

Hello, my name is Bo Mathiesen, I am the UNODC representative in Colombia. In Colombia, the government of Colombia and the FARC, the rebel group, just about two years ago signed a peace agreement to bring an end to a long-lasting conflict. In that peace agreement, one of the important chapters is about solving the problem of illicit drugs. It has a key component, which is built around alternative development, crop substitution. And therefore, the involvement of the communities in the rural areas, where they have been growing coca for many years. Today, about 90,000 families have signed up for this programme and they are all so committed in trying to really bring about that change. They want to be part of the Colombian community. They want to have sustainable livelihoods around legal and licit activities. We have seen in the last years, and the programme really only started its implementation in May 2017, we have seen a very high commitment of these farmers. Approximately, 90% of these farmers fully commit to, and comply with the programme. By October this year, we have now verified that over 30,000 hectares of coca have been eradicated in a voluntary way. And the farmers get a package of support in exchange, they get conditioned payments, they get food security, they get technical assistance projects for new productive activities, and they get technical assistance from the United Nations, including from the government of course, and monitoring. The monitoring component is key because we want to make sure that the compliance of not-growing illicit crops is really kept. Now, we need to consider how important this is to Colombia. There is a clear recognition in Colombia that there is a link between illicit crops, drug production and conflict. It has been the fuel or the gasoline behind the conflict in Colombia for so many years. We know that cocaine production is very significant in Colombia, and we know how important it has been for the different organized crime groups to finance their activities. So, building peace in Colombia has to include a component of bringing down significantly the illicit crop production and the illegal drug production and trafficking out of the country. That's why member states should really also join Colombia and support Colombia in its alternative development activities. Other countries should consider how they can buy the agricultural products that are coming out of these alternative development activities to support these farmers and support these rural communities in this change that it is to go away from the illicit activities over to licit economies. Today, Colombia needs that shared responsibility and we from the UNODC strongly support this notion that a shared responsibility and a global response to the problems that are emanating and beginning their march in Colombia, has to be a problem that we can all share and we can all support in finding a solution to. Thank you.