



U.S. – Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality



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“We do share the goals of expanding social inclusion and economic opportunity... while preserving and strengthening our heritage of pluralism, tolerance, and diversity.”

–Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

In January 2010, the United States and Colombia signed the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality. The Action Plan recognizes the important contributions of African descended and indigenous peoples and seeks to elevate recognition of their cultures in both countries.

Plan Objectives

The Action Plan focuses on sharing best practices and implementing programs to address social barriers that affect Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. These barriers include: lack of continuity, quality, access, and participation in education; low participation and representation in democratic institutions; limited economic opportunities in the labor market; structural racism; and multiple forms of discrimination.

Priority areas for Action Plan programs include:

- » Greater access to education, employment, economic opportunities, housing, cultural preservation, environmental protection, and democratic institutions.
- » Increased recognition of African descended and indigenous culture, traditional knowledge, and contributions to their respective societies.
- » Integration of the histories of these communities as part of the national education curriculum.

Themes for Cooperation

The Action Plan’s Steering Group held its first meeting June 2, 2010, in Bogotá. U.S. and Colombian government representatives evaluated existing assistance programs in Colombia for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. The two governments agreed to establish working groups to discuss the make-up of the Steering group and an agenda for the first plenary session, proposed for late 2012.

The plenary group will incorporate representatives from both governments, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector to develop proposals for achieving the Action Plan’s objectives.

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs’ Race, Ethnicity, and Social Inclusion Unit coordinates the U.S. implementation of the Action Plan and similar initiatives in the region.

Programs and initiatives

The U.S. government has developed new educational, economic, and cultural programming to support the Action Plan, including:

- » English language scholarships for Afro-Colombian and indigenous high school and university students;
- » U.S. experts visiting Colombia to address topics including cultural entrepreneurialism; the preservation of indigenous customs and languages; and diversity, ethnic identity, and anti-discrimination policies;
- » Entrepreneurship programs that train women to foster and grow their businesses in Colombia;
- » Joint private-public efforts to improve access to employment and promote hiring of individuals from traditionally marginalized groups;
- » International exchanges to build people-to-people connections between communities in both countries; and
- » Programs that improve the quality of life and strengthen access to democratic institutions for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

The United States will continue to work with our Colombian partners to develop innovative program ideas and raise awareness of these new opportunities among the African descended and indigenous communities in Colombia and the United States.

For more information, please visit our website at: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/social/index.htm>.