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the world...
shouldn't we?*

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***Praying for the World
One Country at Time***



**Colombia
September 18, 2011**

Colombia



Full Name

Republic of Colombia

Capital

Bogota

Location

Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Panama and Venezuela, and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Ecuador and Panama

Leadership

executive branch dominates government

Overview

Colombia was one of the three countries that emerged from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830 (the others are Ecuador and Venezuela). A four-decade long conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups, principally the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) heavily funded by the drug trade, escalated during the 1990s. The insurgents lack the military or popular support necessary to overthrow the government, and violence has been decreasing since about 2002. However, insurgents continue attacks against civilians and large areas of the countryside are under guerrilla influence or are contested by security forces. More than 31,000 former paramilitaries had demobilized by the end of 2006 and the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) as a formal organization had ceased to function. In the wake of the paramilitary demobilization, emerging criminal groups arose, whose members include some former paramilitaries. The Colombian Government has stepped up efforts to reassert government control throughout the country, and now has a presence in every one of its administrative departments. However, neighboring countries worry about the violence spilling over their borders. In January 2011, Colombia assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2011-12 term

Population

44,725,543

Religion

Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%

Economy

The SANTOS administration has highlighted five "locomotives" to stimulate economic growth: extractive industries; agriculture; infrastructure; housing; and innovation. Colombia is third largest exporter of oil to the United States. President SANTOS, inaugurated in August 2010, introduced unprecedented legislation to better distribute extractive industry royalties and compensate Colombians who lost their land due to decades of violence. He also seeks to build on improvements in domestic security and on President URIBE's promarket economic policies. Foreign direct investment reached a record \$10 billion in 2008, but dropped to \$7.2 billion in 2009, before beginning to recover in 2010, notably in the oil sector. Pro-business reforms in the oil and gas sectors and export-led growth, fueled mainly by the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act, have enhanced Colombia's investment climate. Inequality, underemployment, and narcotrafficking remain significant challenges, and Colombia's infrastructure requires major improvements to sustain economic expansion. Because of the global financial crisis and weakening demand for Colombia's exports, Colombia's economy grew only 2.7% in 2008, and 0.8% in 2009 but rebounded to around 4.4% in 2010. In late 2010, Colombia experienced its most severe flooding in decades, with damages estimated to exceed \$6 billion. The government has encouraged exporters to diversify their customer base beyond the United States and Venezuela, traditionally Colombia's largest trading partners; the SANTOS administration continues to pursue free trade agreements with Asian and South American partners and a trade accord with Canada is expected to go into effect in 2011, while a negotiated trade agreement with the EU has yet to be approved by the EU parliament. Improved relations with Venezuela have eased worries about restrictions on bilateral trade, but the business sector remains concerned about the pending US Congressional approval of the US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

Prayer Concerns

illicit producer of coca, opium poppy, and cannabis; world's leading coca cultivator with 167,000 hectares in coca cultivation in 2007, a 6% increase over 2006, producing a potential of 535 mt of pure cocaine; the world's largest producer of coca derivatives; supplies cocaine to nearly all of the US market and the great majority of other international drug markets; in 2005, aerial eradication dispensed herbicide to treat over 130,000 hectares but aggressive replanting on the part of coca growers means Colombia remains a key producer; a significant portion of narcotics proceeds are either laundered or invested in Colombia through the black market peso exchange; important supplier of heroin to the US market; opium poppy cultivation is estimated to have fallen 25% between 2006 and 2007; most Colombian heroin is destined for the US market (2008)