

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Claudia Blum
Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations

Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly

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Mr. President,

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me to express our gratitude for the presentation made by the Secretary-General, as well as for the circulation of the Comprehensive Framework for Action of the High Level Task Force. We value this session as an opportunity to collect more information and exchange views on the developments regarding this issue.

In previous occasions Colombia has expressed its expectations on the different fields of work of the Task Force. In this meeting, our considerations will relate to the linkages between the global food situation and the challenges that the international community faces with regards to energy security:

1. Firstly, we would like to underscore the complex and multidimensional nature of the food problematic, which imposes the need for comprehensive responses that include short, medium and long-term measures. Along this line, we value the comprehensive nature of the CFA.
2. Among the areas that are a priority for Colombia, we highlight the necessity to increase the international aid capacity in order to respond to immediate food needs. It is also critical to reduce the imbalances and distortions of the multilateral trade system; to boost cooperation for the adaptation of the agricultural sector to climate change; as well as to revitalize and raise the productivity of the rural sector in developing countries, with a view to respond more effectively to the increase in global food demand.

3. Likewise, it is a priority to address the situation created by the dynamics of energy demand and supply. Especially, considering the striking increase in the price of oil, which has exceeded 500% in the last 8 years.
4. This circumstance is reflected, for instance, in the price of fertilizers, which has increased almost in 700%. In Colombia, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has identified that in the structure of production-costs in the agricultural and livestock industries, the prices of oil and fertilizers have a weight of approximately 30% to 40%, including the cost of transportation. Hence, it is very unlikely that shocks of 500% and 700% in oil and fertilizers prices have not had a significant impact in food prices.
5. In this serious context, renewable energies and specifically biofuels stand out as viable alternatives from the perspective of sustainable development. These alternatives contribute to the transformation of the energy economy and the improvement of energy security at the national and international levels; to the decrease of production and transportation costs of agricultural products; to boost the rural sector; and to the protection of the environment, given the reduction of emissions that can be achieved through the implementation of policies on extensive biofuels use.
6. Therefore, it would be paradoxical to isolate, on the basis of oversimplifications, the production of biofuels as a decisive factor in the global food situation. It is necessary to take into account the particularities and specific conditions of producer countries. Additionally, it should be noted that despite this sector's growth, in both developing and developed countries, the global production of biofuels —biodiesel and ethanol— absorbs less than 0.07% of the global food production.
7. In Colombia, the production of biofuels from sugar cane and palm oil has not implied the replacement of fertile lands to produce food or the reduction of the national agro-alimentary supply. On the contrary, it has contributed to the creation of thousands of jobs, to stimulate larger investments in the rural areas and to enhance productivity of underutilized lands. With the large availability of fertile lands in my country, biofuels represent an opportunity to expand the agricultural frontier, without affecting a millimeter of forest. The expansion of the rural frontier entails, simultaneously, higher opportunities for food production and larger benefits for the poorest rural populations. For instance, if in Colombia we used 50% of the suitable and available land to grow sugar cane for ethanol and palm-tree for bio-diesel, we could generate 800,000 new rural jobs.

Mr. President,

I would like to reaffirm that the production of biofuels does not happen in a vacuum. It happens in a context of important sustainable development challenges and, above all, of great difficulties in the field of energy security at all levels. In this sense, we note that even though that CFA acknowledges the critical situation of oil prices in its contextual analysis, it does not include wide political orientation on energy matters. The orientations are limited to the issue of biofuels. We would appreciate if more ambitious actions were projected with regards to the general scope of global energy crisis. For instance, we would like to see the projection of measures to promote in-depth studies on the implications of high energy prices on food security, as well as recommendations that contain policy options to mitigate such implications at the national and international levels. Without a doubt, many of the organizations that are represented in the High-level Task Force can contribute to such objective, in accordance to their respective mandates.

Allow me to reiterate our appreciation for the Secretary-General's presentation and for his efforts in leading the UN response to the food situation. We expect to have additional opportunities for expressing our considerations on the issue, as well as for contributing with specific observations, once a detailed assessment of the orientations contained in the CFA has been carried out.

I thank you.