



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner Piebalgs supporting peace agenda, reduction of inequalities and rural development in Colombia

Brussels, 28 October 2011 - European Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, will visit Colombia between 31 October and 3 November to take stock of the results achieved in EU-funded cooperation programmes, notably in the peace, security and rural development sectors. He will also discuss the future of EU-Colombian cooperation with the national authorities.

Commissioner Piebalgs will visit various projects, such as the Peace Building and Economic Opportunities Project in the city of Cartagena. This project has already benefited 248 families and set up some 200 small businesses. It has been put in place to help to reduce poverty in the La Popa district through the creation of small businesses and the provision of training.

Elsewhere the Commissioner will visit several projects of the emblematic programme "Peace Laboratory III" in the region of Montes de María. During the visit to this rural area where important progress has been made in the consolidation of state presence, Commissioner Piebalgs will be accompanied by the Colombian Minister of Agriculture, Juan Camilo Restrepo, and the director of the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, Diego Molano.

During his visit, the Commissioner will announce the imminent signature of a financing agreement to support the implementation of the national policy for land restitution and rural development, as established in the recently adopted Colombian Victims and Land Restitution Law. This agreement allows the EU to continue its support for peace building, addressing the land issue in particular, one of the structural causes of the internal conflict in Colombia.

Meetings with the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, María Ángela Holguín, and with Members of the Parliaments are also planned. Political discussions will concern the future of EU-Colombian cooperation, the political situation and the reforms agenda to address poverty. South-south cooperation benefitting regions, such as Haiti or Western Africa, will also be discussed, to ensure an effective coordination of aid between the EU and Colombia.

"Colombia is an important partner for the European Union. We recognise the progress it has achieved in development and in making the country more stable, and we share its commitment to facing the challenges ahead. Poverty reduction, attention to victims of internal conflict and handing land back to those who it was taken from remain at the core of our common concern and we are determined to do all we can to continue to help to improve the lives of the Colombian people ", Commissioner Piebalgs declared.

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In addition, the Commissioner will meet with civil society organisations which manage development and humanitarian aid projects.

Facts and figures on EU-Colombia relations

In Colombia, the European Commission supports initiatives in the areas of peace building and alternative development, justice and human rights, humanitarian aid, as well as productivity and competitive business. In these areas the EC delivers support both to civil society initiatives and public policy development. The overall cooperation budget for these different areas in the period 2007-2013 amounts to 320 million Euros.

EU relations with Colombia are based on the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the EU and the Andean Community countries, which was signed in 1993 and came into force in 1998. The overall effort of EU cooperation with Colombia since its beginning and up to 2010 amounts to around 550 million Euros.

In its future cooperation, the European Commission intends to give equal importance to the issues of inclusive and sustainable growth, including sustainable agriculture, and of good governance, including respect of human rights and democracy. Furthermore, gender equality, civil society participation and stronger regional integration remain key objectives of our work.

The European Union as a whole (Member States plus EuropeAid, Commission-managed funds) is the largest donor of official development aid worldwide. In 2010, it provided €53.8 billion (more than 50% of global aid). The European Commission is responsible for the management of €11 billion of aid per year, putting it in second place among donors globally.

For more info

DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

On EU Assistance to Colombia:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/country-cooperation/colombia/colombia_en.htm

[MEMO/11/743](#): EU - Colombia main areas of cooperation.