

The peacemaker Púrchipu

bulletin 8



Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls and youth to the armed conflict in Colombia

September 2003

Bogotá D.C.

Colombia

PROPOSAL OF HUMANITARIAN AGREEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Coalition file



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It is a reality that the levels of confrontation of the international armed conflict that the country is living, are more intense each time, leaving as principal victims of the conflict to the civilian population, which makes urgent and necessary to apply the positive rules and common International Humanitarian Law (DIH) that have as finality to protect civilian people, civilian population and its goods, including those cultural and spiritual and to regulate the combat medias.

The Special Humanitarian Agreements are tools destined to develop fundamental aspect of the International Humanitarian Law (DIH), in which the parts may express their political will of respecting and making respect their rules. The Agreements with Humanitarian Contents are not only humanitarian but in virtue of them the parts may commit to execute certain actions that guarantee the effective realization of human Rights, not only the civilian and political, but also the economical, social and cultural.

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Maria Eugenia Ramirez, consultant of the CAS, has put into consideration of The Coalition a proposition of humanitarian agreement that has been widely discussed by the coalition and that we now put into the consideration of civilian Society.



COMITÉ POR LA OMBUSMAN DE COLOMBIA



terre des hommes - Alemania



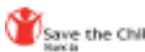
Fundación Creando Unidos



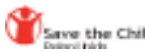
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The context of colombian reality dizzily changes, giving place to paradoxical situations that definitely influence the subject of childhood and youth vinculated to the armed conflict.

As we mentioned in our last editorial, the way negotiation with paramilitary groups is evolving, contains clauses that openly wrangle with International Rights of Human Law, as it has been recently pointed by the UN's High Commissioner office for human Rights in Colombia, specially all the related with the unusual interpretation that the High Commissioner of Peace makes on the universal principles of **truth, reparation and punishment**.

The way it is established in the governmental proposition contemplated on the "Penal alternativity law", that in practice exchanges prison penalties for atrocious crimes committed by "non legal" armed groups for social sanctions that seem more construction of the social tissue tasks, whose realization does not concern to people who has been vinculated to serious violations of human Rights and of the International Humanitarian Law (DIH) does not only worry the coalition, but any citizen who wants to work for peace in Colombia.

Besides, they subsist restlessness about the way in which the process of desvinculation of children and young men and women will develop. Although we count with the assessorry and participation of UN's agencies on the actions that will follow the demobilization of this children and young men and women in coordination with the ICBF, the treatment given to this people must consider the most general frame in which it pretend to guarantee the impunity for terrible crimes against humanity. It is precise that this occurs in this way so that this children, young men and women that have been deliberately used by adults in paramilitary activities, can really recover their abilities as Right's subjects and decidedly contribute to the construction of a society free of militarisms and of the practice of violence as a way of living.

Parallel to this algid juridical dispute, in which the governmental unanimism collides against any other critic, disqualifying it and makes it risky for its contradictors, the government maintains its position of inviting the legislative to approve more severe laws against children and young men and women, like in the proposition of lowing down the age of penal responsibility to 15 years.

Simultaneously - and paradoxically- it has been adopted, at last, the law that approves the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child relative to the participation of children on the armed conflicts. We expect for its effective implementation that will benefit all children in Colombia.



On the frame of the Campaign "We, boys and girls don't want to be in the war" young indigenous, afro Colombian and children from different regions of the country have written letters for president Uribe, in which they tell about their worries on subjects that affect them. Following, you will find a small sample of this expressions.

Ancestral Indigenous Territory

Doctor Alvaro Uribe
President of Colombia
Bogota D.C.

Receive a cordial greeting

In this letter, I want to communicate the situation that we, children and young people are living in this part of the colombian territory, as a consequence of the presence of Statal armed group such as subversion. Children and young people are manipulated, recruited and killed in combats, we are victims of combats and bombardment of the FAC.

In our territories we do want to construct peace, social work must be done and not so much armament for war. This is what we, young people of indigenous communities require Social Inversion.

We thank you for the attention and we hope that this solitudes are taken in mind during your government period.

Cordially :

Youth Committee 



Agreements

por atención

Mister President :

I send you this letter to tell you I am a youngster demobilized from an armed group, I am an indigenous and now I am in Bogotá and I am working in handcrafts and jewelry, and I am learning to read and write in your language, but I am afraid of living on the streets and the only possibility that I have left is to go to ----- and there if I don't leave again, the rows are going to kill me and I want to find my family and to move on.

I ask you to please don't abandon us, if you help me I promise to work hard and to be very responsible. Get me a house where they are not going to kill me.

Thank you for everything.

Mister President :

I am a youth demobilized from the armed conflict, I think children go to war because the situation in the countryside is very difficult. One goes because honestly thinks this is good, but being there, one realizes that it is not.

In the countryside sometimes you can't eat, because fumigations of coca cultivations end up with agricultural cultivations of the country people such as plane tree, corn etc. leaving our families without resources to feed themselves, so this way youngsters believe that in the mount we can fight against all this.

I believe that if things continue this way, there are going to be more children and youngsters going to guerilla to defend hope and life in the mount.

That is why we ask you to think in the country people, in our families that are starving in the country side and more now that they are going out of the armed conflict and need to change their lives in order to move forward, we need support from the government to reintegrate to civil life.

War doesn't bring peace
It brings more deaths, widows and
Children without parents or future.





... CONTINUATION OF PAGE 1

In that way there could be agreed measures of social politics to guarantee the Rights to health and education. An example of this kind of agreements are the global agreements impulsed by the United Nations that in our country are proposed by the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹

The Special Humanitarian Agreements are done and signed only between the parts on conflict with the finality of regulate aspects of the armed conflict, to establish commitments destined to fulfill, make fulfill and facilitate the development of rules to protect the non combatants in situations of armed conflict. In that sense, the humanitarian agreements create and generate mutual trust between the parts based on concrete and verifiable facts.



Coalition file.

HUMANITARIAN AGREEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF BOYS, GIRLS AND YOUTH

This initiative that we propose today is a contribution of the Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls and youth to the armed conflict in Colombia, as another contribution from the civilian society and the international community for a political and negotiated solution to an armed conflict that has as condition the guarantee and protection of human Rights, truth, justice and reparation to the victims, their families and communities. During this process the parts must commit in the search for agreements for the application of humanitarian rules and respect to the civilian population non combatant. Commitment that the Parts have been ignoring with actions and levels of degradation that attempt against all humanitarian principles.



Coalition file.

The parts of the present agreement, down signers



The components of the humanitarian agreement

Having full knowledge that childhood, adolescence and youth are determinant stages on the formation of all human being and retaking for the present agreement the first article of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC, we will understand for children, all human being under eighteen years old.



Coalition file.

¹ Coordination Colombia, Europe, United States. Document under constructions. Some propositions for the humanization of the armed conflict in Colombia, May 2003.



Having present as it is prayed on the preamble of the CRC, the children must be fully prepared for an independent life in society and be taught in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Letter of United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.

Conscious that Colombia is living an armed and social conflict of catastrophic proportions in which children are daily put face to face to violence in all its forms, affecting their present and future reality with physical, emotional and psychical impacts of non quantified but worrying proportions.

Recognizing that population under 18 years old, specially rural population and that of indigenous and afrocolombian communities- with less number of real opportunities- are the most vulnerable to the impact of armed violence and physical destruction of spaces used by them for their recreation activities,

Recognizing that children have been vinculated in so many different ways into the dynamics of the intern armed conflict that Colombia is suffering, used as resources, elements of pressure and even target of war actions, and that all that ways are attempting against their fundamental human Rights,

Conscious that forced displacement of people is one of the most serious effects of the current armed conflict because it hazards and violates the totality of civilian's human Rights besides representing a serious infraction of International human law. DIH.



Andrés Tabares - Angela Yesenia Sanchez - Laura Moncayo Rosero , Coalition file.

Having full knowledge that the principal victims of forced displacement are people under 18 years old, constituting more than 65% of population on displacement situation,

Reminding that the UN´s Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that childhood has the right to special care and assistance,

Manifesting us in accordance that Colombian State has the obligation or respecting, protecting and guarantying the Rights and freedoms recognized by the International law of Human Rights, the political constitutions and the laws,

Conscious that this war is intern and is regulated by the International Humanitarian Law DIH, and that the immediate application of rules that limit its practice suppose to the civilian population and specially children the real respect to their human dignity and their Rights,

Reminding that the State has signed ratified and/or approved:





The forth Ginebra's agreement of 1949, relative to the protection of civilian population.




The common Article 3 (Approved in Colombia by law 5, 1960) on minimum humanitarian rules in intern armed conflicts





 Having present that the Statute of the International Criminal Court approved in Rome in 1998 establishes as a war crime (article 8) the recruitment of children.


 Considering that the Optional Protocol approved by United Nations the 25th May, 2000 establishes 18 years old as the minimum age for obligatory recruitment and participation in activities that attempt against their dignity and integrity as spying, informing and serving as human shield and transporting materials in the battle field.


 Emphasizing that the parts of the conflict - also parts of the humanitarian agreement- are the most direct responsible of the effectively and the respect of the Rights that belong to people under 18 years old who are in the middle of armed conflict, because of their character of civilian population and non participant,


 Considering that the Special Humanitarian Agreements are tools designated to develop fundamental aspects of the International Humanitarian Law (DIH), and that the parts may express their political willingness to respect and make respect their rules,

 Considering that the Agreements with Humanitarian Content and the Human Rights are not only humanitarian, but that in virtue of them the parts may commit to execute certain actions that guarantee the effective realization of human Rights, not only of civilians and politics, but also of the economical, social and cultural,

 The Protocol II Additional to the Ginebra's Agreement (1977) that in its article 4, numeral 3, literals c, d and e, establish in relation to children the minimum age for recruitment in the forces of armed groups and its forbidness for participation in hostilities, just as the special protection and assistance for those who have participated and have been captured. It also indicates the forbidness or restriction to the use of mines, trap weapon and other artifacts.

 The CRC (Republican congress by means of law No. 13, 1991) obliging the county himself to respect it and accomplish it and the government to assure its application. (Articles 38, 39 and 40, are of special interest)

 The 182 Covenant of the ILO approved in 1999 that includes in the worst kind of child work the recruitment and the participation of children in warlike hostilities and urge the elimination of those

 Having in mind that in resolutions 1265 of 1999, 1314 of 2000 and 1379 of 2001 the UN's Security Council referring to children in armed conflicts, where there is strongly condemned the actions against childhood in situations of armed conflict including : death and acts against physical integrity, sexual violence, kidnapping and forced disappearance, recruitment and use of children in the conflict. In the same way attacks to places where there are children like schools, hospitals and urge to all of the actors of the conflict to get to an end in those practices and to accomplish the International Humanitarian Law DIH.



Having clear that Special Humanitarian agreements are done and signed only between the parts in conflict with the finality of regulating aspects of the armed conflict, meaning, to establish commitments designated to accomplish and making accomplish and facilitating de develop of rules to protect the non combatant in situations of armed conflict,



Having in mind that the Signing Parts of the present Agreement have manifested both in their intern rules of behavior in war, as in a public way clear and unmistakable their willingness of making agreements about rules and humanitarian principles gathered in the International Humanitarian Law (DIH) and there for the non participation of children in war or in connected activities as it is resigned in the following points:

- The state for the ratification of the CRC subscribed the following review: *“The Colombian Government in accordance with article 2, numeral 10, literal D of the Viena Convention about the Law of Treaties subscribed the 23rd may, 1996 DECLARES that for effects of the dispositions contained in numerals 2 and 3 of article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations the 20th November, 1989, it is understood that the age that quoted numerals is 18 years old in consideration to the legal order in Colombia establishes the minimum age of 18 years old to recruit to the armed forces the personal called to the military service”*,
- The “Army of National Liberation” -ELN, since 13 years ago, has proposed a treaty or agreement to humanize the co Agreement conflict and has subscribed in that perspective the Viena Agreement, the Mainz Agreement, the Rio Verde Agreement, in which they include the IHL (DIH) as a priority subject for the National Convention proposed by this movement,
- The Armed Revolutionary Forces -FARC-EP, dispatched in 1995 a catalog of recommendations related with the humanitarian law and included in the current agenda of negotiation agreed with the National Government the 9th point about the Agreements on the IHL (DIH), which makes reference to the non recruitment of minors, the antipersonal mines, the respect to the civil population an the effectively of international rules. In the same way, they have publicly declared that the kidnapping of people under 18 years old is not in their politics.

Jeimmy, Coalition file.



We agreed the following compromising clauses

First - General Considerations

1. To treat by every means the children as Social Subject of Law.
2. To act under the obligation of respecting children in every moment as part of the civil population or non combatant.
3. By rule the people under the age of 18 years old will not participate in military hostilities or other activities and it will be avoided at maximum that the effects of the war actions relay on them avoiding any attack that injure thir live, integrity and fundamental Rights.

Second - Protection

1. The parts in conflict will keep unconditional protection to all infrastructure, program and activity that give a service to childhood such as schools, kinder gardens, health posts and hospitals and teachers and places of cult and recreation abstaining of :
 - Making military operations
 - Installing military bases
 - Installing campaments or trimmings
 - Installing police stations
 - Installing seats of security organisms



2. They will have to keep in mind that their children, family or third's children do not remain in places that may suffer attacks for being military targets.

Third - Non participation on the war

1. There will be forbidness with **no restriction** of vinculating people under the age of 18 years old - even if they express their consent- to serve directly or indirectly in the develop of the warlike conflict.
2. The National Government will maintain the reservoir to the CRC in relation to the non vinculation of people under the age of 18 years old to the war activities in spite of the freedom that confers the article 51, numeral 3 of the same declaration
3. In the same way, any kind of warlike activity or intelligence activity that involves children is forbidden. In consequence they will not be used as spies, informers or human shields or to search or destroy mines or other artifacts.
4. From now on the use of non conventional weapons will be forbidden.
5. The existing mine fields will be clearly signalized or isolated so that the children will not be affected in their integrity. This supposes a clear information compromise to the civil population and the use of symbols that may be understood by people under the age of 18 years old.
6. The fields that have been sceneries of combats will be exhaustively reviewed with the finality of avoid the permanence of grenades or other weapons that may cause death and mutilation to children.
7. Children will not give alternative services that have as authority the parts in conflicts.
8. The Parts will abstain from giving military instruction, doing propaganda of apology to the war or insist in the warlike culture that influences the conscience formation of children.

Forth - Forced displacement

1. To the civil population (children, men and women responsible of their care and racing up) that is found in situation of displacement the State will guarantee the enjoyment of fundamental Rights in concordance with that disposed in law 387 and its regulating decrees.
2. The principle of the *best interest of the Child* (article 3,1 CRC) will be attended in the execution of politics, plans, programs and other complementary and of emergency measures for the attention of population in displacement situations.
3. Mechanisms that optimize the protection of the Rights of children in situation of displacement will be studied and implemented.

There will have special interest :

- Their reincorporation to educative, social and cultural spaces
- The guarantee of their juridical personality making function identification and registration centers that will give dispatched transaction to the consecution of their civil registration.



- The access without any kind of condition to a statal program in health which includes medical, therapeutic, pharmacological treatments of optimal quality
 - An emergency and accurate attention to the cultural characteristics of the groups of people forced to displacement
 - Under no circumstance the family will be disintegrated because this is the essential bond for the develop of children
 - The regulation of special protection to girl mothers in situation of displacement



Fifth - Demobilization

1. All the children must be demobilized as soon as possible from armies.
2. The guarantees and Rights of children who have gone out of their row will be respected integrally and prevalently, they will not be judicialiced and there must immediately be accessible for them a reinsertion program that guarantees their integral protection and the reconstruction of the family, social and cultural bonds.
3. For those effects the parts :
 - a. Will give the children a commission conformed by governmental and non governmental institutions that give attention to childhood and/or the International Red Cross.
 - b. They will not be presented to communication media under any circumstance.



- c. The State will guarantee the physical and psychological recovery of children who have been vinculated to the parts, just as the protection of the human dignity.
- d. The scholar, familiar and cultural reincorporation in accordance with their cultural conditions will be guaranteed.
4. In case of capturing children, the parts must abstain of doing any action that hazards their physical integrity or giving them death.
5. The captured under the age of 18 by the parts in conflict, in any case can be used as informants or spies. They can not remain in military trimmings.
6. In case a woman is detained, her right to the custody of her children will be respected her place of reclution, giving to those children the conditions for an adequate develop.

Seventh - Fulfillment and Verifying

1. The Signing parts commit ourselves to not ending in an unilateral way the present agreement.
2. For that reason we accept the competence of a Verifying Commission of High Level integrated by organisms such as the UN², the OEA and the CICR, national and international Non Governmental Organizations and people and institutions who work in favor of childhood and count on recognized ethical and humanitarian quality.
3. Their functions and concerns will be :
 - To verify the fulfillment and the obligations that they acquire in virtue of this humanitarian agreement
 - By function or by solicitude of one of the Signing Parts of this Agreement, to receive individual or collective informs about possible violations to this agreement.
 - To realize and transmit confidential informs to the concerned part of the pertinent recommendations in order to take the needed correctives to strop the threaten or the effective violation from all or part of the present agreement.



² Office of the High Commission of the United Nations for Human Rights in Colombia, Office of the High Commission for refugees, UNICEF, the representative of the General Secretary of the United Nations, between others.



Impulse of Humanization of the Armed Conflict Commission

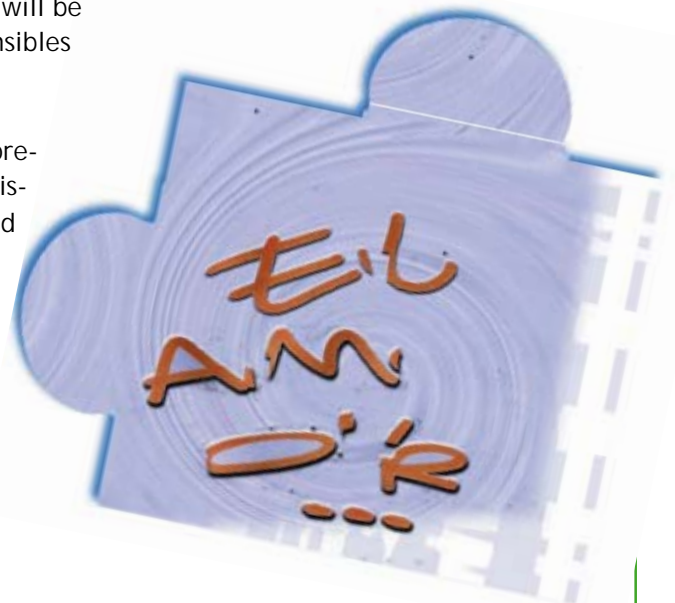
In any case, the conformation, establishment and realization of an Impulse of Humanization of the armed conflict in Colombia commission will be promoted allowing to give continuity to the effort to concert formulas for the protection of the civil population and of combatants put on combatant force while the cease of fire and definitive cease of hostilities is negotiated.

This commission must count on the participation of delegates of the National government and other statal entities, of the insurgent organizations, of the non governmental organizations of human Rights and humanitarian law, international experts on the subject that can contribute the experience gathered in other intern armed conflicts.



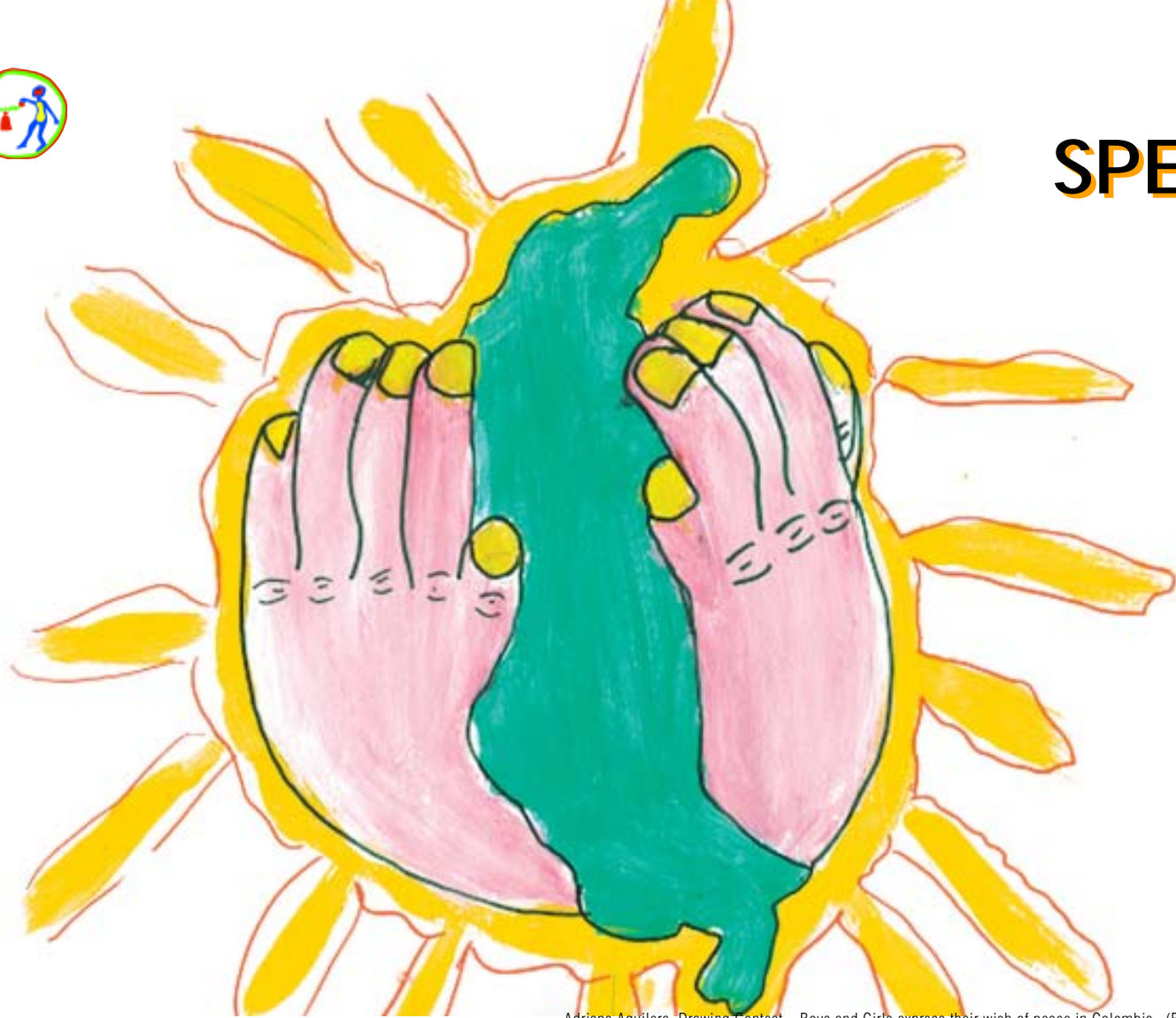
- In case that the violation persists with previous advice the signing parts of the present agreement will send a copy of the inform to the United Nation's Special Representative for Childhood and the armed conflict, to the office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights and other copy may be given to know publicly.
- In conformity with the stipulated in the present agreement, the Verifying Commission will have the faculty of doing rigorous followings to the partial or global accomplishment and recommend to the concerned parts the needed observations for its plain accomplishment.
- The verifying commission will have a national instance, regional instances and logistic and assessor support teams. The commission can receive collaboration and resources without conditions and only in function of its purposes. In any case will preserve its characteristics of impartiality, independence, suitability technical quality and ethical and political authority.
- In case o a serious infraction to the IHL (DIH) and to the present agreement occurs the judgment and punishment of the responsible will be searched without asking refutation as service acts, the responsables will be processed by civil tribunals.

It will be extremely important the definition of spokesmen representatives of the signing parts in front of the verifying commission on the highest level in the national and regional ambit and spokesmen of the victims of forced displacement.



Eight

1. The parts will insist on the political and negotiated solution on the short term to the social and armed conflict that the country is living .
2. The State will commit to the accomplishment of Justice, Truth, Reparation for children that have been victims and their families.



Adriana Aguilera. Drawing Contest, «Boys and Girls express their wish of peace in Colombia» (Bogotá)

NOTES ABOUT CHILDREN AND THE ARMED CONFLICT (EXTRACTS)

Since many years the sad situation of children involved in the war is object of worry for the international community and of a numerous group of governments of countries affected by this tragedy, and authorities of different religious confessions and of a wide group of non governmental organizations.

In other times, specially in XIX century, the figure of child soldier converted by means of ultra nationalist literature, in character of narrations designated to exalt patriotism, courage and abnegation.

In spite of this, the moral develop of humanity has done that the acting of the people under 18 years old in warlike confrontations rejected as something completely opposite to justice, law and reason.

Unfortunately, in spite of all forbidness formulated by the rules of international and national order, children keep on participating on hostilities converting themselves, with frequency, in victims in war facts occurred on interstatal and intrastatal disputes.

Twenty five years later, after being adopted by *Additional Protocols to the Ginebra Agreements* and 13 years after being adopted by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, in many countries of the world -such as Burundi, Liberia, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Colombia- children are employed as combatants.

On the *Inform of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights about the situation of Human Rights in Colombia* relative to year 2002 and presented to the Human Right's Commission on April 2003, it is observed on the subject of children victims of the armed conflict :



OF MISTER MICHAEL FRÜHLING,

Director of the office in Colombia of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights in the presentation of the book
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ARMED CONFLICT

This worry is extensive to all children that by apprehension, redemption or desertion desvinculate from the conflict after having participated in hostilities.

All discrimination between ex combatant children is violating article 2, paragraph 1 of the *International Pact on Civil and political Rights*, of the article 1 of the *American Convention about human Rights* and article 2 of the *Convention about children's Rights*.

Children rescued from war have the right to benefit from the principle of integral protection proper of a State of lay and have also the right that in no case are attributed to them qualifications inspired by the concept of dangerousness.

Inside he 27 recommendations formulated by the High Commissioner of the United Nations for human Rights when they concluded their recent inform about Colombia, there is one directed to the Government, to the illegal armed groups and to representative sectors of the civilian society.

" The different guerilla and paramilitary groups kept on incorporating people under 18 years old on their rows. In occasions the threaten of recruitment provoked the displacement of the families.... "

"...Although there are no existing consolidated statistics about the exact number of minors directly participating on hostilities, it is estimated that almost 7.000 people under 18 years old combat on FARC-EP, ELN and the paramilitary groups. Another 7.000 integrate groups of urban militias bonded to the different pats of the armed conflict. The extension of the conflict to urban zones has produced an increase of minor's recruitment into the illegal militias, such as in Medellin.

The Office of the High Commissioner received information about people under the age majority used us informants by the Army on the Meta and Putumayo zone, in occasions under the promise of rewards. The same was pointed in relation to the police detention of three women of the Association of Women of the Independencies (AMI) on Medellin in November, in which a minor had been used as an over-castted informant." ^{1,3}

The worry of the High Commissioner for combatant children in Colombia has also being consigned in other of its informs about the country. In the one presented on April 2001 it required to all the armed actors " the cease of recruitment of children and the immediate desvinculation of them from their rows." ²

¹ United Nation´s Comisión for Human Rights, *Inform of the High Commissioner of United Nations for Human Rights about the situation of human Rights in Colombia*, E/CN.4/2003, 24th February, 2003, Anex parrags. 44, 45 and 46.

² United Nation´s Commission for Human Rights, *Inform of the High Commissioner of United Nations for Human Rights about the situation of human Rights in Colombia*, E/CN.4/15, march 20th 2001, parra.287



It is the recommendation that encourage them to “not to stint any effort to establish as soon as possible approaches directed to the dialogue and the negotiation that permits the surpass of the intern armed conflict and the achievement of a long lasting peace”

But when they recommend this, the High Commissioner reminds : “ Dialogues and negotiation must take in consideration, from the beginning, the human Rights and the International Humanitarian Law, just as incorporating into their agenda the subject of Rights, truth, justice and reparation”.³

The fortune of the children that make part of the illegal armed groups today, must be, therefore a very important point in every action undertaken by the National Government in accomplishment of the dispositions to facilitate the dialogue and the subscription of agreements with those groups contained in laws 418, 1997 548, 1999 and 782, 2000.

In the frame of its mandate, the Office that I direct is disposed to offer to the Executive the assessorry that in this field requires.

The International Humanitarian Law in our days offers the child not only general like protection, as a civil person margined of active participation of hostilities, but also a special and singular protection as a particularly vulnerable and defenseless person.

Each time it is more urgent that the rules have an unrestricted application, as children represent today the 40% of civilian victims of the armed conflict and 50% of the world wide population of refugees and displaced. The degradation of the intern armed conflict in Colombia can not be stopped while there are combatant children taken to war by deceit or force.

The work of alliances as **Coalition Against the involvement of boys, girls and youth to the armed conflict in Colombia**, conformed by 10 non governmental organizations with reach experien- ce in subjects like children’s Rights and the impact of armed conflict over childhood, is very important to protect children’s Rights.

I use this opportunity to congratulate the Coalition for the launching of their book “ *Children, Youth and armed conflict* ” . We are sure that this book will be a very useful instrument for the important work that the Coa- lition is doing. I formulate in the name of the office I direct, the most cordial vows for the fecundity and success of your activities.

Bogotá, D.C., June 27th, 2003



LA PAZ
EMPIEZA
PRIMERO
QUE TODO
POR CASA
Y POR CADA
PERSONA Y SI
CADA PERSONA
TRATA DE
A PORTAR UN
GRANITO PARA
LA PAZ
LOGIAREMOS
TENER PAZ
TODOS LOS
COLOMBIANOS



³ UNITED NATIONS, COMISION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, Inform of the High Commis- sioner of the United Nations for Human Rights about the situation of human Rights in Colombia, E/CN.4/2003/13, 24th February 2003, parr.168.



PRESIDENT URIBE'S PROPOSITION TO MAKE CHILDREN RESPOND CRIMINALLY AS ADULTS VIOLATES INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Press Release

Bogotá, July 24th, 2003. On the frame of the forum about youth and the armed conflict realized yesterday in Bogotá, president Uribe manifested to the communication media that he pretends to include in the Justice Reform Project the diminution of the age of penal responsibility to make children over 15 years old respond criminally as adults.

This proposition that he presented for the first time on may last year, has been a reason for worry for the Coalition. In November 2002 the Coalition sent an opened letter to the president Uribe that included this subject and other worries about the lack of protection for colombian childhood.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Colombia in 1991, points that unless the country establishes a different age majority, people under 18 years old accused of infringing the penal law must count on specific mechanisms that attend their special conditions and it will resort in the less possible way to judicial procedures.

The possibility that president Uribe presents is opposite to the convention and will there for create an ambivalent situation for children, considering them "incapable" in the moment of practice their civil and political Rights, but at the same time, and totally damage full for childhood, "capable" of responding criminally for their acts in equal conditions as the adults, when it is society who is pushing them to infringe law.

The colombian State hasn't yet accomplished mayor advances in matter of guarantying children's fundamental Rights, even if they are prevalent on the Constitution. In this frame, (en este marco) it is urgent for the government to consider in first instance to establish public politics to make effective children's Rights promulgating rules according to the International Convention, that include specific measures for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the vinculation and recruitment of children and young men and women to armed groups, before thinking of the penalization of children.



Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls and youth to the armed conflict in Colombia



Freddy Bustos. Drawing Contest. «Boys and Girls express their wish of peace in Colombia» (Bogotá)



COLOMBIAN COALITION ACTIVITIES

Nine young men and women coming from prevention processes in Barrancabermeja, Putumayo and Bogotá, participated on the Social Forum of children done in Cartagena on the month of June. On the frame of this forum, an encounter of reflection and participation of more than 40 young men and women from various regions of the country was done.

The Coalition was in charge of the module on children's Rights in the "Fist National Seminary of the School of multipliers on peace and democracy", developed by PODION on May.

The Coalition Paraguay, the Venezuelan section of International Amnesty - Focal point for the coalition in this country- and the United Protestant Churches of Holland have added to the colombian campaign "Us, children, don't want to be in the war".



Coalition file.

INTERNATIONAL COALITION ACTIVITIES

The 12 July, the International Secretary sent to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for children in armed conflicts pursuit inform of Resolution 1460 of Security Council, with up to the day reports of countries in which children are used in armed conflicts, including Colombia.

On June the meeting of the Regional Coalition on the Great Lakes took place; the coalitions of Middle East and North Africa realized a workshop of children's Rights and the Coalitions of Asian Southeast developed a workshop about children soldier in Myanmar.

Bogotá was chosen as seat of the next regional meeting of Latin America's Coalitions, that will take place on October and will have the participation of the International Secretariat Coordinator.