

## **“SOLUTIONS TALKS”**

### **Tri-partite talk about alternative development between UNODC, UNIDO and Colombia 30 NOVEMBER 2023**

#### **Ambassador of Colombia – Laura Gil**

It is a great pleasure to be here today and to participate in a dialogue that Colombia considers fundamental for countries and organizations involved in alternative development and the donors that fund these efforts.

I have come here with three messages:

1. Colombia believes we need to bring products of alternative development projects into agro-industrial chains of value in order to deepen their impact, overcoming the exclusive artisanal entrepreneurship that characterises them so as to reach more communities and provide them with more alternatives for legal and decent livelihoods.
2. Colombia encourages partners in alternative development at the multilateral and bilateral levels and international civil society to help identify allies in the private sector that would allow to open markets for alternative development products in a framework of fair and sustainable trade.
3. Colombia supports Secretary General Guterres’s reform One United Nations and expects to see United Nations programs and agencies working together, side by side, in order to maximise the efficient use of human and financial resources, in Colombia and everywhere.

So let me begin adding a few words to each of these points.

#### **On the relevance of agrobusiness**

My country is engaged in alternative development strategies in line with our new drug policy that seeks to reach coca-growing communities with the purpose of achieving a more significant impact on the transformation of the territories.

We want agriculture to be a source of progress and opportunities for the country. Investing in agriculture is not only one of the most effective strategies to improve food security and promote sustainability, but also essential to many countries' economic development.

We foster policies designed to promote agribusiness where sustainable food value chains play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs and to end local community's dependence on illicit economies.

We are working together very successfully with UNODC, here in Vienna and in the field, to set out alternative development projects that fulfil the income-generating needs of rural and indigenous communities. Many of the products of these projects remain at the artisanal level and supply local markets.

We want to go beyond raw materials and move on to the production of finished products, some of which could supply international markets. Our goal is to develop an agroindustry that relies on innovation and quality, and, for that, we need to provide, more and better knowledge to our farmers. Only thus we will achieve the productive transformation of our countryside.

Of course, not all alternative development products can be part of an agro-industrial chain. We are fully conscious of that. Many of you were present in the launch of Café Malongo last month, an exemplary case of the impact of alternative development. UNODC managed this project and even found a distributor in Europe. Still, the gourmet quality of this specialty coffee prevents its massification.

### **On the relevance of alliance with the private sector**

We want to increase the size of the projects to meet the magnitude of the challenge, because only in this way will we be able to reduce coca cultivation significantly and sustainably for illicit activities. This means finding buyers for these products.

Alternative development has proven to be more successful when projects include private sector partnership with fair trade conditions because it generates competitiveness, improves commercialization potential and market access, adds value to alternative products and promotes entrepreneurship and the legal growth of local economies.

Colombia would like to propose to UNODC and UNIDO to organise jointly a ministerial meeting in which the Ministers of Trade of the countries with alternative development programs together with representatives of the European private sector (large distributors, relevant companies in the agro-industrial sector of cocoa, coffee, chocolate) can discuss how to join efforts to develop larger scale projects.

### **On the relevance of coordinated work with the UN system**

At the heart of this transformation of alternative development programs, there is a need for more joint collaboration between UN agencies, to address the underlying factors and root causes of illicit economies through a holistic approach and mainstreaming alternative development at a larger scale with the private sector, as a necessary component for economic rural development targeting vulnerable communities.

Our call today is to go beyond what we have been doing, to think outside the box, and to have a more coordinated and coherent interaction between UNODC and UNIDO. This would also allow us to make a better and more efficient use of the millions of dollars that Colombia allocates to alternative development programs.

UNODC is our privileged partner for alternative development; UNIDO is the expert organisation on industrial development. We work well with both.

Now let's the three of us commit to do more, to do it better and to do it together.