



General Assembly First Committee Topic Background Guide
***Topic 2: Strengthening Security and Cooperation
in Latin America and the Caribbean¹***

10 October 2017

According to Chapter I, Article I of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the purpose of the UN is:

- To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;
- To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
- To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.²

As the General Assembly (GA) subcommittee charged with security issues, the General Assembly First Committee (GA-1) considers ways to strengthen international security and cooperation. Thus, a frequent topic is how the three goals listed above fit together in particular regions.

The Latin American and Caribbean region faces some of the greatest socio-economic inequalities in the world. Within the region, the UN Development Programme estimates that 24.4 percent of the population is poor, with around 12.9 percent living in extreme poverty.³ This demonstrates significant progress since 2002, when approximately 42% of people in the region lived in poverty. This decline, however, masks significant disparities between the rich and the poor in the region, and does not include the 38.4% of people in the region who are at risk of falling into poverty. In fact, in 2015 and 2016, the number of people living in poverty in the region actually grew by 1.4 percent, according to the UNDP.⁴

To address socio-economic concerns such as these, in 2015, the UN developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a continuation of the former Millennium Development Goals established in 2000.⁵ The SDGs set targets for improvement in poverty, gender equality, maternal health and the reduction of HIV/AIDS.

¹ This document was written by Nicholas Potratz and Kedra Hildebrand. Copyright 2017 by Nicholas Potratz.

² “Charter of the United Nations,” June 21, 1946, available at <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>.

³ George Gray Molina et al., “Regional Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean, Multidimensional progress: well-being beyond income,” UNDP, 2016, pp. 7, 12; available at http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human_development/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-para-america-latina-y-e/.

⁴ World Bank, “Latin America and the Caribbean,” available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/0,,menuPK:258559~pagePK:158889~piPK:146815~theSitePK:258554,00.html>

⁵ United Nations, “End Poverty, UN Millennium Goals: 2015 Make it Happen,” available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

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Although the region has experienced gradual economic improvement in these areas since the end of the Cold War, much remains to be done to reduce maternal mortality, the large disparity in wages between men and women, and the continued spread of HIV/AIDS.⁶

Many of the obstacles to reaching the SDGs are security issues that stymie successful economic, social, and political development. These include the high rates of homicide, violence against women, fighting among paramilitary forces, and the success of drug trafficking cartels. To address these problems, cooperation within the region and among extra-regional actors such as the US and the UN is needed.

To explore these security and cooperation issues, this topic background guide will focus on two countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The first is Colombia, a country recovering from over 50 years of civil war. Successful development in Colombia has long been held hostage to competition between the government and guerillas supported by drug trafficking.⁷ The second focus is Nicaragua, which struggles with many of the same security concerns as Colombia including poverty, demobilization of soldiers, international weapons smuggling, and drug cartels. Despite UN involvement in the successful 1996 federal election, Nicaragua faces ongoing internal social tensions and fragmentation, highlighting the need for increased efforts to prevent instability and promote sustainable development.⁸

Colombia and Nicaragua are two case-studies that draw attention to the complicated economic, military, and international concerns and challenges associated with strengthening security and cooperation in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

History and Current Events

Colombia:

Following the civil war known as *La Violencia*, which lasted for over a decade in the 1950s and resulted in the death of more than 200,000 Colombians, the 1960s were marked by the establishment of several guerrilla factions.⁹ One of the most notorious factions was the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). FARC originally started as a peasant defense movement that combined with the militant wing of the Communist party and was ideologically motivated to defend the poor against the wealthy government and the intervention of the United States.¹⁰ The second most notorious faction, the Army for National Liberation (ELN), was established in 1964 by university students recently returned from Cuba seeking to emulate Fidel Castro's communist revolution, and is based on much of the same ideology as FARC.¹¹ Other, less notorious factions established during the 1960s included the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO), which in 1972 became the M-19 guerilla movement, and the popular Army of Liberation (EPL).

⁶ Annabel Boissonnade-Fotheringham, "AIDS Education: Challenges Ahead for Latin America and the Caribbean," *UN Chronicle*, November 2003; United Nations, "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017," 17 July 2017, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/>.

⁷ Gary Leech, "Fifty Years of Violence," *Colombia Journal*, May 1999, <http://www.colombiajournal.org/fiftyyearsofviolence.htm>

⁸ Frans Van Haren and Kristjan Guy Burgess, "Lessons from the 'Support Group for Nicaragua,'" *Peace and Conflict Monitor*, April 21, 2003, available at http://www.monitor.ucepeace.org/archive.cfm?id_article=25

⁹ Julia Sweig, "What Kind of War for Colombia? History Repeating Itself," *Foreign Affairs* 81:5 (Sep/Oct 2002), pp. 122-141.

¹⁰ Leech, "Fifty Years of Violence."

¹¹ While FARC and ELN espoused similar ideals their relationship was tenuous. In some instances they worked together, while in others they fought directly. Claire Felter and Danielle Renwick, "Colombia's Civil Conflict," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, updated 11 January 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/colombias-civil-conflict>.

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FARC and the ELN increased their power and hold over Colombia over the ensuing 50 years. FARC evolved into Colombia's "largest and best-equipped rebel group," which in March 2008 boasted 9,000 fighters. In 2008, FARC was estimated to control one-third of the country and was responsible for hijacking a domestic flight in February 2002, kidnapping a Colombian Presidential candidate in 2002, assassinating the former Colombian Minister of Culture in 2001, and murdering three United States missionaries in 1999.¹²

After years of increased violence between Colombia and the rebel groups (fostered, in part, by a deal between FARC and ELN to cease conflicts between the groups, as well as suspected support for FARC from the Venezuelan government), Colombia and FARC began the process of negotiating a peace agreement in 2012. Peace talks began when Chile, Cuba, Norway, and Venezuela began acting as mediators for the group. The talks resulted in several ceasefires between FARC and Colombian forces, an agreement from FARC to cease drug operations in 2014, and a final peace agreement in August 2016.¹³

In October 2016, Colombians narrowly rejected the agreement with FARC in a referendum. Despite provisions in the agreement to "establish a special tribunal made up of Colombian and international judges to collect testimony and evidence, oversee reparations, and mete out punishments to those found guilty of serious crimes," many felt the agreement was too lenient on FARC members, as it did not require prison sentences. This angered some who felt it would exculpate many FARC members who committed human rights abuses. In response, FARC and Colombia formed a new agreement in December 2016, but did not hold a referendum. The new plan required FARC to forfeit its assets to be used for reparations, better defined punishments for FARC members, and allowed for FARC political representation, though it barred FARC members from running for office in former conflict zones.¹⁴

Following a civil conflict that lasted half a century and resulted in the loss of 220,000 lives, 25,000 missing people, and approximately 5.7 million displaced people, the peace agreement seems to be an auspicious first step in bringing stability to the country. In early 2017, perpetrators of minor crimes were given amnesty, as required in the peace agreement, and FARC members began to demobilize and disarm.¹⁵ FARC formally ceased to exist as a rebel group in June 2017.¹⁶ In August 2017, FARC officially became a political party in Colombia. Observers note that its role as a political party is important for ensuring Colombian stability, as it brings in FARC's outside voices and offers a democratic process for their concerns to be heard. According to researchers, political inclusion of former rebels makes it less likely that members will resort to violence as a means of attaining political objectives.¹⁷

Still, many challenges remain for Colombia, both with regard to ensuring stability with FARC and with its relationship with other paramilitary groups, such as the ELN. Although the FARC agreement bodes well for ending conflict in Colombia, the newly established agreement remains somewhat tenuous. One potential problem is that there is still widespread resentment towards FARC among Colombians due to its involvement in the drug trade and its criminal activities while active. Efforts to ostracize former FARC members, or the FARC party, could result in breakdown of prospective stability. For this reason, many (including Pope Francis) have stressed the need for

¹² Felter and Renwick, "Colombia's Civil Conflict;" *BBC News* "Colombia's Farc rebels - 50 years of conflict," updated 6 October 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36606568>.

¹³ Felter and Renwick, "Colombia's Civil Conflict;" *BBC News*, "Colombia profile – Timeline," updated 4 October 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19390164>.

¹⁴ Felter and Renwick, "Colombia's Civil Conflict."

¹⁵ *BBC News* "Colombia's Farc rebels - 50 years of conflict."

¹⁶ *BBC News*, "Colombia profile – Timeline."

¹⁷ Alia M. Matanock, "The FARC just became a Colombian political party. Here's why elections are critical to a lasting peace," *The Washington post*, Monkey Cage: Analysis, 30 August 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/30/the-farc-just-became-a-colombian-political-party-heres-why-elections-are-critical-to-a-lasting-peace/?utm_term=.a7febf79ea21

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Colombians to focus on state-building and creating a stable state for the future.¹⁸ Thus, if the UN is to help establish stability in Colombia, it will require Member States to find ways to help promote democratic inclusion in the country, despite its scarred past, as well as the means to create effective and stable governing institutions.

Second, current events in neighboring Venezuela have the potential to destabilize Colombia again. As pro-government forces and anti-government protesters have clashed in Venezuela over an ongoing economic crisis in the country, its borders have remained unchecked. Because rebel groups like the ELN are most powerful at Colombia's borders, the economic and political instability in Venezuela has the potential to bolster rebel groups in Colombia. ELN and other rebel groups can use the porous borders to retreat and strengthen their forces. In addition, the crisis in Venezuela has made it easier for some Colombian insurgents, such as the People's Liberation Army (EPL) to attract "young, desperate Venezuelans." In fact, the EPL already has more recruits from Venezuela than FARC had when it was still operating.¹⁹

In 2015, ELN was estimated to have about 2,000. Though smaller than FARC was at its height, the ELN possesses several special units trained in weapons manufacturing and explosives. It is known for kidnapping wealthy Colombian citizens for ransom and bombing oil pipelines, resulting in several civilian deaths. In fact, when ELN was excluded from initial peace talks between Colombia and FARC in 2012 (reportedly because Colombia no longer saw ELN as a threat), the rebel group began a string of attacks on police and oil pipelines in retaliation.²⁰

While ELN has since engaged in talks with the Colombian government, it has yet to concede on issues such as "taking hostages for ransom, launching bomb attacks and extorting foreign oil and mining companies while talks are ongoing."²¹ A temporary ceasefire between ELN and the Colombian government began in October 2017, though further agreement between the group and the Colombian government has yet to materialize.²²

The ELN relies heavily on drug trafficking as a source of income. The finances provided by the illegal drug trade in Colombia make it difficult to resolve the civil war between the government and the guerrilla groups. In fact, the Colombian government has stated that its peace agreement with FARC has actually made it more difficult to eliminate coca production in the country, as government cash incentives to destroy cocoa and instead grow alternative crops have currently increased cocoa production. Given that FARC (once the largest and most well-equipped guerrilla force in Latin America) was willing to eliminate its drug business and begin to negotiate, the problem is not insurmountable. It will, however, require much effort to end the violence between the ELN and the Colombian government, particularly as reports indicate that the ELN has now begun battling with rival drug producers to usurp control over FARC's former drug producing territories.²³

¹⁸ Nicholas Casey and Susan Abad, "Pope Francis Urges Colombia to Seize 'Second Chance'" *The New York Times*, 7 September 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/world/americas/pope-francis-colombia.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FColombia>

¹⁹ Annette Idler, "Venezuela's instability has far broader implications: here's what's at stake," 10 August 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/10/venezuelas-instability-has-far-broader-implications-heres-whats-at-stake/?utm_term=.0e26ecf265f4

²⁰ Felter and Renwick, "Colombia's Civil Conflict;" Stanford, "National Liberation Army (Colombia)," Mapping Militant Organizations, updated August 17 2015, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/87>.

²¹ Helen Murphy and Luis Jaime Acosta, "Exclusive: Colombia's ELN says it killed Russian hostage; risks peace talks with government," *Reuters*, 2 September 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-rebels-eln-exclusive/exclusive-colombias-eln-says-it-killed-russian-hostage-risks-peace-talks-with-government-idUSKCN1BD0QQ>

²² *BBC News*, "Colombia profile – Timeline,"

²³ Nick Miroff, "A side effect of peace in Colombia? A cocaine boom in the U.S.," *Washington Post*, 8 May 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/a-side-effect-of-peace-in-colombia-a-cocaine-boom-in-the-us/2017/05/07/6fb5d468-294a-11e7-9081-f5405f56d3e4_story.html?utm_term=.d6a9da7a34f6.

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If continued or resumed fighting does occur, it will make future efforts at sustainable development difficult to achieve, as conflict can "deter investment, hinder trade, divert public social expenditure [particularly to military purposes], and hamper access to education, health and other basic services."²⁴ In 2002, during the civil conflict in Colombia, it was the world's homicide capital and had the third highest number of internal refugees after Angola and Sudan. With the prospect for improved well-being for Colombians at stake, a return to the devastation faced by the country in previous decades could be detrimental to the future economic and physical security of Colombians.²⁵

Nicaragua:

Nicaragua has experienced lengthy periods of military dictatorship, the longest being the rule of the Somoza family which was in power for much of the 20th Century. The Somozas came to power in Nicaragua in 1927 with the support of the US in exchange for their promise to replace the several armies that were then running the country with a single National Guard. Domestic opposition to the pact between the US and the Somozas was led by a Nicaraguan named Augusto César Sandino, who formed a guerilla group to resist US and Somozan forces.²⁶

In February 1934, the US pulled the Marines out of Nicaragua in response to years of successful battles fought by Sandino's forces, and the chief of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza, fearing future conflict with Sandino, had him assassinated. The assassination of Sandino led to decades of further assassinations and political unrest within Nicaragua, culminating in the creation of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in 1961. By 1979, the Sandinistas were supported by much of the Nicaraguan populace including elements of the Catholic Church and regional governments. Under pressure from the FSLN, the last Somoza president fled the country in 1979, and was assassinated in 1980.²⁷

In the 1970s and 1980s, conflict between the FSLN and the US led the Reagan Administration to impose sanctions and trade embargoes on Nicaragua. In addition, the US was found guilty by the International Court of Justice of illegally mining Nicaragua's harbors and financing counterrevolutionary groups (the Contras) in neighboring Honduras to oppose the FSLN government.²⁸ The sanctions and the creation the Contras weakened Nicaragua's economy and created instability within the government. In response to the growing insecurity and conflict between the Contras and the FSLN, the FSLN dedicated itself to building up the Sandinista Peoples' Army (EPS). By 1993 the EPS boasted 80,000 soldiers and had defeated the Contras to the point that they agreed to a ceasefire.²⁹ In 1996, Nicaragua had what the UN considered free and fair democratic elections for the first time.

Despite the end of the war and successful elections, decades of violence continue to impose a heavy toll. Moreover, the war continues to flare up from time to time. In 1991, a year and a half after the Contra war ended, groups of rearmed Contras began to attack towns. In response, former Sandinista soldiers began to form small guerrilla units known as *recompas* to fight the Contras.³⁰

²⁴ European Commission, Conflict, Crisis and Security-Development nexus," https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/fragility-and-crisis-management/links-between-security-and-development_en, accessed 10 October 2017; NGO Committee on Education, Chapter 11 in Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, United Nations, <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>.

²⁵ Sweig, "What Kind of War for Colombia?"

²⁶ Louisa Reynolds, "Nicaragua," *New Internationalist* 399 (April 2007), p. 36.

²⁷ Reynolds, "Nicaragua."

²⁸ International Court of Justice, "Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. The United States of America) Summary of the Summary of the Judgment," June 27, 1986, available at <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=367&code=nus&p1=3&p2=3&case=70&k=66&p3=5>

²⁹ Foundation for Sustainable Development, "Human Rights Issues in Nicaragua," available at <http://www.fsdinternational.org/?q=ntlopps/country/nicaragua/humanrights>

³⁰ Tim Rogers, "Silent War in Nicaragua," *NACLA Report in the Americas* 34:4 (Jan/Feb 2001), pp. 11-16.

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Today, Contras continue to operate in Nicaragua under the moniker “the rearmed”, though their existence is denied by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and others in the Nicaraguan government. Members of “the rearmed” state that they are fighting against corruption on the part of Ortega, who, according to opposition groups, now engages in many of the authoritarian activities of the Somozas, whom Ortega helped to depose in 1979.³¹

The complaints of opposition groups are not unfounded. Ortega has used his power to benefit many of his friends and family financially and politically. He helped push constitutional changes that ended term limits in Nicaragua, which allowed him to run for a third term. Although Ortega maintains wide support from Nicaraguans, opponents have also asserted that he rigged the 2016 election and precluded opponents from running. There has thus been strong criticism over “his tight control over elections, Congress, the police, the military and the courts.”³²

Without assistance from external actors, the Contras today are much less capable than those that conspired with the Reagan administration in the 1980s. In fact, many have turned to the illicit activities as a means of funding their operations. International trafficking in weapons acquired during the war and a “drug-trafficking corridor in north-central Nicaragua” remain potential sources of funding for rebel groups, which could strengthen rebel groups and thus exacerbate current and future conflicts between the state and rebel groups.³³ Even with few capabilities relative to the Contras of the 1980s, “the rearmed” have frequently carried out attacks in Nicaragua’s rural areas in recent years. In response, the Nicaraguan government has assassinated both former and current members of rebel groups. Attacks carried out by the government and the contras have resulted in the deaths of many Nicaraguan police officers, soldiers, and civilians, not to mention members of rebel groups themselves.³⁴

Despite strong economic growth under the Ortega government, Nicaraguans continue to experience significant disparities in wealth distribution, access to public goods, and a significant level of poverty. Nicaragua is the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, next to Haiti.³⁵

Given the problems of economic scarcity and government corruption, some observers have speculated that Nicaragua could sink further into civil conflict again in the future. Carlos Chamorro, a journalist in Nicaragua, for example, sees the reinstatement of an authoritarian government as part of a “tortuous cycle of revolution and counterrevolution, civil war and foreign aggression, democratic transition and, now, a return to authoritarianism.”³⁶ Other observers have also argued that the fights erupting between rebels in rural areas and the Colombian government are “a violent expression of the broader anger brewing against the government.”³⁷

³¹ Frances Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras: Nicaragua Endures an ‘80s Revival,” *The New York Times*, 7 March 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/08/world/americas/ortega-vs-the-contras-nicaragua-endures-an-80s-revival.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua&mtref=undefined>; Fox News, “30 years after Iran-contra affair, Nicaragua once again facing threat of rebel fighters,” 8 March 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/03/08/30-years-after-iran-contra-scandal-nicaragua-once-again-facing-threat-rebel.html>.

³² Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Fox News, “30 years after Iran-contra affair.”

³³ Rogers, “Silent War in Nicaragua;” Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Fox News, “30 years after Iran-contra affair.”

³⁴ Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Fox News, “30 years after Iran-contra affair.”

³⁵ Rogers, “Silent War in Nicaragua;” Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Fox News, “30 years after Iran-contra affair.”

³⁶ Carlos Chamorro, “In Nicaragua, A Blatantly Rigged Election,” *The New York Times*, 4 November 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/05/opinion/in-nicaragua-a-blatantly-rigged-election.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua>.

³⁷ Meridith Kohut, “Brewing Anger in Nicaragua,” 22 February 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2016/02/22/world/americas/brewing-anger-in-nicaragua/s/20160223CONTRAS-slide-J4GS.html>.

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In addition to the frustration over increasing authoritarianism and the feeling by many rebels that the Ortega government has excluded them from decision-making, the “brewing anger” is also attributable to economic concerns from several groups in Nicaragua. Rebels have, for instance, criticized policies that favor Nicaragua’s wealthiest individuals, such as tax cuts on luxury items like yachts. Middle-class Nicaraguans have similarly protested what they see as the consolidation of wealth among Ortega’s allies and friends.³⁸

The Nicaraguan government has also proposed a new canal in the country, which it claims would rival the nearby Panama Canal. The government has been working with a Chinese company, HKND, to begin developing the canal, and has promised to reimburse landowners in the affected region. It claims that the canal (and other projects, such as airports) will bring economic growth to Nicaraguans, but many in Nicaragua feel the canal may be “a massive corruption scheme” aimed to increase the influence of Ortega in Nicaraguan politics and to sell off important economic rights to Chinese businessmen, who some suspect have ties to the Chinese government.³⁹

Another potential source of conflict is the treatment of the Miskito people – an indigenous group that resides in Nicaragua – by non-indigenous Nicaraguans. In recent years, the Miskito people have experienced intrusions from “settlers” (i.e. non-indigenous Nicaraguans) seeking access to gold and timber in the Miskito’s ancestral lands. Resulting conflicts between the Miskito and intruding Nicaraguans have resulted in the burning of at least one village, 3,000 Miskitos being forced to leave their homes, and at least 30 deaths. Altogether, the intrusion on Miskito land has affected about 40,000 of the indigenous people. Ortega has officially sided with the indigenous group, but many of the Miskito believe that the Ortega and other members of the government have not done enough to protect them or their lands, and have, in fact, allowed the influx of settlers and resulting violence to continue.⁴⁰

Supporters of the government argue that the Colombian government has provided many benefits to the poor. About 38 percent of profits from oil given to Nicaragua by Venezuela are used to fund social projects, such as housing for the poor. Further, poverty decreased by six percentage points between 2005 and 2009.⁴¹ Rebels claim these are merely attempts to “pay off” the poor, who overwhelmingly support Ortega, in order to maintain the status quo.⁴² Some critics have further predicted that the Venezuelan economic crisis could damage Nicaragua’s economy and the services it provides to those in poverty, which could cost Ortega the political support he now possesses.⁴³

Compared to the recently established peace with FARC in Colombia, Nicaragua has remained relatively stable since the 1990s. Despite this, a number of underlying problems – and the violence that continues to this day, albeit less severe than the conflicts of the 1980s – create an environment that some suggest could foster conflict in the future. To prevent this, the UN and other actors may need to help bolster Nicaragua’s apparent stability. This means preventing distrust and anger towards the government from festering further, which requires the consolidation of democratic and inclusive institutions in Nicaragua that distribute economic and political gains more equitably.

Previous Committee Work on This Topic

³⁸Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Kohut, “Brewing Anger in Nicaragua.”

³⁹ Kohut, “Brewing Anger in Nicaragua;” Andrés Oppenheimer, “Four years later, Nicaragua’s \$40 billion interoceanic canal remains a pipe dream,” *Miami Herald*, 5 July 2017, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andres-oppenheimer/article159689339.html>.

⁴⁰ Frances Robles, “Nicaragua Dispute over Indigenous Land Erupts in Wave of Killings,” *The New York Times*, 16 October 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/world/americas/nicaragua-dispute-over-indigenous-land-erupts-in-wave-of-killings.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua&mtref=undefined>; Mira Galanova, “Inside Nicaragua’s Bloody Conflict Over Indigenous Land,” *AlJazeera*, 1 March 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/nicaragua-bloody-conflict-indigenous-land-170206114438236.html>.

⁴¹Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras;” Kohut, “Brewing Anger in Nicaragua.”

⁴² Robles, “Ortega vs. the Contras.”

⁴³ Chamorro, “In Nicaragua, A Blatantly Rigged Election.”

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In 1948, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was created as one of five regional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The mandate of the commission is to deepen the understanding of development challenges facing the region and contribute to a solution.⁴⁴ ECLAC provides reviews of development issues facing Latin America and the Caribbean and addresses actions being taken by organizations within the UN to support the development of the region.

In September 2000, world leaders came together to adopt the UN Millennium Development Goals, which committed member nations to reducing extreme poverty through a list of target goals and a deadline of 2015. In 2015, these were replaced with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which sought to improve people's lives on many of the same criteria, though with a heavier emphasis on environmental and social sustainability. These goals have a direct impact on the Latin American and Caribbean region by providing targets for development which have become indicators of progress. The sixteenth goal in particular seeks to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."⁴⁵

In 2016, the General Assembly passed Resolution 71/77, which expressed support for the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. In particular it recognized the important role the organization plays in addressing problems with small arms and light weapons in the region, including their sale, distribution, and use by non-government forces. It further urged states in the region to participate in the organization's activities.⁴⁶

Colombia:

The UN has made several efforts to address drug trafficking in Colombia. In 1998, for example, the GA held a special session to consider the "Fight Against the Illicit Production, Sale, Demand, Traffic and Distribution of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Related Activities and to Propose New Strategies, Methods, Practical Activities and Specific Measures to Strengthen International Cooperation in Addressing the Problem of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking."⁴⁷ Colombia was central to this effort, as the GA sought to elicit international cooperation to halt the continued trafficking stemming from the country. In 2003, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) signed several marketing agreements with supermarkets to support the elimination of coca and poppy cultivation in Colombia by replacing them with food crops.⁴⁸

In 2001, the UN agencies in Colombia developed a humanitarian action plan for the country which:

aimed to ensure respect for, access to and implementation of human rights and basic humanitarian principles for the population affected by the humanitarian crisis caused by armed conflict and massive population movements. Seven areas of action were highlighted: (i) prevention and protection; (ii) food security; (iii) health; (iv) education; (v) family well-being; (vi) socio-economic transition; and (vii) coordination and institutional strengthening.

⁴⁴ UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "About ECLAC/CDCC," available at http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/noticias/paginas/0/21710/P21710.xml&xsl=/tpl-i/p18f-st.xsl&base=/tpl-i/top-bottom_acerca.xsl

⁴⁵ United Nations, "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017,"

⁴⁶ United Nations Resolution 71/77 (A/RES/71/77), <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/77>.

⁴⁷ Martin Jelsma, "Background on the United Nations General Assembly Special session on Drug Control," *Transnational Institute*, March 1998, available at http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phpml?page=archives_jelsma_ungass

⁴⁸ Guillermo Garcia Miranda, "Combating Illicit cultivations in Colombia: A Shared Global Responsibility," *UN Chronicle*, November 3, 2006.

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In 2005, the UN Security Council discussed the use of child soldiers by the FARC and the ELN. This Security Council discussion followed an exploratory meeting held in 2004 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which highlighted the need to end the recruitment of children by guerrilla groups in Colombia.⁴⁹

In 2006, the UN Refugee Agency created a country operations plan to deal with the growing displacement of non-combatants, due to the ongoing conflict between the FARC, ELN and the Colombian Government. As mentioned, at that time, the number of displaced people in Colombia was exceeded only by Angola and Sudan.⁵⁰

In 2008, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization highlighted three main goals for assistance to Colombia for 2008–2012, including

elimination of poverty; conservation and sustainable use of resources; and consolidation of democracy. National, regional and local capacity will be strengthened to ensure improved and more equal access to services, particularly for more vulnerable groups; sustainable resource management; more effective institutions; and peacebuilding.⁵¹

In 2010 the Human Rights Council issued a report on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions in Colombia. While the report noted security gains by the government throughout the country, it raised concerns about government security forces that had intentionally killed civilians, then labeled them as "killed in combat." Much of the remainder of the report called to attention the significant number of civilians killed by guerrilla groups.⁵²

The agreement between Colombia and FARC requires that a new UN mission be "responsible for the verification of the reintegration of FARC-EP members into political, economic and social life; the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures." Thus, in July 2017, the Security Council passed Resolution 2366, which issued a mandate that the mission be created following a report on the technical aspects of the mission. After the report was issued in late August, the Security Council passed Resolution 2377, which agreed to adopt the recommendations of the report. The mission officially began operations on September 26, 2017,⁵³

Nicaragua:

In 1996, the UN sent a mission to Nicaragua to monitor elections and verify the "demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, and reintegration of the Contra forces."⁵⁴ The involvement of the UN resulted in the first fair and free elections in the country's history.

In 2001, the International Development Fund partnered with the IMF to present a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Nicaragua. The strategy was based on four pillars: (i) broad-based economic growth; (ii)

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Colombia: Armed Groups Send Children to War (U.N. Security Council to Discuss Colombia's Child Soldiers)," February 22, 2005, available at <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005/02/22/colomb10202.htm>

⁵⁰ United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), "Country Operations Plan: Overview (Country: Colombia)," 2006, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/home/PROTECTION/43253fec2.pdf>

⁵¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Colombia," 2008, available at <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=COL>.

⁵² UN Mission to Colombia Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, A/HRC/14/24/Add.2, 31 March 2010, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/132/35/PDF/G1013235.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁵³ UN Verification Mission in Colombia, "Mandate," <https://colombia.unmissions.org/en/mandate>, accessed 8 October 2017.

⁵⁴ Margaret Karns, "The Roots of UN Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Case Study of Autonomous Agency," paper presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the APSA, August 28, 2008, p. 12, available at http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p278902_index.html

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investment in human capital; (iii) better protection of vulnerable groups; and (iv) institutional strengthening and good governance.⁵⁵

In 2003, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Capital Development Fund boasted success in implementing a small loan program in Nicaragua. The trial program lasted for three years and extended loans for micro-enterprises and small businesses in northern Nicaragua. In view of this success, the UNDP committed another \$1.75 million revolving loan to continue the efforts in Nicaragua.

In 2008, despite being a “vigorous critic of the United States and vocal ally of Hugo Chávez, the Washington-baiting president of Venezuela,” Nicaragua managed to get the backing of the 33-member Latin America and Caribbean group for the General Assembly President position.⁵⁶ The endorsement of the region assured Miguel D’Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua the election.⁵⁷

In 2013, the UN Development Assistance Framework released a report on Nicaragua. The report identified four action areas that are key to development and stability in Nicaragua. These are to (1) establish rights and duties of individuals by meeting basic needs and the welfare of people through basic education, healthcare, nutrition, shelter, and decreasing drug use; (2) ensure socio-environmental sustainability by using sustainable methods for natural resource conservation and land use; (3) promote an inclusive, productive, and diversified economic system that fosters regional integration with increased participation from civil society; and (4) to foster the rule of law and democratic governability by strengthening civil society, decentralizing decision-making, and providing “universal, unrestricted and quality access to justice.”⁵⁸

Conclusion

Members of the Latin American and the Caribbean regions continue to struggle with establishing security and cooperation to achieve successful development. The concerns in the region are multifaceted and require support from UN Member States.

In researching your country’s position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- Is your country a member of the Latin American and Caribbean Region? If so, what are its security concerns? What is its level of development, and how is this affecting security and human rights in the country? How are other countries helping or hindering its progress?
- If your country is not a member of the region, has your country’s history been similar to that of Nicaragua and Colombia? Has your country contributed to or detracted from security, development, and human rights in the region?
- How can your country help Latin America and the Caribbean achieve the SDGs?
- How can the UN contribute to security and cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean?
- Which security issues in the region, and in Colombia and Nicaragua specifically, are most pressing, and how should they be addressed?

Recommended Reading

Felter, Claire and Danielle Renwick. “Colombia’s Civil Conflict.” Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder. Updated 11 January 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/colombias-civil-conflict>.

⁵⁵ International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, “Nicaragua: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Joint Staff Assessment,” August 27, 2001, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/jsa/2001/nic/eng/082701.pdf>

⁵⁶ Warren Hoge, “Nicaragua Credited With Shrewd Tactics in Bid for General Assembly Presidency,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13nations.html>

⁵⁷ United Nations General Assembly, “Miguel D’Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, President of Sixty-Third,” GA/10745 BIO/4022, September 16, 2008, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/bio4022.doc.htm>

⁵⁸ UNESCO, “Nicaragua UNDAF,” 25 October 2013, http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/nicaragua_undaf.pdf.

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This article provides a good background on the history and current events of the Colombian civil war.

Human Rights Watch. Website. Available at <http://www.hrw.org>.

Human Rights Watch is a non-governmental organization that provides information on the human rights effects of wars and government policies worldwide. It is an excellent source for up-to-date reports on the human rights and human security situation in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

“Nicaragua.” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/nicaragua>.

This topic page from the New York Times provides recent news on events in Nicaragua. For more information on several of the issues addressed in this guide, see specifically:

- Carlos F. Chamorro. “In Nicaragua, a blatantly rigged election.” *New York Times*. 4 November 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/05/opinion/in-nicaragua-a-blatantly-rigged-election.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua>.
- Frances Robles. “Nicaragua dispute over indigenous land erupts in wave of killings.” *New York Times*. 16 October 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/world/americas/nicaragua-dispute-over-indigenous-land-erupts-in-wave-of-killings.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua&mtrref=undefined>
- Frances Robles. “Ortega vs. the Contras: Nicaragua Endures an ‘80s Revival.” *The New York Times*. 7 March 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/08/world/americas/ortega-vs-the-contras-nicaragua-endures-an-80s-revival.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNicaragua&mtrref=undefined>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). “Armed Conflicts and Conflict Management” and “Arms Control and Disarmament Documentary Survey.” Website. Available at <http://www.sipri.org/>

This non-governmental organization provides information on military conflicts around the world and is a good place to start to understand ongoing conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Website. Available at <http://www.eclac.cl/default.asp?idioma=IN>

This is the home page for ECLAC. It provides updates on ongoing projects, reports regarding development issues, and analysis of regional application of the SDGs.

United Nations. “The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017.” 17 July 2017. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/>.

This report provides information regarding the UN Sustainable Development Goals and their progress in recent years. It includes useful regional data on each of the 17 goals established by UN Member States.

World Bank. “Latin America and the Caribbean.” Website. Available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/0,,menuPK:258559~pagePK:158889~piPK:146815~theSitePK:258554,00.html>

The World Bank was founded to advance post-war reconstruction and development worldwide. This website provides news, regional analyses, and country briefs, data and statistics on development topics and initiatives being undertaken by the World Bank in the region.