Special Session on Children

On May 8 through 10, more than seventy Chiefs of State and/or of Government, 1,400 delegates representing 800 NGOs, more than 300 children and adolescents of the world and hundreds of defenders of the rights of children will meet in New York to discuss issues concerning children at the Special Session on Children. This will be a great meeting where fulfilment of the goals set by the Chiefs of State twelve years ago at the World Summit for Children will be evaluated and for defining the new commitments that they will take on for the next decade. It is a meeting without precedent that will take place in the context of the United Nations General Assembly.

The children who attend will participate as delegates in this historic Special Session on Children. This will be the first occasion on which such a large number of young people participate in an important United Nations conference.

Colombia’s participation

Within the official programme of the Special Session there will be other parallel activities in which the attending NGOs, government agencies and children can participate in forums to discuss the main issues relating to children, health, education, child protection and HIV/AIDS with special support groups such as lawmakers, religious leaders, public defenders, mayors and youth organisations.

Colombia will be represented in some of these forums. This is the case of Congressman Gustavo Petro, who will attend the Parliamentary Forum; Beatriz Linares, Delegate Defender for the Rights of Children, Women and the Elderly of the Office of the Defender of the People, who will attend the First Global Meeting of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children; and the Children’s Movement for Peace, which will participate in the Children’s Forum.
President Andrés Pastrana will not attend the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Colombian government will be represented by Juan Manuel Urrutia, National Director of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

**Participating NGOs**

**CIMDER** – Centro de Investigación Multidisciplinarias para el Desarrollo.

The Centre for Multidisciplinary Research for Development is an NGO of the Universidad del Valle in Cali. Its mission is to produce and disseminate knowledge, strategies and methodologies and to train human resources that contribute to improving the conditions of health and welfare of the population. [www.cimder.org.co](http://www.cimder.org.co)

**Esmeralda Luz Burbano-Jaramillo** Executive Director, CIMDER

Born in Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Professor at the School of Public Health, School of Health, Universidad del Valle. M.A. in Public Health, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia. Resident in International Health, PAHO, Washington.

Ms. Burbano has carried out consultancies and research on institutional and community programmes for primary health care in Colombia and other countries of Latin America, with emphasis on community-based information systems and the design and planning of public health policies with social participation processes. She has provided services in consultancy, research and teaching in the field of evaluation of health services. Design, execution and evaluation of research and technical co-operation projects in the area of health. Institutional management of non-governmental organisations.

**Special guests – profiles**

**Beatriz Linares-Cantillo**

Agency: Office of the Defender of the People
Post: Delegate Defender for the Rights of Children, Women and the Elderly
Ms. Linares possesses a degree in Law from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, with a specialisation in Public Administration and Administrative Institutions at the Universidad de los Andes.

Among other posts, she has held the following:

Academic Secretary and Director of Undergraduate Studies of the School of Law of the Universidad de los Andes.


Director of Support for Educational Administration and Decentralisation of the Ministry of Education.

Professor of Child Law at the School of Law of the Universidad de los Andes.

Co-ordinator of the Comisarías de Familia programme of the Legal Aid Office of the Universidad de los Andes.

Ms. Linares currently occupies the post of Delegate Defender for the Rights of Children, Women and the Elderly of the Office of the Defender of the People. She has held her current post since June, 1997. She has attended numerous local and international seminars on children’s issues as panellist and speaker.

**Gustavo Francisco Petro-Urrego**

Born in Zipaquirá, Cundinamarca, on 19 April, 1960, Mr. Petro studied at the Colegio Nacional de la Salle in Zipaquirá and took his degree in economics at the Universidad Externado de Colombia. He took specialisation courses in Public Administration at the ESAP in Bogotá and in Population Development and Environment at the Université
Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). He obtained a doctorate in New Trends in Business Administration at the Universidad de Salamanca (Spain).

At an early age he became involved in social and political action, acting as Municipal Personero of Zipaquirá (Cundinamarca). He has been an advisor to the Office of the Governor of Cundinamarca. In 1980 he entered the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) and has been a member of its National Directorate. A political prisoner in 1984, he was a peace negotiator for the M-19 movement during the presidency of Virgilio Barco. Member of the House of Representatives for Cundinamarca during the 1991-1994 term, he was named Diplomatic Attaché for Human Rights to the European Parliament. He returned to Colombia and was elected Representative for Bogotá for the 1998-2002 term. In this body he is a member of the Third Commission, responsible for economic affairs, and of the Pro-Tempore Commission for Peace. In March of 2000 he was elected Second Vice-President of the House of Representatives, for the term ending on 19 July, 2000.

In the most recent congressional elections, held in March of 2002, he obtained the largest number of votes in Bogotá for the House of Representatives.

Forums in which Colombia will participate

First Global Meeting of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children

This meeting will be held on Tuesday, 7 May. The purpose of this closed meeting is to bring together for the first time the greatest possible number of independent national agencies whose purpose is to oversee, promote and protect the human rights of children throughout the world. Such institutions have divers names and structures; some are separate agencies for children, others form part of national human rights organisations or offices of defenders of the people. All of them share the purpose of promoting full application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A final declaration will be issued.
Parliamentary Forum
On Thursday, 9 May, important lawmakers will consider the ways to strengthen their commitment to increasing substantially the budget resources allocated to children. The participants will refer to more efficacious policies for making the world act fairly towards children and will try to achieve a consensus regarding legal regulations for child protection. They will study converging strategies for mobilising civil society around legislative action for children and adolescents. The representatives of child parliaments will speak about their expectations. This event is convened by The Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNICEF.

Children’s Forum
This forum, which will be held immediately before the Special Session, will bring together approximately 400 children belonging to government and NGO delegations from around the world to debate key actions for children.

It is hoped that during the forum the young participants will formulate their own responses to the draft final document of the Special Session and the possible follow-up measures. The programme of the Children’s Forum and its report will be structured according to the 10-point outline of the Call of the Global Movement for Children and of the campaign “Say Yes for Children”.

The Say Yes for Children and Peace Campaign (see graphs)
With the highest score of all Latin America, Colombia carried out the world campaign, "Say Yes for Children", during an entire year in various cultural and social mobilisation events. 4,845,791 votes were obtained from children and adults who voted for the items – organised in ten points – that they considered most urgently need to be taken into account for children’s development. The big winner in Colombia was defence of the right to education, followed by the protection of children against war.

The Children’s Movement for Peace
Five adolescents from different regions of the country will attend in representation of the Children’s Movement for peace. They will participate in divers parallel events that will
take place during the Special Session for Children. They are Jessica Meneses, from Malambo, Atlántico; Genser Oswaldo Cerón, from Puerto Asís, Putumayo; Fabio Calambás, from the Guambian Indian Reservation of Silvia, Cauca; Leidy Johanna Sierra, from Mogotes, Santander; and Mayerly Sánchez, from Soacha, Cundinamarca. They will principally attend the Children’s Forum that will be held on 5-7 May and participate in working groups specially organised by the NGOs.

Profiles of the children of the Movement

Jessica Yulieth Meneses-Cantero
Leader of the Children’s Movement for Peace

Born on 3 October, 1987, in Sincelejo, Department of Sucre. At present, Jessica lives in the municipality of Malambo, Department of Atlántico. Her parents are José Alfredo and Betty, and she has four brothers and sisters. At the age of fourteen, she is a person sensitive to the situation of her agemates. For the last three years she has shared her knowledge on various occasions, teaching classes to poor children and children displaced by violence when teachers are lacking in the community. She is in tenth grade at the Instituto Femenino No. 2 Alberto Pumarejo.

She has been a member of the Children’s Movement for Peace for the last year. Among her past activities is her participation in the National Meeting of the Children’s Movement for Peace held in Montelíbano, Córdoba. She has also attended two consultations, one regional and the other national, to discuss children’s rights.

Gencer Oswaldo Cerón-Santamaria
Leader of the Children’s Movement for Peace

Gencer’s family is composed of his parents, Segundo Cerón and Gloria Nancy Santamaría, and his two brothers, Cristian and Jonathan. He was born on 10 March, 1985, in Puerto Asís, Putumayo, where constant battles take place due to the presence of various armed groups.
As a member of the Children's Movement for Peace, he has worked as a volunteer in the “Return to Happiness” project, through which it is sought to help children forget distressing events through play and acquaint them with new things through recreation. He works with a group of young people in the most distant and/or forgotten neighbourhoods of his town, teaching them their rights and letting them know that there are spaces for them, both in and out of the schools. He was also part of the radio production team of the youth group at a radio station in his town.

He stands out because of his sense of fellowship, responsibility, creativity, group control and enthusiasm for his work.

**Fabio Nelson Calambas-Calambas**
Leader of the Children’s Movement for Peace

Fabio Nelson Calambas-Calambas, was born on 12 December, 1984, in the vereda Fundación of the Guambian Indian Reservation in the municipality of Silvia, Department of Cauca. He is the second child of the family, and has four brothers and sisters. His parents are Marco Tulio y María Teresa.

In 2001 he finished his secondary studies, receiving his agricultural high school degree from the Instituto Agrícola of Silvia, He also took courses in Agricultural Telemarketing and Production Projects at the Casa Turística of Silvia. His plan is to study Animal Husbandry as he considers that profession to be fundamental for development of the community.

He became a member of the Children's Movement for Peace in 2000, when he was elected as representative at a human rights workshop held by the Fundación Rafael Pombo. He participated in the National Plan of Constructors of Peace in April, 2001, and was an organiser of the Regional Meeting of the Children’s Movement for Peace held in Pasto. In his community he stands out as a leader who has dedicated himself to multiplying his knowledge among the children and adolescents of his reservation.
Leidy Johanna Sierra-Vargas
Leader of the Children’s Movement for Peace

Leidy was born in San Gil, Santander, on 20 December, 1987. Her family is composed of her parents, Josué Gilberto and Marta Rocío, and three younger brothers and sisters. She is in ninth grade at the Instituto Técnico de Mogotes.

The Municipal Constitutional Assembly process was carried out in her municipality, receiving the 2000 National Peace Prize. Leidy Johanna, who participated in this assembly as representative of the children of her municipality, was elected to receive the award.

At present, in her free time she is in charge of the games centre of her municipality. Representative of the students in the School Government of her school, she was student personero in 1998. She was present at the event “Niños y niñas al sol”, held in 1999, and at the Second National Meeting of the Children’s Movement for Peace, which brought together 200 children from all over the country. In 2001, she participated in the event Niños y Niñas al Congreso “Participando Ando”, at which the law declaring 27 April the Day of the Child in Colombia was passed. She participates, with the right to speak and vote, in the Municipal Assembly of Mogotes, where decisions are taken about issues that interest or affect children in her municipality.

Mayerly Sánchez
Leader of the Children’s Movement for Peace

Mayerly was born in Bogotá on 9 February, 1984. Her parents are Hilda Clavijo and José Sánchez, and she has two sisters, Yeimi and Natalia. Mayerly Sánchez is one of the pioneers of the Children’s Movement for Peace. She started working with the NGO World Vision eight years ago, when she met with children of marginal neighbourhoods with the aim of offering them recreation.
In 1996, UNICEF issued invitations to organisations such as World Vision for their children to participate in the first meeting that would be held with the aim of forming the Children’s Movement for Peace. Mayerly participated in that meeting as representative of World Vision, and since then has stood out due to her capacity as leader and promoter of good ideas for driving the Movement. Since that time she has been a spokesperson of the Movement, publicising the labour carried out by children and adolescents in the Movement, disseminating the rights of the child and making people respect them.

Mayerly has had the opportunity to travel to divers countries as representative of the Movement to receive some of the awards that have been given to the Movement around the world in recognition of the action carried out in Colombia. In venues such as the UN in New York and The Hague Call for Peace in the Netherlands, and in countries such as New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and Panama, she has been able to communicate the thought of all of the children and adolescents of Colombia and the work that they have done for peace and children’s rights. Her speeches have awakened the interest of attendees in learning about the Movement and supporting it even more.

She has become a multiplier of children’s rights in neighbourhoods and schools of population displaced by violence, especially in Cazucá, in the municipality of Soacha, where the rights of children are greatly violated.

http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/