human rights and international humanitarian law situation. [Not surprisingly, they] voiced their strong support for the work undertaken by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia [and] noted with satisfaction the Colombian Government's pledge to implement the recommendations made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>76</sup> They urged the Colombian Government to implement these recommendations promptly and to take effective action against impunity and collusion especially with paramilitary groups [and] welcomed the Colombian Government's statement that they recognised and supported the role of civil society and Non Governmental Organisations as important stakeholders in carrying out reform, implementing development programmes and defending human rights and moving towards a negotiated settlement of the internal armed conflict (...) Finally, they agreed to review and refocus their cooperation programmes with particular emphasis on contributing to the strengthening of state institutions, the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis, the protection of human rights, environmental activities and the development of alternatives to drug production. Having taken careful note of the Colombian Government's priorities in these areas, they agreed to consider how to make their cooperation programmes more effective in the light of the current situation in Colombia, with a view to a donors' co-ordination conference to be organised by the Inter-American Development Bank".<sup>77</sup>

That new donors' conference is scheduled for February 2005 and will take place in Colombia. In Europe, meanwhile, some civil society groups campaign both for a more profound European support to Colombian peace endeavours (e.g. Pax Christi Holland) while others advocate against European support for what they see as 'Plan Colombia II'. Obviously, few are bluntly against European funding of 'peace endeavours' in Colombia. Their argument tends to be that strong conditions be set to the disbursement of European public moneys, e.g. in the 2004 ODHACO advocacy campaign concurring with the

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<sup>76</sup> Compliance with 24 United Nations Human Rights Commission recommendations defined in 2003 was evaluated to be problematic only a few months later. In 2004, the same UN institution issued no less than 27 recommendations, while recognizing Colombia progressed in complying with other recommendations. Even if certain strands within European civil society push for making compliance with UN Human Rights recommendations conditional to European aid, EU institutions that disburse these resources tend to limit their comment on the matter in 'emphasizing their concern about human rights violations in Colombia, while recognizing progress made'.

<sup>77</sup> *London Meeting on International Support for Colombia*, 10/7/2003.

European Council and Commission decision-making process on the European policy paper for Colombia.<sup>78</sup> Some civil society organisations did in fact advocate that EU institutions and European governments stop funding programmes in Colombia, since the present Colombian government ‘is not respecting its part of the deal’, more particularly the commitments which that government was understood to have made in the scope of the 2003 London Declaration, including full compliance with Recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Commission at its annual sessions in Geneva.

### \* Continuity and reservations

The arguments in favour of setting strong conditions to European aid and related civil society campaigning was not as yet seen to impact heavily on the concerted European support for the actions undertaken in the scope of conflict resolution in Colombia. Their weight should not be overestimated in the light of governmental and supranational European Union commitments to Colombia. European commitments are not formulated vis-à-vis a particular Colombian presidency, but rather with respect to the policy efforts that have been underway in Colombia for several decades, that is a policy to seek a negotiated solution to the conflicts. This endeavour is generally recognized as Colombian state policy, rather than contingent on a particular presidency, even though differences have been noted in the methods different Colombian presidents apply to aspire at the pacification of their country.

Peculiar to the current Colombian presidency is its insistence that a cease-fire be made conditional to opening peace talks with illegal armed groups. The formulation of this condition did not surprise: when still a deputy to the Colombian Congress, Álvaro Uribe had consistently criticized that the Pastrana government granted a *zona de distención* to FARC, while that guerrilla continued and even intensified its assaults on the state and the population in all other zones of the country. FARC, in this, was seen to have abused the *zona de distención* in order to fortify its military position, rather than elaborate a genuine peace agreement. Uribe Vélez was not to repeat such strategy, but declared himself willing to open peace talks with any armed group respecting a cease-fire. He also invited the international community to support, facilitate and mediate in such negotiations.

Negotiations that the Uribe government engaged in from December 2002 onwards, however, did not immediately attract international support, least of all European support. Coincidentally, paramilitary self-defence blocks were the only organisations to agree to the conditional cease-fire.<sup>79</sup> Having respected a six months unilateral cease-fire, some of the paramilitary blocks then signed the *Acuerdo de Santafé de Ralito* with the Colombian government on 15 July 2003.

Both in Colombia and abroad, suspicion arose over the option of the Uribe government to initiate negotiations with *autodefensa* groups in an extremely discrete mode. Reservation was also expressed with respect to his strategy of proposing a legal framework (*ley de alternatividad penal*) for this negotiation, before a large public and political debate on a

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. supra in the Civil Society section.

<sup>79</sup> Even if they did not respect the cease-fire to the same degree in all places where they were present.

first version of that proposal was organised.<sup>80</sup> From the onset, the proposed arrangement was condemned by the Swedish head of the Office of the Human Rights High Commissioner in Bogotá, Michael Frühling, and by non-governmental human rights organisations - domestic and other. In their view, a ‘veiled amnesty’ was being offered for people believed to have committed the worst crimes against humanity, and critics expected grave human rights violations would remain unpunished.<sup>81</sup> With respect to the Colombian government’s efforts to negotiate a deal with paramilitary blocks, the international community had also been recommended the following: “Engage the [Colombian] government in a regular policy dialogue about paramilitary (demobilisation and reintegration) and the need to link this process to the opening of structured negotiations with the insurgents, while *making clear that there will be no international financial support until the government has shown concrete willingness to prosecute senior paramilitary leadership and jail those found responsible for crimes against humanity*. Once the government has taken steps to create the special police and prosecutor units, provide complementary funding alongside that of the international financial institutions”.<sup>82</sup> Support would in that last case be advised to be forthcoming, for the ‘design and implementation of the demobilisation and reintegration plan, truth and reconciliation commissions, but also programmes to assist internally displaced persons and victims, as well as judicial and prison institutions’.<sup>83</sup>

Few in Europe probably waited for the above-quoted, Brussels-based International Crisis Group recommendation to act as they saw fit, although the recommendations could be added to the explanations for the lack of European enthusiasm to make commitments in support of these negotiations. When the Administration of Alvaro Uribe progressed in its endeavour to get a formal negotiation process going with a section of the paramilitary self-defence groups,<sup>84</sup> the EU did little more than issue a declaration that ‘welcomed’ the process,<sup>85</sup> yet made it clear that it would not at that time participate in the process. The EU made it clear that it would not get involved in the way that European countries had been with the more embryonic peace processes that the Pastrana Administration set up with Colombian guerrillas. In Colombia, hence, the EU was defined as a ‘significant

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<sup>80</sup> Various reports on the matter by the International Crisis Group, at [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org). Regional, national and international consultation about the proposed legal projects were organised later. Several versions of the proposal were drafted later on, none of which was voted by early 2005.

<sup>81</sup> In actual fact, a ‘package deal’ leading to a blanket amnesty is far from in the making. A *proyecto de ley* that provides for ‘alternatividad penal’ was presented to the Colombian Congress in 2003. The proposal was reviewed with critical interest in Colombia and abroad, such as at a Dialogue organized at the University of Brussels, 28/11/2003 (proceedings available from [www.ipisresearch.be](http://www.ipisresearch.be)). How loose readings of the *proyecto de ley* contributed to the deterioration of the image of Colombia abroad, was reviewed in *interalia*, “Solo contra el mundo?”. In: *Revista Cambio*, 29/9/2003.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted from the “Executive summary and Recommendations” from *Colombia: Negotiating with the Paramilitaries*, International Crisis Group, 16/9/2003 (italics added). The document is available through [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org)

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>84</sup> On 12/8/2004, various sources announced that the negotiations would get extended so as to include some 95% of the paramilitary combatants, c.f. <http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co>

<sup>85</sup> Declaration of the Presidency on behalf of the European union on the occasion of the formal start of talks between the Government of Colombia and the AUC paramilitary groups, Brussels, 20 June 2004, 10167/04 (Presse 194).

absent one',<sup>86</sup> when formal negotiation with self-defence groups began in mid-2004. It would take another few months before the first European commitments began to be made,<sup>87</sup> that is Swedish, Dutch and German commitments to support the Organisation of American States (OAS) mission that accompanies the negotiations of the Colombian government with paramilitary blocks and that intends to verify the paramilitary cease-fire. These commitments were made by each of these European member states separately and individually. The policy of the European Commission and Council as to support to the negotiations and demobilisations endeavours was defined in a Colombia strategy paper that was brought out in December 2004.

Europe's initial lack of enthusiasm for supporting the process that the current Colombian government has engaged in with *autodefensa* groups, is by all measures an attitude that differs from the largesse with which were met – at face value - the former Colombian governmental attempts to negotiate with guerrilla groups at the time of the Pastrana presidency, such as commitments for concerted European Union aid programmes directed at zones 'where these guerrilla groups were expected to work out a post-conflict scenario'. European countries also kept a remarkably low profile about a new effort to get a process going with the ELN guerrilla in mid-2004, and that is being facilitated by Mexico.<sup>88</sup> EU Council Declarations on the matter were restricted to verbal support for the Colombian government's efforts on that front, while reiterating 'serious concern' about the grave human rights crisis in the country.<sup>89</sup>

Europe was not seen to be very supportive either of the Colombian governmental programme to promote voluntary and individual demobilisation of combatants, the *Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado* (PAHD). The programme is open to people from all illegal armed groups, including *disencias* of these groups. In practice, most individuals entering the voluntary demobilisation programme are former FARC guerrillas, and a substantial percentage of those that stepped into the programmes were child soldiers.

Having announced an intention to support some of these governmental efforts to reinsert demobilised former combatants, especially the efforts geared at former child soldiers,<sup>90</sup> the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) eventually earmarked EUR 40 million for that support, to be spent over 2005 and 2006.<sup>91</sup> ECHO had already disbursed

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<sup>86</sup> "Llegó la hora cero para el inicio del proceso de desmovilización de los paramilitares". In: *El Tiempo*, 1/7/2004; "La Unión Europea saluda proceso con paramilitares, pero no asiste a él". In: *El Tiempo*, 30/6/2004.

<sup>87</sup> Sergio Caramagna, chief of the OAS mission in Colombia, toured Europe seeking support in September 2004. Commitments were being announced at that time, in newsarticles such as "Ayuda/Aviones Ambulancia en vez de tanques". In: *El Tiempo*, 23/9/2004.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. news coverage as of early June 2004, when that Mexican effort began to take shape.

<sup>89</sup> EU General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council Declaration, 26/1/2004.

<sup>90</sup> "Colombia debe cumplir sus compromisos, dice Chris Patten, Comisario europeo de Relaciones Exteriores". In: *El Tiempo*, 18/1/2004.

<sup>91</sup> European Parliament approved "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council, amending Regulation (EC) No 2130/2001 on operations to aid uprooted people in Asian and Latin American developing countries". Brussels, 23.02.2004 COM(2004)126 final 2004/0040(COD).

EUR 11 million to Colombia in 2004, which was earmarked for assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs). The increase in ECHO allocations would allow that assistance to IDPs to continue, while also making provisions to support demobilised combatants. This allocation decision was motivated as follows:

“In addition to the IDP issue, the Regulation (EC) No 2130/2001 also covers support to demobilised soldiers, an issue on which demand to the European Commission is likely to increase in Colombia, notably regarding child soldiers. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (“DDR”) of former members of illegal armed groups is one of the central objectives of the current Colombian administration, and in any case, addressing the issue of child soldiers (estimated at between 7,000 and 11,000 in Colombia) is of critical importance to help Colombia effectively apply the Convention on the Rights of the Child it has ratified. The EU is currently drafting a comprehensive policy towards the mainstreaming of the issue of children and armed conflict into its policies, actions and aid programmes, which will also be a further incentive to take action in this area in Colombia”<sup>92</sup>.

The Colombian demobilisation endeavour, however, is not limited to child soldiers only. The programme that assists demobilised former combatants received more than 5000 individuals in the first two years of the Uribe Vélez’ presidency, and the count is presently up to 6000.<sup>93</sup> The programme also takes care of the groups of *autodefensas* that demobilised in blocks, and as such was attending over 7000 former combatants (some of which with families) by September 2004. That number is increasing steeply at the end of 2004, when another 3000 *autodefensa* combatants are demobilising.

Further European commitments for supporting these and other aspects of the negotiation and demobilisation endeavours in Colombia are still to clear out. Certain civil society groups and other strands of European society demand that strong conditions be set to the actual disbursement of allocated budgets. The EU Commission and Council will define their policy on Colombia in December 2004.<sup>94</sup>

## Governmental policies and politics

Europe has evidently become cautious in its support of (steps towards) negotiation processes that involved Colombian illegal armed actors. At the same time, European Union institutions and individual member states continued their general line of support, politically, diplomatically and most of all on the front of socio-economic development programmes and investment.

The caution that marks current European political attitudes and actions in support of the present Colombian government’s efforts to deal with armed conflicts, and that contrasts with the line of commitments made at the time of the previous (Pastrana) presidency,

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<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, p. 7, Article 5.1.2.

<sup>93</sup> The *desmovilizado* scores are reported online at <http://www.mindefensa.gov.co>

<sup>94</sup> COLAT discussed the matter at a 19/10/2004 session, but the actual decision will be taken at the full European Council of Minister in December 2004.

were explained to relate to ‘European disappointment’ about the going sour of the attempts to negotiate with the guerrillas at the end of that Pastrana presidency, in 2002.<sup>95</sup> Several European countries were said to have changed their position on the armed non-state actors that are active on Colombia territory at about that time. That last process merits to be described in some more detail, as it has impacted upon the making of a European common security policy.

#### \* Positions on ‘terrorism’

In the run up to the May 2002 meeting of the European Union and Latin America + the Caribbean, organised under the Spanish presidency of the European Union (*Cumbre de Madrid*), commotion arose over intentions to add the FARC guerrilla to a European terrorist list. At that time, that list already included the Colombian paramilitary AUC.<sup>96</sup> Inclusion on that list would undo prerogatives which FARC spokespersons enjoyed in European countries (visa, refugee status), and as such cause FARC to lose what it had built up in more than a decade of ‘diplomatic activity’.

Sweden, later joined by France, initially vetoed the inclusion of FARC on the European terrorist list.<sup>97</sup> Such inclusion was argued to obstruct the next Colombian presidency to begin new negotiations. This argument did not convince in all respects: FARC’s long-time inclusion on a US terrorist list had not stopped the Colombian government from trying to negotiate peace with that organisation in the 1998-2002 period.

The failure of European governments to reach an agreement for including FARC on its terrorist list caused Europe to be criticized bitterly in Colombia,<sup>98</sup> as the controversy concurred with the May 2002 massacre in Bojayá, department of Chocó, where more than a hundred people died, most of them children. The victims had fled in a church that was bombed by a FARC ‘home made’ device. Swedish UN High Commissioner Anders Kompass, who inspected the disaster area soon after, restricted his criticism to the Colombian State, for having failed to prevent the tragedy, and to the paramilitary troops assumed to have provoked FARC to detonate the bomb. In Colombia, this statement proved difficult to appreciate, and European ‘anti-militarism’ – which some Colombians also took to have blocked substantial European funding for Plan Colombia - was played

<sup>95</sup> Speaking on behalf of the EU Council presidency, Dutch ambassador to Colombia Teunis Kamper attributed the current caution to the “Caguan failure”, that is the negotiations that the Pastrana Administration had tried to get going with the FARC in the demilitarized zone near Caguan. In retrospect, the EU took itself to have invested too much hope in that process and in the Havana dialogues that the ELN engaged in. “Unión Europea dice que espera que haya buena fe en el proceso”. In: *El Tiempo*, 1/7/2004. This European ‘disappointment’, then, relates to the negotiation performances by illegal armed actors, not to performances by the Colombian state, nor to its past and present government – even if the latter Colombian government has been affected from what it took to be ‘European disengagement’.

<sup>96</sup> The EU “terrorist list” was introduced in December 2001 in the aftermath of the 11/9/2001 events, and included AUC from the onset. Spain and Belgium are reported to have eventually pushed the idea to include FARC, in “Cumbre de Madrid condenará terrorismo”. In: *El Tiempo*, 16/5/2002.

<sup>97</sup> Decision-making on the list is a CFSP issue, which the *Treaty of the European Union* defines to resort to an intergovernmental ‘Pillar II’ scheme: policy formulation takes place within the context of the Council of Ministers and its Working Groups, almost exclusively on the basis of unanimity.

<sup>98</sup> E.g. in the Editorial “El despiste europeo”. In: *El Tiempo*, 5/5/2002, “Detras de la posicion europea hay tal vez motivaciones pragmáticas, como la compra de una especie de seguro contra el secuestro de sus ciudadanos o el mantenimiento de canales para ‘negociar’ secuestros”.

out against human rights concerns and still other considerations presumed to be on European agendas.<sup>99</sup>

The Swedish government effectively changed its view in the aftermath of the Bojayá massacre and after President Pastrana met with the late Anna Lindh, Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs. After this ‘Swedish Turn’ the inclusion of FARC on the common European Union terrorist list was decided rather rapidly at a meeting of the Committee of (Member State) Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and formalised at the next Council meeting, in Luxembourg on 13 June 2002.

By then, the ELN was no longer talking with Colombian representatives in Havana, a fact taken to be significant.<sup>100</sup> The inclusion on the European terrorist list of this second Colombian guerrilla organisation was therefore believed to become a fact at the next occasion where that list would be revisable, even though – quite remarkably - Belgium had expressed reservations on the matter.<sup>101</sup> These or other reservations appeared to have been more problematic than anticipated, as it would take the EU Council almost two more years before it could include the ELN on the list.<sup>102</sup> In Colombia, non-inclusion of the ELN on the European terrorist list had been taken for an indication that Europe did not cooperate sufficiently well in the ‘war against terrorism’. In the light of widespread European reservations to US practices that go by the name of such war, non-cooperation was a matter that many in Europe were proud to be criticized for, at least until blind terror hit Europe too, more particularly in Spain, on 11 March 2004.

As of 3 April 2004, European measures for ‘countering terrorism’ apply to the three largest non-state actors in Colombia, that is the AUC (paramilitary self-defence groups), and the FARC and ELN guerrillas.<sup>103</sup> These measures include: “the freezing of funds and other financial assets and economic resources [attributed to those organisations]; ensuring

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<sup>99</sup> “Lecciones de una masacre, Bojayá y Europa”. In: *El Tiempo*, 10/5/2002: “Aun cuando suene a blasfemia, todo el mundo debería entender que la única forma realista de defender a los derechos humanos en Colombia es incrementando el gasto y la eficiencia militar del Estado. Esta comprobado que para los grupos irregulares la fuerza es el único argumento realmente disuasivo. Esto deberían tener el valor de reconocerlo las ONG de derechos humanos. Pero, sobre todo, deberían entenderlo algunos Estados europeos que en relación con el fortalecimiento militar del Estado colombiano a veces se comportan como si fueran ONG antimilitaristas y benevolentes con la guerrilla. Como si esta benevolencia les pudiera significar un hipotético seguro antisequestros”

<sup>100</sup> “Antes del rompimiento, la inclusión del ELN no estaba en discusión en vista de la expectativa que había en Europa por la posibilidad de un acuerdo de paz”. Quote from the article “Unión Europea incluyó a las FARC en su lista de grupos terroristas”. In: *El Tiempo*, 13/6/2002.

<sup>101</sup> Several sources ascribed Belgian reluctance to put ELN on the European terrorist list to the liberation of European kidnap victims in the first half of 2002. The Belgian member of parliament who negotiated that liberation, candidly and publicly claimed ELN had remained off that list thanks to his insistence (Meeting at the *Maison de la Communauté française* on 11/10/2002), suggesting a deal was cut so that the ELN would abstain from kidnapping Europeans in the future as long as Europe did not consider that organisation terrorist. ELN has not complied with its part of that deal, if ever there was one: a British journalist was kidnapped by the ELN at the end of 2002, and more Europeans were kidnapped by that same guerrilla on 12 September 2003, while on an expedition in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Martha.

<sup>102</sup> *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 99/28, 3/4/2004.

<sup>103</sup> The inclusion caused ELN-spokespersons to inquire with the French and Spanish ambassadors to Colombia, whether their countries would still be considered members of the ‘Grupo de Países amigos del proceso de paz con el Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Cfr. “ELN pide a España y Francia aclarar si siguen en el grupo de países amigos”. In: *El Tiempo*, 21/4/2004.

that funds, financial assets or economic resources or financial and other related services are not made available, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of [these] entities; and police and judicial co-operation between the EU Member States”.<sup>104</sup>

These steps are in line with agreements that allow for meaningful cooperation between Colombian and European enforcement institutions. To name but a few: on 10/2/2004, the Colombian government formalised an agreement for strategic cooperation with the European Police Office (EUROPOL),<sup>105</sup> that covers areas such as drug trafficking and illegal money laundering, though not ‘terrorism’, even if the latter area is covered by the EUROPOL Convention applicable for internal EU use.<sup>106</sup> France had already signed a separate security cooperation agreement with Colombia in July 2003. Enforcement cooperation in combating the flow of drugs, generally seen to be the main source feeding the conflicts in Colombia, is provided for in a port control agreement that was concluded with the Netherlands.<sup>107</sup> Last but not least, Colombia and Spain have extensive security cooperation agreements. Spanish expertise on ETA was made available to Colombian enforcement agencies, as well as British expertise that stems from coping with the IRA.<sup>108</sup>

European efforts to cooperate over security and hence the task of ‘combating terrorism’ remains a matter that largely resides in the hands of national governments. These matters are not being decided at the supranational level of the European Union. In this capacity, these resemble other political issues, with respect to which different European governments foster different sorts of policies, in accordance with (temporary or permanent) political affinities, traditions, and other singularities.

#### \* Divergent policies

Early 2003, France announced that it would be willing to receive and harbour FARC guerrillas ‘were these to be liberated in a humanitarian agreement’.<sup>109</sup> That commitment corresponds at least in part to overt and covert French governmental endeavours to negotiate the liberation of the kidnapped French-Colombian former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt. In July 2003, French foreign affairs minister Dominique de Villepin’s envoy was - somewhat embarrassingly - found aboard a French Hercules airplane that had landed in Manaus without previous notice to the Brazilian authorities. These authorities were not allowed to inspect the plane, for it claimed diplomatic status. The

<sup>104</sup> *EU Council press release* 7517/04 (Presse 92).

<sup>105</sup> The difference must be appreciated between a framework for ‘strategic cooperation’ on the one hand, and one for ‘operational cooperation’ on the other. Only the latter provides for exchange of data relating to individuals.

<sup>106</sup> The Europol Convention is displayed at [www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l14005b.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l14005b.htm). The tasks that are listed on that page include “preventing and combating terrorism and unlawful drug-trafficking”.

<sup>107</sup> Acuerdo de voluntades para el programa de cooperacion en seguridad portuaria, signed in Bogotá, 29/10/1999.

<sup>108</sup> IRA-representatives are being investigated for having trained FARC guerrilleros in the use of explosives and other devices believed to be effective in urban warfare.

<sup>109</sup> “Francia dispuesta a acoger a rebeldes de las FARC que hagan parte de acuerdo humanitario”. In : *El Tiempo*, 9/1/2003. The offer has been repeated a few more times later on, most recently in September 2004, as reported in “Francia mantiene oferta de facilitar refugio a guerrilleros que se beneficien de acuerdo humanitario”. In: *El Tiempo*, 10/9/2004.

Hercules was equipped so as to provide a medical check-up to Ingrid Betancourt, whom the French expected to be liberated in Brazil at that time. The FARC later denied having intentions of liberating Betancourt then and there,<sup>110</sup> or any of the other *canjeables*, other than by way of a humanitarian agreement package deal.

As to this same Franco-Colombian kidnap victim, who is beyond doubt the best-known kidnap victim for Europeans, several European cities sent over mayors to Colombia to do advocacy work of some sort. Initiatives for that type of activity were taken by French mayors, who were effectively seen to transport huge packets of letters from French citizens, demanding the liberation of Ingrid Betancourt. The mayors of Hannover, The Hague and Stockholm, and smaller European towns, travelled to Colombia as well, intending to do advocacy work that they hoped would be heard by non-state actors, such as the guerrilla.<sup>111</sup> The participation of Stockholm in such initiative does not come as a surprise in the light of the Swedish policy and considerable interest in Colombian affairs that were described in the sections above.

In general terms, Swedish policy, that has traditionally been social-democrat and bore witness to large human rights concern, and as such landed several Swedish nationals into the chair of the United Nations human rights representative in Bogotá, differs from the train of commitments that were made to the Colombian governments by Spain's conservative Prime Minister José Maria Aznar. As to still other European countries, there is little indication of a consistent policy line: The Belgian government was seen to have pushed for the inclusion of FARC on the European terrorist list - an action that was certainly not 'on demand' of the dense civil society networking in the Heart of Europe. Weeks after the inclusion of FARC on that list, Belgium was reported to have successfully stopped the inclusion of another Colombian guerrilla group, the ELN on that very same list of terrorist organisations. This last achievement could not be taken for the result of a transparent political or public debate, but must still be seen as government-endorsed. Quite by contrast to the Belgian track-record on Colombia, Dutch policy on Colombia has been exemplarily consistent, more particularly in emphasizing efforts aimed at environmental protection, the promotion of 'human rights, peace, democracy and governance', and gender.<sup>112</sup>

#### \* The German connection

A relation of yet another type has been seen to exist between Germany and Colombia. That relation merits to be documented here in some detail. It has been strained and even stained, by the activities of a former employee of the German security service, Werner Mauss. From the 1980s onwards, Mr. Mauss sold quite peculiar services to German multinational firms that invested in Colombia. Having successfully, if somewhat expensively, bought out *Mannesmann Anlagenbau* employees kidnapped by the ELN in

<sup>110</sup> The medical equipment was therefore rumoured to be aboard for operating on a FARC leader, as part of a deal that the French expected would eventually conduce to the liberation of Ingrid Betancourt. Certain other items aboard the 'diplomatic plane' were held too contribute to that liberation as well.

<sup>111</sup> Author interview with the organizers of the advocacy mission, Antwerp, July 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Dutch contributions to these three areas are defined in "Contribución Neerlandesa de Cooperación Bilateral en Fase de Ejecución". That document is available through the website of the EU Commission Delegation to Colombia, [www.delcol.cec.eu.int](http://www.delcol.cec.eu.int)

1984, he went on to do the bribing believed necessary to help Siemens and other European firms obtain contracts to build the Medellín metro (Metromed).<sup>113</sup> The shady activities of citizen Mauss became more implicating for the German government towards the end of the 80s, when he connected his ELN contacts with German politicians. In this way, Mauss proved remarkably successful in getting European citizens liberated from the ELN guerrilla. Mauss continued rendering these special services into the 1990s, when his preferred operational contact within the German *Bundesregierung* was no one less than *Kanzleramtsminister* Bernd Schmidbauer.<sup>114</sup> Mauss introduced his minister of foreign affairs to a delegation of ELN-representatives whom he had invited to visit Germany. The delegation included the ELN's military commander Nicolas Rodriguez Bautista and ideologist Antonio García. Mauss arranged for this delegation to be introduced to politicians in Germany and other European countries as well, in the scope of what was presented as a "peace plan". More embarrassing still was that the ELN's European trip had been preceded by preparatory talks that involved the then Colombian president Ernesto Samper and his minister of interior affairs (and multiple presidential candidate) Horacio Serpa, as well as the president of the German Episcopal conference bishop Karl Lehmann and his Colombian counterpart, Alberto Giraldo Jaramillo. The correspondence in which the peace plan was being prepared was brought into the open and has been extensively documented.<sup>115</sup> The implicating documents include a series of letters that Colombian president Ernesto Samper addressed to the then German *Bundeskanzler* Helmut Kohl. According to *Kanzleramtsminister* Bernd Schmidbauer, Kohl had been informed about the plan.

At the time the ELN top was touring Germany, one of this guerrilla's fronts abducted four employees of F. L. Smith (FLS), a Danish company that worked on the construction of the Rio Claro cement factory in Antioquia.<sup>116</sup> One of these four employees, a German national, was released immediately, so as not to create an embarrassing situation for the ELN top men's German hosts. The liberation of the three other kidnap victims proved more difficult, but Mauss offered to do the necessary, having already branched out to serve clients from other European countries in the recent past: In 1996, he had arranged for the liberation of 2 Italian engineers, employed by the Rome-based construction company *Tecnologie Progetti Lavori* (TPL), who had been abducted by the ELN 200 days previously. Next, Mauss began negotiating the liberation of the FLS employees. Intercepts of telephone conversations,<sup>117</sup> in which Mauss called himself 'Heinz Weber', indicate that he put massive pressure on the Danish company. He insisted that they pay

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<sup>113</sup> The affairs are described in detail by Ignacio Gómez & Peter Schumacher, *Der Agent und sein Minister – Mauss und Schmidbauer in Geheimer Mission*. Berlin: Elefant Press, 1997.

<sup>114</sup> The German government under *Bundeskanzler* Helmut Kohl had to reveal its collaboration with Mauss, when answering parliamentary questions from *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (the ecologist party) and from the PDS (socialist) Bundestagsgruppe: *Bundestagsdrucksachen* 13/6925, 13/8130, 13/6953, 13/11448.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Ignacio Gómez & Peter Schumacher, *Op. Cit.*; and Ignacio Gómez & Peter Schumacher: *La última misión de Werner Mauss*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta 1998.

<sup>116</sup> An account of this kidnap case and of the negotiation that led to the liberation of the hostages was published by Øjvind Kyrø: *Ulrik Schultz - Gidsel for fred. Beretningen om 223 dage som guerillaens fange i Colombia*. København: Peter Asschenfeldts Nye Forlag 1997.

<sup>117</sup> The telephone conversations were tapped by the British private security outfit Control Risk. That private security had previously been hired by the Danish firm to negotiate the release of the kidnap victims. Most of this negotiation can be followed in Danish translation in Øjvind Kyrø, *op. cit.*, 1997, page 196 ff.

the ELN a U.S.\$ 5 million ransom and that the Danish government take part in the ‘peace plan’ in the making. Jan Carlsen, CEO of FSL, refused to channel that request to the Danish authorities.

On 17 November 1996, Mauss’ activities in Colombia were brought to an end. Along with his Italian wife, (Al)Ida, Werner Mauss was exposed at a press conference in Medellín. The couple had been arrested one night earlier at the Rionegro Airport when they tried to smuggle out of the country the wife of a German businessman,<sup>118</sup> who had been abducted by the ELN. The Mauss couple had been orchestrating the liberation of the German woman while they themselves were staying in Colombia under false identities and passports of Mr. and Mrs. Möllner.<sup>119</sup> Dealing with armed non-state actors, such as the ELN, is an activity that is not allowed by Colombian law. The latter also condemns the negotiation of ransoms to obtain the liberation of kidnap victims, and actual payment of such ransoms. However, as many thousand Colombians have been breaking that law in order to get their loved ones released, its application was in actual practice reduced to the understanding that ‘no middlemen should gain from a kidnap release operation’. The Mauss couple were believed to have done just that, in several large operations they had been involved in during 1996 (including the Danish FLS case and the truly German Schöne case). Mauss was also breaking the agreements that had been reached by private security organisations such as Control Risk, that presented ‘competition’ in this kind of trade. Last but not least, Mauss was believed to have requested that the large sum in ransoms be paid to him directly. The allegations turned out difficult to prove,<sup>120</sup> while the Mauss couple was kept in custody until July 1997, and were not allowed to leave Colombia before May 1998. Hardly back in Germany, Mauss orchestrated a gathering of ELN-representatives with Colombian civil society representatives, in a place near Mainz, at the *Kloster Himmelspforten*. Mauss was not believed to be involved in the actual talks, that lead to the short-lived “Acuerdo de Puerto del Cielo”,<sup>121</sup> in which the ELN solemnly promised to stop kidnapping children, women and elderly people, and to start respecting international humanitarian law. Mauss was seen to take care of the logistics, while the initiative for the event came from the Colombian and German churches.<sup>122</sup>

Interestingly, the 1996 press conference, where the Mauss kidnapping connection was exposed in public, had been called for by the then Governor of Antioquia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez. The man was no complete unknown to Europeans and to certain Germans in particular, when he got elected president of Colombia less than 6 years later.

<sup>118</sup> More particularly, Herr Schöne, the number one in Colombia of the German chemical concern BASF.

<sup>119</sup> The incident was summarized in the chapter which Peter Schumacher contributed to the Pax Christi Holland campaign document, *The Kidnap Industry in Colombia – Our business?* Utrecht, 2001 (Spanish translation as *La industria del secuestro en Colombia – un negocio que nos concierne*). The somewhat problematic launch of this campaign was referred to *supra*.

<sup>120</sup> The allegations could not be proved, even though reputable German newsmagazines claimed to have indications that Mr. Schöne paid 1.8 million German marks to get his wife back (cf. “Das Ende von 007”. In: *Der Spiegel* 48/1996), and that the BASF company disbursed another couple of millions into an account that belonged to the Luxembourg letterbox company Barclay Continental (Leo Müller & Klaus Wirtgen: „Deckmantel für kriminelle Geschäfte“. In: *Stern* 49/1999 of 2/12/1999).

<sup>121</sup> The Agreement was reproduced in the Colombian magazine *Utopias* Nr. 56, July 1998, pp.10-12. The ELN did not comply with the commitments.

<sup>122</sup> According to Dr. Rudolph Hammerschmidt, spokesperson of the German Bishops’ Conference, in a letter to the *Rhein Zeitung*.

Governor Uribe's 1996 press conference call had rather serious political consequences in Germany, where the Christian democrat government had been interpellated about its Mauss-connections by the socialist and ecologist opposition parties, which later came to constitute the current coalition government. Still, it took political Germany near to 6 years to get over the incident, a period during which any topic related to Colombia proved too hot to handle. That period seemed to have come to an end late September 2003.<sup>123</sup>

The German change of approach was the outcome of a parliamentary debate that had lasted seven months, after which the *Bundestag* approved an 18 paragraph motion that sets out the lines of a new German policy vis-à-vis Colombia and urges the Gerhard Schröder Administration to take the necessary steps to that end.<sup>124</sup> In a crucial first paragraph to the motion, the German parliament urges the government to support president Álvaro Uribe in his task to have the public forces recuperate the monopoly of violence in his country. In this, the motion could not possibly contrast more with a certain German policy of the past, whereby both private German entities and citizens, and their government, were seen to cut deals with Colombian armed non-state actors that undermined the Colombian state's monopoly of violence. Moreover, Germany sent Claudia Roth, its parliamentary commissioner for human rights, to Bogotá on 2 October 2003.<sup>125</sup> Frau Roth is a member of the ecologist ('green') party *Bundnis 90*, which is also the party of the influential minister of foreign affairs, Joschka Fisher. In Bogotá, Claudia Roth announced that Germany would urge the European Union to appoint an "alto comisionado de la Unión Europea para el conflicto en Colombia",<sup>126</sup> in line with the German parliamentary motion. That motion is specific in that the task of a European high commissioner would 'not have to describe what is happening in Colombia, but rather to identify concrete actions and concerted European positions to help Colombia solve its conflicts'.<sup>127</sup> There is no evidence yet of a corresponding initiative at the level of the European Union institutions. Considerable governmental German advocacy work would be required in Brussels to convert the paragraph of the *Bundestag* motion into a European reality. In the meanwhile, however, the German government gave its full support to its Colombian homologue's request that Europe finally come to consider the ELN guerrilla as a terrorist organisation. At a press conference in Berlin on 13 February 2004, and right after meeting with Alvaro Uribe, German *Kanselier* Gerhard Schroeder committed himself to pushing for the inclusion of the ELN on the European list of terrorist organisations. That goal was achieved less than two months later, concurrently also after Europe fell victim to the 11/3/2004 terrorist attack.

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<sup>123</sup> "Alemania liderará nombramiento de alto comisionado de Unión Europea para conflicto en Colombia". In: *El Tiempo*, 2/10/2003.

<sup>124</sup> The motion was promoted by the German member of parliament Lothar Mark, and voted with full coalition majority support.

<sup>125</sup> Claudia Roth was seen to visit Colombia on earlier occasions, as part of European political delegations.

<sup>126</sup> "Alemania liderará nombramiento de alto comisionado de Unión Europea para conflicto en Colombia",

*l.c.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*

## Tentative conclusions

In the case of ‘what to do about Colombia’, as in many other cases, European national policies give little evidence of building up to a coherent European Union policy.<sup>128</sup> This ought not to come as a surprise, for the European Union’s political activity on foreign relations and security (CFSP) is subject to a different institutional regime than are the Union’s commercial policies and the endeavours for international cooperation.

An example of that latter, more coherence-prone European activity was recognised in the 30/4/2001 announcement of a concerted European aid package to the Colombian peace process. That package concerned both the Commission and the European member states. Coherence is even more manifest in the definition of trade policies, which are within the competence of the European community institutions. Policy on trade resorts to the so-called ‘Pillar I’-regime that is formulated according to Community method, where the Commission has sole right of initiative.<sup>129</sup> As said in the introductory section, moreover, Colombia is in no way singled out by the European commerce and trade regime. The country has benefited from a preferential import tariff arrangement, like other nations in the *Comunidad Andina de Naciones* (CAN) and other countries still, that the European Union considers in need of preferential treatment.

A change of individual EU member states policy has been observed with respect to the political and diplomatic support they were willing to give to peace negotiations with illegal armed groups in Colombia. Until the first half of 2002, different European Union member states facilitated talks with the two large Colombian guerrilla groups, which were hoped – in vain - to lead to genuine peace negotiations; and the concerted European aid programmes focussed at zones where these guerrilla groups were expected to work out a post-conflict scenario. None of this European willingness was made manifest with respect to the demobilisation of the paramilitary self-defence groups that has been in the making since the second half of 2003. The European argument that such reservations are due because of concern that Colombian violators of human rights will remain unpunished, does not convince in all respects. To name but a few observations that suggest there may be a touch of selective indignation in that reasoning: France offered to accommodate actual FARC-combatants, which the Colombian government would have to release from the prisons they are presently kept in, in exchange for the liberation of some of the kidnap victims presently held by FARC-*frentes*. In quite a few perspectives, that deal would imply impunity for FARC combattants who did commit serious crimes, and who were actually imprisoned for these crimes by the Colombian authorities. Moreover, spokespersons of both ELN and FARC, that are organisations presently considered ‘terrorist’ by at least some in Europe, have enjoyed official status in European countries for many years.

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<sup>128</sup> The European Union is believed to learn from this and other coherence failures, according to Steven Everts & Daniel Keohane, “The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from Failure”. In: *The International Institute of Strategic Studies Survival*, vol 45 (3), Autumn 2003, pp. 167-186.

<sup>129</sup> The different policy regimes are explained in detail by, e.g. Charlotte Bretherton & John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*. London: Routledge, 1999, 316p.

In Europe, these days, Colombian guerrilla groups are not considered 'more terrorist' than are Colombian paramilitary self-defence groups, but neither are they seen to be 'less terrorist'. European civil servants and diplomats may be believed, nevertheless, to have few incentives to help conclude a negotiated settlement between the Colombian government and extreme right-wing paramilitary self-defence groups, while these same Europeans may have had larger interests or at least incentives to help conclude a deal that involved guerrilla movements that some in Europe still had romantic ideas about. That last disparity, however, has been undone in the wake of the deterioration of guerrilla warfare in Colombia in the last decade and especially in the failure of the Pastrana Presidency attempts to move on to formal negotiations with FARC and ELN.

Given the fact that the EU and its member states were equally reluctant to make more than verbal commitments to supporting a new attempt to begin negotiations with the ELN guerrilla in mid-2004, the EU policy change was ascribed to 'support fatigue' on the European side, in the light of disappointment over Colombia's armed actors lack of willingness to reach a negotiated solution to the conflicts. Not even this 'argument' holds well in the light of the observation that European Union institutions and governments do continue to invest in the making of negotiated settlements to end armed conflict in countries such as Congo, where local illegal and other armed actors have been far less convincing in their commitment to conclude a negotiated settlement.