

➤ Re-examining the Drug Problem Through a Fresh Lens

Juan Manuel Santos, President of the Republic of Colombia

The global commitment to fight the drug problem has – without a doubt – grown stronger and more resilient during the past four decades.

Governments and international organisations, as well as the scientific and academic communities, have all worked together to understand and tackle this matter, responsible for inconceivable amounts of violence and distress throughout our countries.

Colombia has experienced progress in this fight, and historic results have been achieved. We are no longer the world's top cocaine producer, according to the latest report by the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy. Not only have we reduced crops and trafficking, but with strong determination, we have dismantled menacing drug cartels.

Decades of hard work and sacrifice have yielded significant achievements.

However, we are now witnessing, with profound concern, how this situation is drifting to neighbouring countries, along with all the pain, violence and corruption it entails, which we have endured in our country for too many years.

Therefore, we are now called upon to invest all of our power and determination towards finding new ways to increase the effectiveness of this fight if we truly wish to outwit this problem and prevent it from causing more suffering and destruction.

The Colombian Government strongly believes that the time has come to take a fresh look and we invite world leaders, scientists and experts to start an open, serious and honest debate about this war. The time has come to think outside the box.

Our invitation is to dutifully study new formulas and approaches screened through an academic, scientific and non-politicised lens, because this war has proven to be extremely challenging and oftentimes, highly frustrating.

This is a global problem that demands a global solution, and therefore a new international consensus is needed. We must all make a sustained effort at thinking about creative and innovative ways to eradicate this scourge from our societies.

We are already moving toward this reality. During the past Summit of the Americas, held in Cartagena, Colombia, thirty Presidents and Heads of State agreed – for the first time ever – to engage in discussions – led by experts – on the War on Drugs, its effectiveness and prospects.

Our hope is to witness steps of this same magnitude, or even greater ones, multiplying around the world.

This report is a valuable contribution to this healthy and necessary debate. By re-examining the international approach to the drug problem from an academic perspective, we are nourishing the discussion and setting the conditions to find a new and more efficient strategy.

Let us relentlessly search for, study, think and debate, with all our courage and determination, seeking to discover and implement bolder and smarter answers to this pressing problem. Our world needs us to step up to this challenge. Our countries trust we will. ■