



PRESS RELEASE

UNODC and Colombian authorities to destroy almost 14,000 firearms on International Gun Destruction Day.

BOGOTA, 6 July 2007 (UNODC) - A special ceremony to melt down nearly 14,000 firearms will take place on 9 July, International Gun Destruction Day. Organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Colombian Ministry of Defence, the national armed forces and the programme "Vida Sagrada", the event will highlight the danger of illegal arms proliferation. Of the firearms scheduled for destruction, 60% were illicitly manufactured, 31% are privately owned and 9% belong to the armed forces. Seventy-seven per cent are illegal.

UNODC recently published a report entitled *Violence, Crime and Illegal Arms Trafficking in Colombia*, which said the country needed to do more to crack down on arms trafficking. The report challenged the perception that it was plagued by indiscriminate violence. Rather, the use of firearms was highly controlled and regulated by criminal gangs, rebel factions and the Government.

Colombia has one of the highest homicide rates in the world. In 2005, 70% of over 17,000 homicides registered were committed with firearms. Cities registering the highest numbers of legal firearms were also those showing the lowest homicide rates. Conversely, cities with the highest murder rates were those with the lowest number of legal arms. Most homicides in Colombia are related to the illegal ownership, manufacture and trade of firearms.

The ceremony will be supported by the National Plant for Metal Work and Manufacture –SIDENAL. The molten metal will go towards the manufacture of school chairs and the construction of a monument in memory of the victims of violence and kidnapping in Colombia.

The meltdown will happen on Monday 9 July, at 3:00 p.m. (local time) at SIDENAL headquarters, Sogamoso, witnessed by the Minister of Defence, Juan Manuel Santos Calderon; General Freddy Padilla León, Military Forces Commander; Father Alirio López, Director of the programme "Vida Sagrada"; and Stefan Liller, UNODC Colombia.

Since December 2005, UNODC has been the custodian of the Firearms Protocol to the 2003 United Nations International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

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