

**Background note on the
Special Address of the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia
Second regular session of the Executive Board
Monday, 14 November 2022, 15:00–15:30
Hybrid event in the Auditorium at WFP headquarters and on Zoom**

A Latin American country recognized as the world's second most biodiverse, Colombia is uniquely multicultural with a very young population and a thriving spirit, and yet it faces great challenges in achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development that benefits all regions, territories and social groups, starting with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The country has a history of almost 60 years of internal armed conflict, with 9.3 million people affected (90 percent or 8.3 million of whom have been displaced); recent migration has led to more than 2.5 million people settling in the country; extreme poverty affects more than 40 percent of the population; a crucial peace process is under way, but with low levels of implementation over the last four years; the dynamics of food insecurity affect more than 40 percent of the population, and undernutrition is worsening, particularly among ethnic groups; and an economic slowdown caused by COVID-19 and skyrocketing food price inflation (of more than 26 percent in 2022) is reflected in a projected negative trend for 2023 due to high global food prices and reduced production capacity resulting from the global fertilizer crisis. The effects of a changing climate add an additional layer to this complex scenario of multiple challenges, with impacts in terms of emergencies and on development and peace.

Against this backdrop, the new Government of Colombia headed by President Gustavo Petro took office on 7 August 2022 with a vision of change and transformation, focusing – among other themes – on supporting that part of the country's population that has historically been most excluded and marginalized: women, children, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, smallholder farmers, the LGTBQI+ community, older people, and the most vulnerable. This vision imposes a series of measures, starting with rural reform, the pursuit of “total peace”, the attainment of universal school feeding and the expansion of social inclusion and social protection systems to include all the people and communities living in Colombia. To nurture Colombia's vision of the future, the Government is currently promoting community-based dialogue that facilitates the participation of all communities and territories, especially those most affected by conflict and violence, in setting the priorities for the country's new national development plan.

One of the central pillars of the new Government and its vision of inclusive development is the launching of a national programme to fight hunger, which will emphasize the need to bring development to rural areas, focusing on vulnerable territories and communities, including Afro-descendant and indigenous populations, and on empowering rural women and young people, preserving ancestral knowledge and traditional crops, leveraging the unique agro-ecological richness and diversity of Colombia's cultures and territories, which for centuries have been preserved by the communities themselves, and giving impulse to the effective and sustainable use of water resources and the sustainable agricultural production pathways that respect and protect the environment, among other initiatives. This alternative vision of Colombia's development aims to contribute to the country's socioeconomic development, generate value, engage women and young people, promote new inclusive pathways and new employment opportunities, and help to reduce structural inequalities, while promoting the mitigation of and adaption to the impacts of climate change.

The Vice-President will take this opportunity to highlight the support of WFP throughout Colombia's recent history and during this important phase of change and transformation and to advocate increased support for addressing the challenges of social inclusion, creating new opportunities for historically neglected populations in Colombia and Latin America and the Caribbean, especially Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples and women.