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COLOMBIA'S ELECTIONS AND CONSOLIDATION:  
MOVING BEYOND FARC AND THE PARAMILITARIES?

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## PROCEEDINGS

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Good morning. Thank you all for being here. My name is Kevin Casas-Zamora and I'm a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program as well as the Acting Director of the Latin American Initiative here at Brookings.

On October 30, Colombians will go to the polls to select governors, mayors and local councils. The elections will be a very serious test for the administration of President of Juan Manuel Santos including as to how the Santos government will cope with the growing power of new illegal armed groups and their paramilitary successors. Despite many successes achieved in the course of a largely successful first year since President Santos took over in August 2010 including robust economy growth to the tune of 5 percent a year, and most recently the long-delayed ratification of the free trade agreement with the U.S. by Washington. I should count among the successes, by the way, the fact that our good friend and former colleague Mauricio Cardenas joined the Santos administration recently as Minister of Energy and Mining which is obviously wonderful news for him as for Colombia. Despite all this, Colombia's secular challenges concerning violence, insurgency and the rule of law remain pressing and complex. They manifest themselves in the election.

Just to give you an idea, according to Colombia's own Interior Ministry, more than 10 percent of the candidates have criminal records. Moreover, unlike national elections, Colombia's local elections are often under threat by corruption, voter intimidation and political violence. To President Santos's credit, his administration has deployed early electoral safeguards and recognized the threat that paramilitary groups pose. In July 2007, the Santos government signed into law a far-ranging political reform paving the way for the imposition of penalties on parties that endorse candidates with links to illegal armed groups or face investigation for drug trafficking and crimes against humanity. Election fines, rules and anticorruption norms have also been toughened up. This is merely one example of the current administration's intent in improving the country's adherence to the rule of law.

On August 7, Santos presented his Comprehensive Security Policy for Prosperity plan. The plan is aimed at reducing homicides, kidnappings, extortion and other crimes by 50 percent by 2025. Under the new plan, the military forces and the National Police would apply their efforts with differentiation taking into account the specific characteristics of each zone. They classify the zones into Red Zones in which the objective is to end violence, Yellow Zones in which the objective is to create proper conditions for democratic governance and in Green Zones where the goal is to put optimum security conditions in place to promote prosperity.

To talk about all this, to talk the forthcoming elections in Colombia, the efforts and performance of the Santos administration in consolidating and extending the security gains accrued during the past decade, to talk about the differences between the approaches to security of the current and the previous administration of President Alvaro Uribe, to talk about the prospects of the end of the FARC's insurgency which to my recollection is probably the longest insurgency in the world at this point and, finally, to talk about the ways in which the U.S. can help or hinder this process, we have assembled a very distinguished group of speakers here supremely knowledgeable on all things Colombian particularly on issues related to violence and the rule of law. They are and I start from the extreme left from your perspective, first we have our very own Vanda Felbab-Brown who is a Fellow in the Latin American Initiative and in the 21st Century Defense Initiative in the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. She is surely one of the world's foremost experts on illicit economies and international and internal conflicts under management including counterinsurgency. Then we have my very good friend, we go back a long time, Adam Isacson, who joined the Washington Office for Latin America in 2010 after many, many years working on Latin American and Caribbean security issues with the Center for International Policy here in Washington. Closer to me we have Claudia Lopez, a Colombian political researcher and terrific investigative journalist who is currently pursuing doctoral studies in political science at Northwestern University in Chicago. Finally, last but not least, we have Virginia Bouvier who is a Senior Program Officer for the Center of Innovation at the U.S. Institute of Peace where she heads the Colombia Conflict team.

With this group of speakers I'm pretty sure that this will prove to be a fascinating discussion about a very important country in Latin America, a country with huge untapped potential and that seems to be undergoing a mix of positive and negative changes. This is a discussion that we expect you to join once the panelists give us their remarks. Thank you very much. Over to you, Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Thank you, Kevin. Kevin said that Brookings is lucky and Mauricio Cardenas is fortunate and rewarded for his services to get the ministry portfolio. We are equally lucky that Kevin was able to step into the void and take over managing the program. Thank you, Kevin.

Good morning to all of you. Colombia is a fascinating case, fascinating because if you listen to narratives about Colombia in the United States including at this week's hearing on the Andes, you could easily get the impression that Colombia is a miraculous story where everything is going extremely well. There is no doubt that very significant improvements have taken place in Colombia. As always, the angels and the devils in the details and how one plays the baseline game, one can reach some either very optimistic or -- optimistic conclusions about Colombia.

If we look at what's happening in Colombia compared to what was happening anytime in the 1990s and the early to mid-2000s, things are significantly better. At the time -- civil war with a very successful insurgency. Some analysts even worried that possibly the national government could fall. Travel along major roads was not possible. The insurgents were also in some cases present in the cities. At the same time you had paramilitary groups extremely strong at the time conducting a great deal of massacres and both of these actors were involved in the drug trade and getting a lot of various forms of strength from participating in the drug trade. General homicide levels and kidnappings were extraordinarily high.

For a variety of reasons including U.S. assistance under Plan Colombia, the Colombian forces have been able to turn the situation around, and by 2008 Colombia was a far safer place. The FARC was pushed out from all of the strategic corridors and all the major population areas. Travel eased. The Colombian government reached a deal with the

paramilitaries to demobilize them. They used violence in many areas to a great degree. There were some particular stories such as Medellin which were heralded as the Medellin miracle in how to reform a violent city. Even today Medellin is often presented as the model to be emulated in Mexico for example.

Then as 2008 things have sort of stalled, and heading into 2010, some of the trends are even not progressing or in fact are deteriorating including in the security situation. I should also emphasize that beyond what's happening in the security situation that there have been some robust institutional improvements. For example, if one looks at the judicial system in Colombia, arguably that is one of Colombia's greatest stories especially in terms of the capacity of the judicial system to put a check on the executive and develop levels of accountability. But even in the judicial system there are some still some serious deficiencies that need to be tackled.

Very positively, when President Santos was elected he understood that despite the security successes of the Uribe era, deep socioeconomic issues that have historically plagued Colombia and in many ways are at the root of lots of Colombia's security problems had to be addressed. There was very little attention paid to them during the era of President Uribe, and President Santos very put this at the forefront of his agenda, reducing poverty, reducing social inequality, bringing the state to areas that historically have had very meager or altogether nonexistent state presence. The Santos administration embraced a population-centric counterinsurgency plan. There were previous versions, sort of test runs during the latter part of the Uribe administration called the Consolidation Plan and on paper it is designed how one would want to see a counterinsurgency plan designed with a robust security presence meant to secure the population to prevent attacks on the population from a variety of actors, bring police in and then bring in socioeconomic development, the judicial system and rule of law. In one area, especially the La Macarena region was the test case and the one that was supposed to be emulated.

But here is where the -- and the problematic details come in a number of these policies. Although La Macarena was the test run, it very soon became obvious that La Macarena was a relatively small region and essentially in no other place did the Colombian government have the capacity to put in the level of resources that went to La Macarena including in terms of a security, police and military presence. So the government has really struggled with where else can this plan be implemented, what are the strategic zones and it really had to scale down very significant the number of areas that would be subject to similar approaches even with fewer resources than La Macarena. The second important problem arose in the mobilization of the -- didn't go so well. Yes, they demobilized, but as Kevin already prefaced, new armed groups have emerged and some of them have almost continuous linkages to the old paramilitaries with the same individuals both in leader and the rank and file. And there are new groups that are nonetheless responding to the long-standing drivers of resource extraction or resource usurpation and rent extraction from now just cocoa that continues to grow in Colombia although at a smaller level than at the peak, but also gold mining, emerald mining and coal mining. So all the problems about the displacement of people from land have reemerged, and in some ways new warps have emerged. Often a country experiences a security or peace benefit if peace is established so that economic activity is enabled and in some places Colombia almost is experiencing a peace deficit where peace is established -- previously could not be reached and hence was of little value was not contested. But now there is new confiscation, new displacement, land for the plantations of African oil palms so that businesses still continue to be deeply complicit and tolerant of paramilitary or bandas criminales, the government doesn't call them paramilitaries, but of the presence of new groups displacing people. Some of the groups have reached accommodation with the FARC in some areas and in other areas they fight the FARC. Urban violence is also very much of an issue. Adam will speak about that, but the Medellin miracle could be called the mirage of the Medellin miracle these days.

With all the focus on the socioeconomic issues, the challenge that the government faces and I suspect that both Gennie and Claudia will pick on that is how to implement many of the plans that looked great on paper on the local level with redistributing

resources in a more equitable manner whether it's land restitution or some of the other socioeconomic programs that the government is talking about will generate new opposition from entrenched groups that have access to armed actors that will face a significant reduction in their economic power if these plans are implemented well and in their political influence as well so that there will be a huge opposition. And it is precisely at the level of local institutions that the state is extraordinarily weak where there is the deepest corruption, the deepest complicity and alliance with illegally armed actors so that resolving that for the state will be critical. The plans can die in implementation and that's the major challenge and perhaps will be compounded as you will hear from Claudia after this election.

Let me say a little bit about cocoa. Cocoa is reduced but is still growing in Colombia. It's the source of income to extremely poor people, marginalized people who have essentially no capacity to access any of the resources and who are hence deeply resistant and alienated as a result of eradication. But it also is still a continuous source of conflict as -- groups over to control access to cocoa. It's far from something that is over. Unfortunately one police where the Santos administration did not break sufficiently with the Uribe years is to insist on this approach called -- cocoa where the cocoa is eliminated in any area before the community can receive any assistance from the state, a policy that is ineffective and deeply counterproductive.

You will see a lot of Colombian officials going around the world and telling the world that they can teach the government of Afghanistan how to do counterinsurgency, the government of Mexico how to tackle organized crime and do counternarcotics, the government of the Philippines how to demobilize paramilitary groups and you'll see some of the same messages echoed in Washington. There is in fact much that can be learned from Colombia. Colombian officials have a great learning experience and there are major improvements, but it would be bad for everyone in the world who is receiving these messages to ignore the complexity and the challenges of these issues that are still deficient. So before you buy the Colombian miracle and the Medellin miracle, caveat emptor, there are many issues yet that need to be tackled.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Vanda. Adam?

MR. ISACSON: Thank you, Kevin and Vanda and all of you for coming. It's an honor and a real opportunity for me to be able to talk a bit about what I've been observing in Colombia as well. The organizers did ask me to talk about urban violence and land restitution which don't overlap a lot so that there might be a rough segue in the middle, but let's jump into this.

As far as urban violence, I wanted to talk about Medellin also. I was there for a little while in August. Maybe I'm the worst example of the foreigner who parachutes in and parachutes out and comes up with some impressions, but I came out confused by a contradictory picture. As an example, we were in the -- neighborhood on the northern extremity of the city about halfway up the hills, we with a member of Congress and we were meeting with some active gang members and they insisted that we walk around the neighborhood with them. We were walking accompanied by some blue-vested representatives of the Medellin city government who were tasked with trying to build peace between gang members. We were walking in a neighborhood where all the streets are paved, there's a school that looks pretty well supplied right there in the neighborhood, electricity and clean water is all there. The services are all there. But one of the gang members who said he'd just gotten out of jails points about three blocks down and asks, Do you see where that that white car is parked over there? I can't go past there because the rival gang will kill me on sight. That was such a bizarre juxtaposition of what's happening there and it seemed to be emblematic of where things stand in a lot of the slums or the comunas surround the city.

I would echo what Vanda said about Medellin because the last few years have been fascinating. A few years ago, 2006-2007, Medellin had a significantly lower murder rate or homicide rate than Washington. That is not true anymore. As in much of Colombia's security situation, things are better than they were in 2002, but they're not better than they were in 2008. The homicide rate began to climb again very rapidly in Medellin after 2008, homicide and other crimes, after Don Berna, Diego Fernando Murillo, the paramilitary leader, demobilized but still the mafia leader who ran criminality in Medellin, who had a monopoly on it, was extradited to the United States in May of last year. He left behind a vacuum of criminality where midlevel

commanders who had been under him before began to fight each other all over the comunas. The homicide rate just about tripled from 2007 to 2009. It started to go down a bit last year, but only a bit. The homicide rate is expected to be in the 75 to 80 range this year which is about the same as El Salvador or Honduras, not as high as Chihuahua, Mexico, but still far higher and about double that of Washington.

What does that tell us about the Medellin miracle or mirage or whatever you want to call it? It does tell us that what critics were calling Don-bernabilidad, a pun on governability, was real. A lot of the advance happened because following the demobilization of the paramilitaries there was a monopoly on control of criminality in the very strategic city of Medellin and if there's a monopoly it's not under dispute, that if you live in a undisputed territory violence tends to go down, prosperity tends to go up and that can often appear to be an effect of good governance. That is not to diminish the impact of good governance in Medellin. Medellin has had two pretty solid governors in the last 8 years, Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar, who for the most part were not corrupt, did not tolerate corruption and launched a series of livability, public space and civic culture programs all over the city and spent resources relatively wisely. A testament to that despite the fact that the murder rate and other violence rates have gone up since 2008, they have gone up anywhere near the levels that they were at the turn of the last decade, 2000-2002, or during the heyday of Pablo Escobar when homicide rates were approaching 200. They're not going to because there is more of a presence particularly of the city but also the national government. I think now we're back at what was more the baseline or more believable level of violence with better governance efforts and I do think they get some of the credit, some of it, not all of it, for the fact that violence rates have declined somewhat in the last year and a half or so.

What the violence looks like though when it does take place in the comunas is very similar to what I think you see in many Latin American cities or what you ever saw in Medellin in the past. When you get down to the ground in the neighborhoods it is gangs. It is territorial gangs. It is young people ages 14 to 25 for the most part. It involves a lot of vengeance killings, sicariato, and involves a lot of what I was talking about before, the indivisible barriers that exist between neighborhoods, the territoriality being strictly enforced. The competition is usually at this point over microtrafico, narco mundo, the right to sell drugs on street corners. What is different though perhaps is who the gangs are allied with or aligned with or controlled by. In Medellin for example it has gone from guerrilla militias 15 or 20 years ago to paramilitaries controlling it, to now the two main overall leaders in Medellin are guys named Sebastian and Valenciano, both of whom have ties, one each to the new neoparamilitary emerging criminal groups, one with Rastrajos, and other with the Urabenos. Sebastian right now seems to have the upper hand in the battle for Medellin. This also may account for some of the drop in criminality in the last year and a half because there were fewer neighborhoods in dispute.

One lesson from Medellin is that, yes, good governance is important, but governors should be careful how much credit they take for drops in criminality. I think that's a lesson that's important for places like Ciudad Juarez or Nuevo Laredo. Also another final lesson there is that city services are good. Governance efforts at the local level are better than they've ever been. The police are still a wildcard and a question mark and particularly force levels are not under full control of the mayor's office. Nor is the justice system which remains absent or ineffective in much of the city.

Countrywide the urban trends of urban violence are showing not as marked a turnaround as Medellin, but there are similar concerns. In Bogota the homicide rate bottomed out at about 19-1/2 in 2006. Last year it was up to 23-1/2. Not dramatic, but enough that it's really showing up in opinion polls and in conversations and perceptions of insecurity in Bogota. In Cali, the homicide rate bottomed out at 67 in 2008. It was 81 last year. Major cities are again better than 2002 but worse than just a few years ago.

The government's plan for dealing with this is not entirely clear. It does however involve the addition of 20,000 more police and that would bring the national police force nationwide to about 180,000 members. The police force has already increased by about 25,000 in the last 4 years while the armed forces in fact have shrunk by about 10,000 in the past 3 years so that there is more of an emphasis on police and less of an emphasis on armed forces is what we're seeing. That does respond to urban violence concerns and it also responds to changes in the tactics of the FARC who are much more mixed in with the population with smaller units and more plainclothes operations and the emergence of the criminal bands. Whether it is enough and whether the police and the justice system are up to that challenge -- I know I'm running short on time. I wanted to discuss community policing and youth programs and deficiencies in the justice system, but for time's sake maybe we can save that for the questions and I'll move on.

On the question of land restitution, it is absolutely critical if we're going to talk about peace in Colombia. The land tenure situation lies at the heart of causes of the conflict and it lies at the heart of the huge historic wave of displacement that Colombia has suffered particularly over the last 30 years. This is a country that never really had a land reform unlike most of Latin America did in the 20th century and then in 30 years saw a massive reverse land reform. The UNDP came out with a report about a month ago that .15 percent of Colombia's landholders control 52 percent of the country's agricultural land; 80 percent of small landholders in the country are below the poverty line; and according to the UNDP, 6.6 million hectares, a hectare is 2-1/2 acres, you do the math, about 13 percent of all agricultural land was taken or people were disposed from it and usually displaced from it by violence in the last 30 years ago. Expectations are being raised that this is going to be resolved at least partially. In June, President Santos signed into law a victims and land restitution bill that among its goals is the return of about 2 million hectares that would only be about a third of the total of land. That process is in the slow process of getting started now. There are Constitutional Court reviews of the law, regulations for implementation are being drawn up, there are a lot of conversations with civil society about how these regulations are going to end up and they're setting up the agencies that are going to be carry out land restitution. There will be about 22 offices for it around the country. And there is a sort of pilot program, a plan --

that's been going on in much of the country although that has mostly just been handing out titles to land that before had belonged to the government and did not have an owner. This faces a lot of challenges if it's actually going to happen. If it were easy, they would have done it by now, but the challenges are legion. The first is simply security. Where are you going to do this that the country is considered post conflict enough to begin? Cordoba -- the Pacific coast or the consolidation program zones? Where is it safe enough? Where is it green enough to move forward? That appears to be a point of much disagreement within the government particularly between the agricultural ministry and the defense ministry. If you don't attend to some of the most hard-hit zones, you've got a vicious cycle. You have areas where the despojo or the dispossession of land made the conflict worse and lies at the root of the conflict, but because the conflict is so bad, you can't undo the despojo and that requires some really tight coordination with the security forces and we have not seen signs of it yet.

Another big challenge is simply the legal hurdles, the testafellos or third-party landholders who have to be identified and kicked off the land; massive fraud with the help of the state and parapoliticians over the past several years with falsifying land titles and falsifying transactions and they've got to get behind all of that. The agriculture minister himself says that he found the state land agency to be supremely infiltrated and that regional offices were practically co-opted by the paramilitaries when he came to power a year ago. That means they go through all of these files and find massive amounts of falsifications. The campesinos didn't stand a chance as legal maneuverings deprived them of the land that they thought they owned. In Montes de Maria which is going to be a crucial laboratory, this is a region in the north near the Caribbean coast, for land restitution, a small but fertile region that saw 50 massacres just between 1999 and 2001, a third of some of the municipalities' population kicked off their land in that 2- or 3-year period, just there so far the agriculture ministry has found fraudulent purchases of 24,000 hectares of land and there is probably going to be more. They're carrying out similar investigations in several other parts of the country.

Other legal obstacles include the horribly difficult task of mapping out where exactly the predios, the landholdings are in the first place and the fact that a lot of the land where

people were kicked off of was held informally. Forty percent of landholdings in Colombia are not formally titled: people who were forced by debts they had accumulated while they were displaced had they not properly dotted every i and crossed every t and how they registered as displaced people; people who bought in good faith but are now finding out or have yet to find out that the land they bought was owned by somebody who was violently kicked off. What do you do for them? There is another question; could you have made a good-faith purchase in the last 10 years in a place like Montes de Maria where massive displacement and massacres had happened anyway? The probability of having bought the land of somebody who was violently kicked off was quite high.

The other challenge and this is one I think Claudia will be talking about quite bit too is the pushback that is inevitably going to be coming from the landowners in a lot of these areas. We may see some of the pushback in the results of the election, the local, municipal and gubernatorial elections that are happening on October 30. It's very likely that many of the landowners who don't have any intention of giving up their landholdings to the victims have been backing candidates who are flush with cash and likely to win and I'm sure Claudia Lopez will be discussing some of these questions about candidates. You need local officials. You need these governors and mayors in particular to be on board if you're going to be doing a credible land restitution process. They have a crucial role to play. If they're dragging their feet, if they're throwing up legal obstacles, if they're hiring people to be in charge of representing them at the relevant mesas or coordinating committees who are on the side of the original dispossessing landholders, this could get stalled very quickly.

Meanwhile, there is the security situation of people who do get their land returned. We've already seen more than 50 representatives of displaced and victims in land rights communities killed since 2008 and roughly 20 since President Santos took over. I would say that it's more dangerous now in Colombia to advocate for the return of land than it is to denounce a human rights abuse committed by the military. Both are dangerous, but the risk seems to be even higher in cases of land because people want to hang onto those assets and are willing to go to great lengths to do so. Protection of land activists and people who are going to receive land is important, but ultimately you can't deploy the military and the police to protect everybody all over the country. People are going to be exposed. More important than even the physical bodyguard type protection then is what happens after someone is killed. What is the probability that somebody who kills or orders the killing or the intimidation of somebody who is receiving land will be punished or not? Right now that probability is close to zero and that has to change. Of the 20 cases of land -- since the beginning of the Santos government, I know of no case that has gone beyond the preliminary investigative phase in the justice system. The justice system as with urban violence lies at the heart of this. Even after years of this acrimonious free trade debate, the experience of killings of labor leaders does not encourage me that the justice system is up to the job right now, has the resources, has the protection or has the political will behind it. If the justice system isn't up to the job, the pushback against land restitution could be successful over the next several years. That would be disastrous for prospects for peace. If the dispossessors get to keep their land, it will prove that the guerrillas are right and the guerrillas don't have a lot of moral standing right now. The elections then because of who will be brought to power to carry out land restitution in some of the most hotly contested areas are a key moment. We may be looking back on the October 30 elections when we try to determine what were some of the main factors in the success or failure of land restitution a few years from now. It's a hinge or a fulcrum moment and we should all be paying attention to it. Thank you.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you. Claudia, the elections?

MS. LOPEZ: Thank you so much. It is really a great honor and great opportunity to be before this great audience and to speak about Colombia's elections that are coming in a week or so to elect governors and mayors. It's a big challenge, and of course as with any other topic in Colombia, the assessment of how it is going to be always depends on which year you choose as a baseline to compare.

If we compare against 1997 for example or the local elections held in 2000, we are by far in any indicator doing better now. But if compare to the last local election in 2007, there are some issues that we already lost. There are some advantages that we already lost. For example, violence in the preelectoral period doubled during this election which means we have doubled the number of candidates who were kidnapped, doubled the number of candidates who were killed, doubled the number of candidates who were threatened, so that that picture is already a bad picture. So in the preelectoral election level we already did pretty badly in comparison to the last local election in 2007.

The second thing that's going to happen here is why this violence again? Part of the answer was already given here, to some extent the re-composition of the different illegal groups in Colombia starting from FARC and different tactics and trying to adopt to the new situation and to the success of the army in previous years. If you're confronted successfully in one way, you learn, everybody learns, everybody adapts and that's what happened in particular with guerrilla groups. As far as paramilitary groups or new criminal groups, there is a huge fragmentation and competition. After the 2008 year mainly because of the massive extradition process of the paramilitary bosses, it of course exploited all this internal competition between -- groups and new groups, groups that were never involved in the demobilization and peace-dealing process with President Uribe as for example Rastrojos. One of the things that amazed me is that Rastrojos is by far the largest cartel in Colombia today and nobody talked about them and that's certainly one of the reasons for their success. All the attention is put on somebody else and that's certainly quite a P.R. strategy for them.

AUC was the largest federation drug cartel in Colombia's history, the largest and the most successful. If you analyze why today with all the information, the judicial information and others that we have been able to get because of the peace and justice process and because of the demobilization process, we know that any figure we compare, if the ambassador remembers, the cartel of the Cali in your time or the cartel of the Medellin, they look like babies compared to AUC times. So we have these huge cartel federations, huge drug traffickers -- that for some reason we decided to deal with as if they were political fighters even though we all knew they were not. And we offered demobilization and this is as simple as drug traffickers don't demobilize, period. It's as simple as that. There is no rational reason why we should expect a drug trafficker to demobilize. A drug trafficker doesn't have a retirement plan. It's not that they are respectable, at some point I'm going to get out of this business and I'm going to buy a house in Florida and I'm going to retire. No. That's not the way it works. You know that you are then going to end up in impunity or in death or in jail. Certainly retirement is something that cannot happen in the drug business. And even we know that and we all acknowledge that since at least 10 years ago to put some year as a baseline, all illegal armed groups in Colombia are heavily involved in drug trafficking and so their military and political operations are driven by that main business, we're still trying to deal with them as if they were not that kind of group. So there is a huge fragmentation, there is a huge competition and that's one of the reasons why pre-election violence has increased, because you may have some advantage if you get the mayor and the governor on your side at regular times, but if you are in a competing situation with another criminal groups and any other group is better able to get the governor or the mayor on their side, they have a huge advantage against the other groups. They will be able to have security information and information about operations against them. Probably if one group takes the governor's office and is able to coordinate with the police and with army operations against the other group, that really threatens the other group. So I think that's one of the reasons that we are seeing all these tensions and this violence is because one of the armed groups is not willing to allow any other group to get a strategic advantage to get the governor or the mayor on their side. They know they're going to be punished and chased. There is a strategic advantage for them -- not allowed to do that.

The second reason I think is I'm extremely worried that although we will now have much more information and signs to be sure about this is that the state in Colombia, the region or the local state not to say the national of course, in many institutions is a huge opportunity for money laundering. The contracting services at the local and regional level especially in regions where you receive royalties with mining, there is a huge opportunity for money laundering and money laundering is the most profitable part of the productive chain of the illegal business. It's far better to do money laundering at some point in Medellin or in any other region than to do cocoa growing in far-away areas. So you're able to get the governor's office or the mayor's office, you're going to be able to use the contracting apparatus of the state to do money laundering and it's a huge business. Many of the things that we see in the finance movements to support different candidates is they are -- they're contracting apparatus of that governor's office or that mayor's office, so that's the third reason. You're not willing to lose such an opportunity. It's very important and a strategic part for your business in addition to having information and security. So that's coming from the illegal arms side and why are they fighting to keep these positions or to not lose the positions that they already have or not to allow other groups to get that advantage.

Now let's see the picture on the political side. As you said at the very beginning, according to official government figures, at least 10 percent of the candidates that are still running have criminal records. The fair question of course is why can they run? There is something wrong on the institutional legal side if we know that and these candidates still can run and still can win. But putting that first problem aside, as you all know, President Santos presented himself as a sort of good loyal successor of President Uribe. There was no way Juan Manuel Santos could win the national election without the votes and the support and the electoral apparatus of President Uribe. However, after one year I think it's quite clear to everybody that President Santos decided not to keep the entire agenda of President Uribe. That displeased many people. For example, the victims' law or the land reform law is very important and it's quite useful for Colombia's challenges, but of course that also irritates many people in particular many of former President Uribe's supporters. One of President's Uribe's strong points, I'm not going to mention all, but at

least one in the political arena is that he was able to build these regional bases to a national-level coalition composed of both legal and illegal forces, political and illegally armed group forces that are combined at the regional level that never before him had the chance to get up to the national level in such a strong position. It's not just by chance that a third of congress members of President Uribe's coalition are in jail because of ties with drug traffickers and paramilitary groups. This was one of the weakest points but also one of the strongest points in the electoral base that President Uribe's coalition had. So if you ask now what the coalition of President Santos is, the answer is the same. The same parties, the same leaders, the same political structures at the regional and national levels are there. All the former parties that supported President Uribe are supporting President Santos. So the story is it's the same coalition. Everybody remains in the same position of power as before. No. Formally the names of the parties could be the same. La U is there, Cambio Radical is there and the Conservative Party is there. The only new party in the coalition is the Liberal Party. All of the rest are the same guys. What is the change? If the same parties are there and if the same leaders are there, what changed? What changed is I will say the terms of power relationships within the coalition. To put it in simple terms, the regional more hybrid, more illegal, more linked to paramilitaries and drug traffickers were far stronger before within the coalition than now. They were left out of the main positions, and we already in the first term of President Uribe, these guys were able to -- very important positions. They already lost those positions. So although they are part of the coalition and nobody, not even them of the government, is willing to declare a rupture, we're not going to go -- we're not going to do this -- if nobody is willing to take that chance, we're going to remain in the picture and say here we are governing but in reality I'm from inside. The level of influence of these regional political groups changed heavily within the coalition and now the more let's put it as urban side of the coalition is much more in power because that's where President Santos is coming from. He is coming from this sort of urban, national traditional elite and not coming from this sort of mixture of regional cattle ranchers or paramilitary base of the regional elite. So they are still together, but the terms of power within the coalition is completely changed. Completely changed.

What's the new battlefield? Of course they are not pleased by these facts. You can read the papers and many of them dare to say publicly we were better treated under President Uribe. What it means is this. We were the leaders of this coalition before, we are not any longer and we are resenting that. So the new battlefield for this inside fight is the local and regional elections of course because this part of the coalition needs if they want to survive in power to make clear before President Santos that they are still there, he still needs them and he can't dismiss them forever. They only chance they have to make that point is by winning as many governors' offices and by as many mayors' offices as they can. There is a huge tension because of this internal change within the coalition. It's again a cycle. In order to do that, you may do that making the best campaign you want or you can do that too looking for the support of your old friends. Trying to win against a candidate that doesn't exist because you killed him is far easier than trying to run against a candidate that's still there. That's the fear factor that has driven tension and explaining both the violent tension and the political tension we are facing now in these local elections. Of course, local electoral years are always more violence than the previous year. Always, unfortunately. Always. So this is not the first time. You can absolutely expect that 2011 is going to be more violent than 2010 as you could expect that 2007 was going to be more violent than 2006. That has been the history of Colombia. We don't have political violence because we have drug trafficking. We have had political violence throughout our entire history unfortunately. So that was expected.

But if you compare the trends of the national elections, we did much better in 2006 both in political violence terms than 2002. If we compare the last elections in 2010, we did far better than the two previous years. Now we are still under this pressure. Are we going to do better than in 2007? We know already that in preelectoral terms we didn't. Unfortunately that's gone. So in 10 days or something like that, we're going to know what the political picture looks like, who actually wins. How many of President Santos's supporters on his side of the coalition won? Or how many of the other party? I don't want to call them the Uribe party because they are not entirely Uribe party members. There are many other figures and interests there. They happened to be well represented under President Uribe but that doesn't mean that President Uribe is their boss, that

he can give orders to these guys. Not any longer. He is not always in power. You can give those orders when you were in power but when you're not in power you cannot give orders. You might be a good friend, you may be his partner and probably they like them better, but it's not the same position as before.

Just to recap, this year's elections are incredibly tense because of the recomposition of the illegal groups, in the paramilitary groups, because of the readaptation of the guerrilla groups, in particular FARC that find a way to readapt their military strategies to defend themselves better and be in a better position. This is also because of this recomposition within their political national coalition. And I would say, and I don't want to miss the opportunity to mention this last fact, it is in my opinion, 15 years ago there were plenty of reasons why the army or the police in Colombia could say we don't have enough resources, we are not large enough to regain control of this country, we need better equipment, we need better support in terms of intelligence and other sources, there is no reason whatsoever why the army or the police at this point in history cannot do that. One of the challenges that President Santos I guess he is facing, of course he is ever going to recognize it, is that to some extent the army in particular has been in a kind of strike in the last year and that's of course a huge challenge. The deal is if you push for all these peace and justice things and people start telling the truth and they start saying that they have ties with us and that we support them somehow, some drug traffickers or some paramilitaries, now justice is coming before us -- they're there to prosecute some high-ranked military members and we now are willing to accept that. Either we got -- and impunity from this picture or we're not going to do the job we are supposed to do and that's a huge challenge. Nobody is willing to recognize this of course. If you ask the army, of course they will say that they are absolutely loyal and submit to the civilian power in Colombia. But the reality behind the problems that we are facing or some of the problems that we are facing in security is that these kinds of brazos caídos kind of strategy in the army in particular, so this is a key point -- President Santos -- president can ensure that he will be able to control and to give orders to the political spectrum. This is a democracy. Politicians belong to different parties or to different ideologies. They are not supposed to receive orders from the president, but the army is supposed to receive orders from the -president, so if the president

cannot control the political arena nor the military, really we are in trouble. Really we are in trouble. So the key point is not only to regain the democratic security that we hope to have, but also to continue doing some sort of a strategic regional and national state-building process in Colombia. We need to be able to regain control both in the military and in the political arena and that is part of what is at stake in this election. Thank you.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Claudia. Virginia?

MS. BOUVIER: So it's left to me to talk about what the prospects are for the future and I'm going to try to pick up on some of the ideas that have been presented so far.

I think we can look at the different issues from the international, national and regional levels. Again, it does depend on what baseline you're looking at, but I'm going to start with Santos coming into power and how some of the environment has changed within Colombia that makes in some ways the prospects for peace more hopeful and in other ways less hopeful. On the first front, I think if we think back to when Santos came in, war was practically breaking on the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador and I think that on the international level if we think about Colombia within the region, we see that tensions have been tamped down quite considerably. Santos has really made an effort to become a global leader as well as a regional leader for Latin America. He secured Colombia a place on the U.N. Security Council and I think that's been very important for Colombia's international prestige. Colombia now heads up UNASUR through Maria Emma Mejia that is another very important position within the hemisphere.

There have both trade and political relationships opened up to many different parts of the world so there's less dependency I think on the U.S. and the U.S.'s vision. Also there's been a free trade agreement approved with the United States and that was a huge feather in the cap of Santos I believe even though this has been something that's been coming for many, many years.

However, I think it's also very ironic in some ways. Santos came in and he acknowledged as his predecessor did not that there was an internal armed conflict in Colombia. The irony is that in fact it's no longer an internal armed conflict. If you look at the figures, the conflict is spilling over the borders of the region. UNHCR just came out with statistics that 200,000 refugees are in Venezuela, 95 percent of whom are Colombians who have fled the conflict. There are some 30,000 Colombians in Ecuador. In 2009 there were 389,000 refugees in 36 countries of the world so that the refugee situation is quite high and the internal displacement continues to be extremely high with 3.7 million displaced internally. Colombia is now the country with the largest displaced population in the world and that's beating out Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan, other places with war zones. So I think on the international level we see political dialogue and communication among governments in a much better capacity than it was a year and a half ago, but we also see the prospects of new tensions with increasing numbers of refugees that need to be processed or need to be dealt with in some humane way and I think a movement within civil society and the international community to find ways to regularize the treatment of refugees and to accord them the kinds of protections of states that citizens would ordinarily be granted.

On the other hand, inside Colombia you also see an escalation of war. Colombia has always fascinated me in part because it's like the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez in that depending on who you talk to, you can be talking about the same country and have completely different visions of what's happening. On my last trip I was in Bogota and the euphoria about the victims law, the land restitution, all the changes and the kinds of acknowledged apologies for what happened to Juan Manuel Zepeda, the U.P. leader who was assassinated with an apology from the state for what within the legal structures and the elected government structures

particularly at the happened, there were all sorts of indications that things had changed dramatically with the coming of Santos. Then you leave Bogota and you go to the regions and in Cordoba and in Montes de Maria on the north Atlantic coast, in Antioquia, in Magdalena, in different parts of Colombia you find that in fact the war has gotten worse, the violence has escalated and the fear factor has increased. You start looking at the violence in this preelectoral period and it's horrendous. You look at questions of impunity and accountability and Colombia is not doing any better than it was before, in fact it may be doing worse because the violence is going up and prosecutions have not kept pace. You have a Congress that was one-third indicted, and Claudia Lopez at the Fundacion Nuevo Arco Iris has done incredible work documenting the penetration of the paramilitary regional and local levels.

We also see the justice and peace law that was approved back in 2005 that has led to four convictions in 6 years which is not a lot, but what it has done is revealed tremendous levels of corruption and of complicity between the government and the paramilitaries. We know that one-third of the Congress was convicted, but I also saw some recent statistics that when the paramilitaries gave their confessions, their versiones libres, a lot of information was revealed that could be followed-up on by the judicial system but has not been. In fact, the Supreme Court turned over evidence to other prosecutors to investigate 24 governors, 225 mayors, 11 local representatives and 55 council people and none of these have been followed through on. You can see that at the national level I think that in Bogota people are much more optimistic that things are changing and that there is the possibility of peace to come. In fact, I think that when Santos came in there has been a very interesting flurry of exchanges with the different guerrilla leaders from both the ELN and the FARC with the leadership claiming that they're interested in dialogue. Alfonso Cano released a video right before the new president came into power and said, hablemos, we want to talk and he laid out an agenda of the things he wanted to talk about, and they were political reform, land reform, human rights and international humanitarian law and economic reform. Each of the topics that the FARC and Alfonso Cano said he was interested in talking about, President Santos has taken on and is looking at ways to deal with each of those not

through a dialogue with sitting down at the table with the guerrillas necessarily, but I think trying to pull the rug out from under the guerrillas in terms of what their agenda might be so that

down the road where if the land reform and restitution is successful we may get to a point where sitting at the table, many of the issues that the guerrillas might have been brought to a peace table have already been taken care of, and that's in the best of cases. I think the challenges to moving forward with the land restitution and the victims laws are tremendous and Adam has hinted at some of them, but I think also if we think about the pool of potential victims and victims in Colombia and trying to figure out administratively, legally, technically, humanly and psychologically there are so many different ways dealing with such a large pool of millions of victims is going to be very, very difficult and I think the prospects ahead are not terribly optimistic. topics that the FARC and Alfonso Cano said he was interested in talking about, President Santos has taken on and is looking at ways to deal with each of those not through a dialogue with sitting down at the table with the guerrillas necessarily, but I think trying to pull the rug out from under the guerrillas in terms of what their agenda might be so that

I think we're okay on time and I think we want to leave room for discussion as well, but I think that in some ways the prospects for peace are looking glum, but the prospects for dialogue are looking better than they've looked in a long, long time. It may very well be that in that not-so-distant future we do see a peace table put together that's probably between the guerrillas and the government. I think one of the biggest changes we're seeing under Santos is that people are talking about peace. They're discussing what the mechanisms might be. They're discussing what the nature of the discussions might be. They're discussing what the agenda might be. Senator Roy Barreras presented a law for peace and this has generated all sorts of discussions. I don't think that it has resolved anything, but it's passed kind of the first stage in the Congress and it has eight more stages to go through. Part of this law would look at the question of who gets reduced sentencing and for the first time I think ever in Colombia's history there is a law that's looking at reduced sentences for military who commit human rights violations in the course of duty let's say. This is tremendously controversial. There are many who would say that the International Criminal Court has already dispensed with the idea that a government can give itself amnesty and there's a consideration that in fact

this would be the state giving the state or forces of the state an amnesty so even if it were to go through legally within Colombia, there's a very good chance it would call on the wrath of the ICC to come in and say you guys can't do this just like Pinochet or the Argentine couldn't give their own military an amnesty. So I think it still has a lot of hurdles to go through and it's likely to go through a lot of different revisions. Colombia has a very strong Constitutional Court that has been a real I think protector of international norms. It challenged when the Colombian legislature passes laws that are somehow found not to meet the standards of international rights and humanitarian law. The Constitution Court has often modified them or overturned them as it did with the Law of Justice and Peace back in 2005 and I think is likely to do the same.

I would mention also that what happens in the regions and for this region what happens in the elections is really important. The elections may mark a turning point in the future of the path to peace in Colombia and I think it behooves us all to keep our eyes on what's happening. There was an article that came out in "Semena" also that mentioned many of the places where -- and Claudia has referred to it, but I think until you see the specifics you don't get a sense of the magnitude of the number of parapoliticians who are running, the number of FARC candidates who are running, people supported by one of the other illegally armed groups. And to the extent that the electoral system legitimizes the role of these illegally armed actors including bandas criminales in the system, the possibilities for some sort of a meaningful transition to peace will be minimized, they will be reduced significantly. I will end with that and are open for questions and turn back to you for questions.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Gennie. That was phenomenal. Before we go into the Q and A, for those of you who are in the back, there are seats in the front and you're more than welcome to come join us in the front.

I have a couple of issues that I want to raise if you'll allow me. The first one is about Medellin. I find the whole discussion fascinating because it suggests a very profound point which is relevant well beyond Medellin which is that the absence of violence doesn't mean better rule of law. In many cases when you have a desperate

population, desperate because violence has spun out of control, the pax mafiosa is a bargain that a lot of people are willing to make. I would imagine that if you go and ask people in Monterrey these days, you would find a lot of people willing to strike that bargain. My question is whether we know what the people in Medellin are thinking, because we may find that what the people are thinking in terms of going after the mafiosos and improving the rule of law is very different from what the government is trying to do. The attitude toward the pax mafiosa among the population in Medellin is something that strikes me as very interesting and that has implications for places beyond Medellin. That's number one.

Number two; I'm slightly surprised about the fact that other than a few times in Gennie's presentation the FARC was barely mentioned as though they were a relatively marginal actor in this whole story. My question would simply be what are they up to particularly when it comes to the issue of land restitution because as Gennie alluded to tangentially, one would think that the success of the land restitution policy poses a strategic challenge to the FARC and among the people that would have an interest, that would have an incentive to push back against land restitution paradoxically would be the FARC. What do we know about that? I'll leave it there and then we'll turn it over to the audience.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Do you want me to answer now?

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Yes, absolutely.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN:

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Let me start and you can join. On Medellin the story of the pax mafiosa or narco peace I think is complex and one of the important things that Adam was saying was the opening narrative of what the situation looks like with the gang members saying I cannot go beyond the car. One of the things that have emerged in Medellin is even as the boundaries between the Sebastian and Valenciano groups are stabilizing; people are finding it extremely difficult to cross the boundary. Kids are told that they cannot go to an elementary school that is two blocks away that lies in the territory of Sebastian as opposed to Valenciano. People cannot go to work. There is a

lot of pressure to either physically eliminate or expel from the areas FARC has been demobilized, that have gone through the official demobilization problems. It's a level of peace that is still contested and that is very problematic for people. It's very different from Don Berna where he really controlled the city and the rules were clearer and there were greater -- I am reluctant to say greater freedoms because I think there are some contradictions or oxymoronic terms, but it's even more problematic narco peace than it was under Don Berna right now, but violence is very much of an issue.

On your second question on the FARC, Adam was also speaking about how the FARC has adapted, there is lots of violence by FARC, lots of urban violence, lots of terrorist attacks, lots of bombings of pipelines and lots of kidnappings. There is a lot of FARC activity more in the rural spaces than in the urban spaces that is very severely impinging on security. In many areas such as in Nariño and the very violent areas, there are real limits how far the military forces can go. It's a very different proposition for them to be fighting big FARC columns or pinning them down somewhere in La Macarena than taking the fight to Pasto so that that is very much of an issue. The FARC is a difficult balance because if the FARC obviously subverts the land restitution, then it can be very clearly deprived of any vestiges of political support among especially other than the cocaleros. But at the same time, the FARC is benefiting from the paras subverting it and all the FARC can do is pull back and allow the paras or the bandas criminales to subvert it for their own purposes.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Do the dirty job for them.

MR. ISACSON: You made an interesting point, that the absence of violence doesn't mean better rule of law. It almost reminds me of the United States where illegal drug consumption when you throw in cocaine, meth, marijuana, et cetera, is down somewhat from 20 years ago, but drug-related violent crime is a fraction of what it was 20 years ago. When you look at opinion polls here, less than half of a percent of people nowadays think drugs are the most significant problem facing the country. It has disappeared from our radar because of the absence of violence even if it's still a pervasive problem in our society.

What is Medellin thinking? I could not tell you. I would not dare to speak for people living in these neighborhoods that grew up in the stateless barrios around the edges of the city. One thing I've heard many times is that people don't necessarily feel like they're at the mercy of or imprisoned by the gangs, that in an area where you could never trust the police, you could never trust the state, that territorial gang, these kids out there on the streets, were your protection from being extorted by others and being at the mercy of others and at some level, it varies, but almost pulling for their kids out there on the streets protecting the neighborhood. That's the level to which things have gone. Paramilitaries all over the system carried favor with merchants and residents when they first arrived in the zone by carrying out social cleansing, killing prostitutes, drug addicts and beggars and that made them more popular of course. In an area where you don't ever think of the state or the justice system even being an option, the absence of rule of law is just not an issue. You want absence of violence and that's it.

However, Mayor Alonso Salazar presided over this increase in crime in part because he did try to go after all groups rather than make pacts with any of them. That did not make him less popular. His approval rating even now is in the high sixties so that people do recognize the need to have rule of law, it just seems to be too far of an aspiration.

As far as the FARC, Vanda covered it. The FARC are in more marginal areas now. However, if you live in Nariño they are a part of your everyday reality, but in populated areas their actions are down. In less-populated areas and areas with military police patrols, attacks do seem to be way up. The only point on land restitution I would add, and others may dispute this, the FARC's power centers tend to be more agricultural frontier zones where landholding is more you cut down some jungle and that's your land until someone challenges you on it and you're pretty much there; more sparsely populated. The areas where paramilitaries are strong overlay much more closely with the zones of reverse land reform so that it's in areas of paramilitary control where restitution is going to be probably more of an immediate issue.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: That makes sense. Do you want to add something to that?

MS. BOUVIER: I would add that the figure that I had seen is that military actions by the FARC are up 10 percent in the last year and recruitment is up. As Claudia alluded to, they're readjusted tactics to accommodate the government's increased presence and resources. They're doing more land mining than they were before; they have much more small kinds of ambush actions. They do not seem to have been diminishing their activity although I think everybody would agree that they have been beaten down and the numbers of the ones who were FARC members seem to have gone down significantly through demobilizations as well as attrition.

MS. LOPEZ: But that is all at the sort of tactical level. Let's be clear. The FARC has been defeated at the strategic and political level in Colombia irreversibly in my opinion. Probably the best achievement of Colombia's society and government in the last 15 years is that and that's still there. On the tactical level we are having trouble of course because of this readaptation and because last year there were national elections and so it's always the story of the FARC that we're going to make sure the new government understands we are still here. Yes, they are still there and they are making that point clear. Also on the regional level it's the same story. Yes, they are provoking a lot of trouble, but I will say again as my last point is that what worries me is not why the FARC has increased 10 percent attacks in their activities in the last year, that's worrisome and I could see why that happened. What I don't understand and I can't accept is why the army has decreased by 4 percent their attacks by their initiatives against the guerrillas. That doesn't make sense. It's not what you're expecting. So the problem isn't that they are pretty much active. The problem is our guys are inactive. That's the issue and thus we cannot control what the FARC does, but we should control what our army does so that's what I would say.

On the prospects of peace, it's not the fact that the FARC is marginal and it is marginal in the departments because it is marginal in the country and it is marginal for elections and it is marginal for the prospects of country and that's going to continue being their role. We cannot be

overconfident of course and we need to be serious about dealing with the FARC still for many years along, but regarding land reform, I think and I hope that the government has this clear and I'm pretty confident that they are, if there is any prospect of success for land reform, there are at least two or three things we need to ensure. One is that this is not going to be a FARC cause. That's not their cause. That's our government's cause. That's our government's priority. That's on the stage in the political agenda that Colombia's society and government has decided to take it finally very late in our history but at least we decided to take it. We cannot allow the FARC to take over this reform or any other significant political reform in Colombia because they don't have the representation to do that. We need to ensure of course that the FARC are not able to take over to receive the land reform which is what they are doing now, and we need to ensure that both our military and civilian institutions are able to come on the side with the government to implement the policy instead of supporting the land grabbers and maintain the alliance with them. We need to break that sort of tie.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Over to you, audience. We have unfortunately 10 minutes. Perhaps we can take four questions and I would urge you to identify yourselves when you start posing your questions.

MR. ESTIN: I'm Saul Estin from Phelps Stokes, formerly with the Institute of International Education. I want to thank you all. I thought it was very thorough especially for the presentation of statistics. I really enjoyed it. As a person who completed my Fulbright research in Colombia and as a multiethnic scholar, I wanted to offer one other perspective which wasn't really considered in this talk. That is, one of the greatest challenges to Colombia's sustainable development is deep structural racism and the neglect for socioeconomic equity. We're talking about a country where the government has systematically underreported the number of Afro descendants and indigenous people present in the population for years if not decades. We're talking about a country where most of the Afro descendants and indigenous people live geographically isolated in areas that have weak infrastructure and even worse schools. We're talking about a place where many of the victims, the majority of the victims of the land disputes

and the attempts at land restitution have been Afro descendants and indigenous people. Recently we have seen some progress because this late summer there was a law passed outlawing racial discrimination in public spaces, but still there a lot of lingering questions about enforcement with laws like that and new advances. So in a country like this I want to ask why are we not seeing more discussions about how to improve socioeconomic equity and racial equality enter into these sorts of discussions and into the policy calculus when we consider Colombia's path toward sustainable development? Thank you.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you.

MS. SCHWARTZ: My name is Rachel Schwartz. I'm from the Inter-American Dialogue. My question has been kind of alluded to in some brief comparisons to Mexico, but I've heard on multiple occasions and especially among U.S. policymakers this idea that the Colombian case should be held up as the blueprint for how to tackle criminality in places like Central America and Mexico which are being ravaged by organized crime and drug trafficking. My question for you as experts on Colombia is how do you respond to this assertion? Taking into account of course that all of these cases are distinct in so many different ways, are there any lessons from Colombia that we can learn in thinking about Central America and Mexico?

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you.

MR. THOMPSON: My name is Aaron Thompson. I'm with the Department of State. My question is specifically for Claudia Lopez regarding I thought your observations on the internal dynamics of the governing coalition was fascinating and I was wondering as an outside observer of Colombia on a national level how we'd be able to tell which side of the coalition was gaining the advantage in these municipal elections, if there is a specific party that would have any advantage -- there were certain parties like the PIN that were associated with paramilitaries but I don't know if that's still the case. If you have an observation on that, that would be really interesting. Thank you.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you. That was that, so I guess a couple of minutes per speaker. Vanda?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I'll pick up on the Mexico comparison. I brought it up in my presentation. There are lessons from Colombia. There are four lessons from Colombia. To neglect the problems and deficiencies would be critically incorrect. To some extent Mexico itself bought onto this notion that high-value decapitation will reduce the power of the groups. This was based on the Medellin model. What was ignored in that narrative for that lesson was the fact that you had the Cali and Medellin cartels in the 1980s and 1990s, it was a great bipolar system. You had two cartels. So when the government started focusing on the Medellin cartel, the Cali cartel was very happy to participate. They destroyed the Medellin cartel and voila there was no period of immediate suppression of violence because the Cali cartel took over. It didn't last for a variety of reasons including U.S. oversight and the realization of how much the Cali cartel was complicit. But the other lesson that was not at all mentioned was the fact that you had a great ability by the FARC and the paras to plug into the drug trade with a massive escalation of civil war. It was a very different situation than in Mexico where at the beginning you had about six drug-trafficking organizations. High-value decapitation broke them up but also eliminated the balance of power in the criminal market and precipitated the very intense, very uncontrolled right now criminal violence. You have lessons about demobilizations of actors in both urban and rural spaces and the extraordinary difficulty of pulling it off critically.

I think on the positive side there are lessons to be learned about how to structure vetted isolated units that are necessary to prevent corrupt government officials from trying to subvert especially high-value investigations. I think there is much that Mexico can learn from that as well as about how to reform the police, but again that's a very incomplete story. Doing intelligence in urban spaces for suppressing violence at the local level is very different than doing intelligence for high-value targeting. Both countries have massive problems. Colombia itself didn't overcome it. Yes, there are important lessons, but the context matters a lot and simply saying Medellin worked and ignoring what didn't work in Medellin would be disastrous for Mexico and the same goes for intelligence reform, police reform and demobilization and structuring operations.

MR. ISACSON: Mexico probably doesn't have that much it can learn from Colombia. The things that Vanda mentioned are largely tactical issues such as how to improve intelligence or how to improve the way units work and there are some things that can be taught there. Often when there's discussion of Colombia in the context of Mexico there's a bit of nostalgia perhaps for a moment when the recipient country's elite coalesced around a single plan actually some of its own resources on that plan and showed some political will to move forward. I don't want to discuss Mexico's too much, but there seems to be a lot more discussion about the 2012 elections and rearranging political deck chairs and taking on this problem squarely, particularly problems like justice and reform of public security. You can learn a lot from what was not done in Colombia, too, especially again justice, creating opportunities for youth and exerting a civilian state presence in the countryside and other areas where there wasn't one, and there's a lot that Colombia can show Mexico about what still remains to be done. And there is a whole host of other issues especially our own contribution in demand for arms and money laundering that simply don't come out of the Colombia experience at all.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Claudia?

MS. LOPEZ: The bad news is on November 1, I can assure you everybody is going to declare victory. Every side. So we're going to be quite confused by that. The president is going to say we win, we won. President Santos is going to say we won. The Liberal Party is going to say we won. The leftist parties are going to say we won. And to some extent, yes, everybody is going to win a little bit. Party lines help for nothing so forget about it. Party lines help nothing in Colombia unfortunately. This story for example that the Pin is the party related to the mafia as if everybody else is clean is wishing of course so we cannot take this story and make policy decisions based on it. In the very same year in 2010, PIN was the evil. Here it's the part that's related. That same year more members of the U Party, la U Party, were related and indicted because of ties with paramilitaries and drug traffickers than any member in the PIN Party. The very same year now PIN already doesn't exist because drug traffickers and politicians allied with them learned their lesson. Also, PIN is discredited to get rid of them. So they've already built three different parties. Now they are supporting their candidates through AFROVIDES, through (inaudible) through many

other parties and many other coalitions, so who are the candidates now? Seventy percent of the candidates running right now for the most important offices, governor's and mayor's offices are running based on coalitions so that no individual party can declare victory alone.

Having said that, we have good enough information, and when I said we I refer to the government and the media and the NGOs who work on these issues, we have good enough information to have a clear picture of who is winning after a couple of days after the election. So we know who is supporting each candidate in the most important cities, municipalities and governor's offices. We know exactly so that we can make an assessment beyond the headlines and the pictures in the headlines of November 1 that are going to be not useful at all. Let me tell you the story. If Enrique Peñalosa in Bogota and Alvaro Velasquez in Antioquia don't win the election, everybody is going to declare President Uribe's defeat, period, because they are the most noticeable candidates he is supporting. Of course they are important candidates. They'll win the election. Does that mean that President Uribe actually losses or is defeated? No. Of course it would be a huge defeat for him but it doesn't mean that at the regional level and in the whole political spectrum he is losing so we have to be careful. It's complex, it's not easy, but, yes, I would say we can have a clear picture, we have good enough information both in the governmental agencies and in the nongovernmental agencies to have a clear picture of who won and who didn't in the election after a couple of weeks.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Have Secretary Clinton call Claudia a couple of days after the election.

MS. BOUVIER: I'd like to address two of the questions, the question on discrimination and the absence the absence of discussion about ethnic minorities also about women. Women have not been mentioned by any of us up front. On the second question on lessons from Colombia I have a couple of comments I want to make.

On the question of marginalization, I think partly the reason is that they're not at the tables in Bogota at the highest levels. There was a national encounter of Afro, indigenous and peasants for land and peace in Barrancabermeja in August of this year that was very significant. It brought 20,000 people from these different sectors for several days to discuss what plans forward they might come up with for peace. It was remarkable because it's the first time there's been a national gathering of that sort in many, many, many years. I'm assuming that during the Caguan days there was more mobilization, but I think that that kind of national mobilization of those sectors has not happened in a while so I think that is noteworthy. I think the other thing is in some ways because these groups of women and ethnic minorities have been the ones to be displaced, to be refugees, to suffer the real war in the regions, that it's no surprise then that people in Bogota are able to deny that the war continues on because these are groups that are not sitting at the tables with them telling them that the war goes on and we're feeling it and women especially. USIP is supporting a book that's coming out on the gender dimensions of violence on the North Atlantic coast. It will give you chills up your spine and the level of violence against women and violence against transgender, bisexual and homosexuals as well as part of a kind of philosophical ideological plan to gain control in sectors is mind-blowing. It's mind-blowing. I hope that addressed a little bit of the question.

I wanted to turn briefly to the lessons from Colombia for Mexico and I think it is really important not to take lessons wholeheartedly from Colombia for Mexico because there are so many differences. There is not time to go into those now, but what I would say is we've seen, and I was following the drug-trafficking issue when the U.S. Army invaded Bolivia back in 1986 and the debates have not changed that much. But one thing that I think people keep forgetting is this balloon effect where you crunch down on the drug trade in Bolivia and it reemerges in Peru or it reemerges in Colombia, or you crunch down on the Putumayo and it comes down in Caquetá or you crunch down on the cartels in Cali and Medellin and it goes to Los Zetas and the groups in Mexico. I think that we're trying to deal with drug trafficking at a national level. We're

using national policies instead of transnational alliances to deal with it and they're not effective because of this balloon effect, we can anticipate that that will happen and until we have some sort of structures that we create that go beyond the nation-state and the electoral period -- I spoke to one Mexican official at one point and he said we just want to make sure the numbers go down while we're in power, while we're in office, and I think that's the kind of mentality that many bureaucrats who are responsible for implementing these policies has. They want to make sure that they can show success in their municipality, in their department, in their nation, and until you get beyond that to look more long term and more globally I think we're not going to find the solutions.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you very much. We will be certainly watching the election results and I only hope that now that the FTA has been ratified and that there is this kind of feel-good attitude that the good guys are running the show in Colombia, we keep paying attention to what's happening. We will certainly be paying attention and we certainly hope that you join us in future discussions about Colombia. Please thank our speakers.

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