1.2. Location and Size

The continental territory of Colombia is located on the Northwestern end of South America. It is the only South American country with shores on the Atlantic (Caribbean Sea) and Pacific Oceans.

The size of its territory is approximately 440.000 square miles (1.138.000 square kilometers).

1.3. Population, Language and Religion

Colombia's current population is about 33 million inhabitants and its official language is Spanish. The country is characterized by a high degree of ethnic diversity.

The majority of Colombians are Roman Catholic, but there is religious freedom.

1.4. Physical Characteristics and Main Cities

In general terms, the Colombian territory is formed by a mountainous region to the West and by a flat region to the East. The former is constituted by the Andean Cordilleras and the latter by the Orinoco and Amazon river basins.

The Andean Cordillera is divided into three mountain ranges which run from South to North, with heights greater than 13.000 feet at some points. Most of the population is concentrated in the Andean region where the climatic conditions have given rise to a rich agricultural development. However, this advantage is offset by the cost and difficulty of transportation in the mountains.

Nearly 70 per cent of Colombians live in towns or cities. Cities with more than 500.000 inhabitants include Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena. Bogotá is the administrative and political capital and the major financial, industrial and commercial center.

The most important sea ports are Barranquilla, Cartagena and Santa Marta on the Caribbean and Buenaventura on the Pacific.

1.5. Transportation and Communications

The country has made a substantial effort to meet the increasing demands of the population and of the industrial development process for new and better means of transportation and communications. At present, almost all of the territory is connected by land and air transportation, as well as by mail, telegraph and telephone services.