

ingness of the government to give full importance and seriousness to the conclusions and recommendations of the report; urged the government to advance in the implementation of the recommendations contained within the report as soon as possible; and, welcomed the renewal of the agreement between the government and the High Commissioner for Human Rights extending the mandate of the permanent Office in Bogota until 30 April 1999.

The Commission also: expressed deep concern at the gravity and scale of the violations of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law and the persistence and intensification of the internal armed conflict and, the serious and continuous abuses and violations of human rights and the application of international humanitarian law mainly by paramilitaries and guerrillas, but also by certain state agents; urged all parties to make serious efforts to negotiate a peaceful conclusion to the internal armed conflict; and, recognized the creation of the National Peace Council, the ten million votes for peace cast by the citizens of Colombia, the authorization of regional Governors to promote humanitarian agreements with guerrilla groups, and the growing openness of Colombia to international participation in the search for negotiated solutions to armed confrontation.

The Commission also acknowledged the package of important policies and measures adopted and initiated by the government in the field of protecting and defending human rights and its willingness to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner and the Commission's special rapporteurs and working groups, as well as the steps taken for the application of humanitarian standards in the conflict, and its continued cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The Commission expressed deep concern at the growing and harmful contribution of paramilitary groups to the increasingly violent situation in much of the country and their involvement in more than half of the violent crimes attributed to the parties to that conflict; expressed concern that members of the paramilitary groups sometimes act in conjunction with, or with the acquiescence of, members of the armed forces or police; welcomed the reduction in the number of human rights violations attributed to the armed forces and the police, but expressed concern that the measures taken by the authorities have not yet succeeded in ensuring that any support for the activities of paramilitary groups is investigated and punished; noted measures to put an end to paramilitary groups and urged all the authorities to intensify to the maximum these measures; stated its expectation that the armed forces will dismiss from service all those in their ranks who may be implicated in crimes against humanity; condemned terrorist and other violent acts by guerrilla groups which violate international humanitarian law; called on the guerrilla groups to respect norms of international humanitarian law and, especially, condemned killings and all attacks on the

civilian population, indiscriminate massacres, kidnapping and threats to kill nationals and foreigners, hostage-taking, the widespread use of anti-personnel landmines, and the recruitment of children; condemned electoral sabotage by the guerrilla groups; urged the guerrilla groups, for humanitarian reasons, to release all the soldiers in their possession and all the persons kidnapped in contravention of international humanitarian law.

The Commission: welcomed the recommendations of the Constitutional Court to impose strict controls on the weapons held by special private security and vigilante services; welcomed measures adopted by the government to regulate the establishment and functioning of these bodies; and, called on the government to ensure the required resources to monitor closely the activities of all such groups in order to guarantee their effective control and ensure that they remain within the law.

The Commission: called on the government to promote the conclusion of the process of reform of the military penal code by excluding from military courts serious human rights violations and in particular crimes against humanity, by separating the functions of the executive and the judiciary, and by introducing criminal indemnification proceedings ("*la parte civil*"); called for urgent promotion and adoption of the draft law to put an end to forced disappearances and genocide and to increase the punishment for acts of torture; acknowledged the draft law aimed at the abolition of the regional justice system; expressed continuing concern at the unacceptable level of impunity, in particular concerning abuses by state agents that continue to fall under the jurisdiction of military courts; welcomed the important advances by the Human Rights Unit in the Office of the General Prosecutor in number of cases of gross human rights violations; urged the government to strengthen and consolidate its support, through all institutions of the state, of all those who promote the defence of human rights; and, expressed deep concern at the apparent increased threat to many human rights defenders and the fact that some members of the state's intelligence organizations consider these defenders to be linked to guerrilla groups.

The Commission: acknowledged the efforts made by the government to address the problems of internal displacement of large numbers of citizens but expressed continuing concern about the increasing numbers of internally displaced people; welcomed the understanding reached between the government and the UNHCR on establishing a liaison office in Bogota; and, urged the government to continue to seek effective means to prevent such displacements, take all necessary measures to protect the life and physical integrity of internally displaced persons, and to ensure security for organizations supporting them.

The Commission requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to present to the 1999 session a detailed report on the activities of the Office, including analysis on the situation of human rights in Colombia.