

United States of America

Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review

Ninth Session of the Working Group on the UPR
Human Rights Council
22 November – 3 December 2010

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA, HAITI AND PUERTO RICO

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Executive Summary

*U.S. foreign policy relationships and assistance to Colombia, Haiti and Puerto Rico have resulted in human rights violations in those countries. For 10 years, Plan **Colombia**, a U.S. aid program to the Colombian government, has been in effect. Until 2007, 80 % of the \$6.7 billion has been spent on the military. This has resulted in massive loss of life, internal displacement, a food crisis and economic instability, particularly in indigenous and communities of Afro-descendants. We oppose the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and urge U.S. legislators to cease further military and fumigations operations and refuse to certify Colombia as being in compliance with human rights standards. In **Haiti**, U.S. economic policies have created a captive labor force which has contributed to overpopulation and a cycle of poverty, leaving Haitians vulnerable to damage from the recent earthquake. U.S. aid policies, while benefiting U.S. corporations, have reduced Haiti's autonomy and ability to provide basic services that would have reduced vulnerability from the earthquake. The U.S. recently undermined Haiti's democracy by providing political and financial support to unlawful parliamentary elections and illegally excluding several political parties, including Haiti's largest party. We urge the United States to adopt a human rights-based foreign policy in Haiti. **Puerto Rico** continues to be a colony of the United States. The U.S. maintains authority over Puerto Rico's defense, international relations, external trade and monetary matters. The presence of the FBI and its repression of the independence movement, lack of accountability for assassination of a pro-independence leader, and assaults on the nation's journalists are current manifestations of the colonial relationship. The presence of the U.S. military has resulted in dire environmental destruction, and the lack of local control over the environment has caused devastating adverse effects on the health of the Puerto Rican people, as well as to the land, water, air, flora and fauna. Political prisoners from Puerto Rico, including two who have served 29 and 30 years behind bars, remain incarcerated for their participation in the struggle for independence.*

Colombia

1. In 2000, "Plan Colombia" (Public Law 106-246) was signed into effect by President Bill Clinton, effectively waiving several key human rights conditions. After ten years and \$6.7 billion spent mostly on military operations tied to aerial aspersions of coca crops, the war on drugs, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategies (80% until 2007),¹ Plan Colombia has resulted in massive loss of life, internal displacement, food crisis, economic instability - mostly in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities - and serious undermining of autonomy and self-determination. At the same time, coca cultivation, production and exportation appear to have increased.² By approving policies that disregard human rights protections, the Colombian government only had to superficially meet its requirements in order to obtain aid. Overall, the United States has failed to protect human rights in Colombia and provide the desired security for American citizens.

2. The five decade internal armed conflict in Colombia is deeply rooted in the structural social, economic and political inequalities, racial discrimination and endemic corruption at all state levels, and is linked to economic interests and the struggle over

access and control of resources, particularly land. Characterized by egregious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law for which all the armed actors, including state forces, are responsible, the internal armed conflict has concentrated on indigenous and Afro-descendant territories. Although the struggle for territorial control is the core of the internal armed confrontations and violence, it has been mostly obscured by the sensationalism of drug trafficking and terrorism, the key components of U.S. foreign policy Plan Colombia. The United States has heavily supported militarization, despite the fact that State army in collusion with paramilitary structures is responsible for massive killing of civilians for socio-political reasons, most of which are Afro-Colombians. The United States also gave \$20 million to the Colombian government to support the demobilization process of paramilitaries, as demonstrated by the 2010 Human Rights Watch Report,³ which has also failed. Re-grouped paramilitary structures declared Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders, organizations and Community Councils as “military targets” and intensified the assassination of leaders in the last two years. Moreover, the amnesty granted to paramilitaries and the extradition of some of them has left in judicial limbo cases involving massacres, murders, disappearances and land dispossession, and has violated the victims’ rights to true justice and reparation.

3. UNHCR concurred with various U.N. bodies and human rights NGO reports that African descendants are disproportionately affected by the internal armed conflict and violence in Colombia. Nearly half of Afro-Colombians (26% of Colombian population) are affected by forced internal displacement. Structural exclusion and discrimination, large scale economic projects, and lack of adequate judicial and institutional protection for Afro-Colombians’ collective territories, which facilitates the presence of illegally armed actors in their lands, are the principal reasons for the disproportional internal displacement.⁴ Statistics from the 2005 Census demonstrate how severely Afro-descendants’ have been devastated by internal armed conflict and paramilitary actions. For instance, 89% today live in extreme poverty. One of the largest settlements of Afro-descendants, located on the Pacific Coast, is among the most affected groups, as 72% of the population has lost their means of subsistence (i.e.- land, crops, jobs). While 82% of the population in the Pacific region owned their homes in 1991, only 3.5% own property today. Afro-Colombians are protected by national laws, such as Law 70 of 1993, which recognizes cultural, political, economic and territorial rights, and international agreements such the ILO Convention No.169 (to which Colombia is subscribed), which establishes the right of ethnic groups to be consulted and integrated into the decision-making process on issues that potentially affect their integrity and territorial rights. Nevertheless, land seizure by violent or fraudulent methods has affected about 79% of collective land owners and economic mega-projects, such as oil palm cultivation, mining exploitation and large scale infrastructure, are taking over their ancestral territories.

4. Since 1996, the intensification of the armed conflict in Afro-Colombian communities has coincided with the process to collectively title their lands and the implementation of Plan Colombia. Three major areas have been hard hit by the violence: (1) Jiguamiandó-Curvaradó river basin zone (Chocó region), where over 120 leaders and community members were assassinated between 1996 and 2009, and more than 140,000

acres of collective land were fraudulently appropriated by oil palm corporations with proved links to paramilitary structures and drug traffickers; (2) Buenaventura (Valle de Cauca region), one of the biggest recipients of IDPs, where 797 murders were registered between 2006 and 2007, 117 disappearances and 175 violent deaths were registered between January and August 2009 alone, and a large scale economic project to transform the second most important port in the country has 3,500 persons facing displacement; and (3) Tumaco (Nariño region), one of the strongest paramilitary centers of operations, is a recipient of funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (or “USAID”) for demobilization and coca eradication projects, whereas Diocese of Nariño noted that between January and June of 2009 at least 206 people were assassinated.⁵

5. Despite the requirement that Colombia protect property owners and prevent human rights violations by armed forces,⁶ and despite the fact that fumigations had proved ineffective on reducing coca cultivation and production, continued experiments with intensive aerial aspersion, commonly linked to counter-insurgency activities, have caused massive internal displacements, loss of farm crops, military abuses, and a humanitarian crisis. Only this year, intensive fumigations were reported by the Community Councils of Alto y Bajo Mira (Tumaco), Timbiqui and Guapi (Caucus), and Naya and Anchicaya rivers (Buenaventura); some of these are recipients of USAID funding. Fumigations happen in disregard not only of the provision on the 2008 aid bill, but also in violation of the right to previous consultation. Some Community Councils in the Buenaventura and Tumaco regions already have autonomous manual eradication initiatives that the Colombian government does not support. In 2007, the Community Council of Yurumangui River manually eradicated 27 hectares of coca in two days without any government support or follow up.

6. For decades, institutional intervention has eroded the autonomously productive activities of local communities. The USAID strategy for substitution of coca cultivation and economic development is just one example. While communities and leaders are harassed, persecuted and murdered by armed actors because of their participation in local projects, the eradication and substitution projects do not respect and promote their autonomy or cultural integrity and offer even less support for self-protection initiatives formulated by Community Councils. Despite appropriating \$15 million annually since 2008, USAID funds have yet to offer any support for Afro-Colombian economic development at a local level. Furthermore, it has been proved that USAID strategy has indirectly contributed to the violation of human rights and illegal seizure of lands.⁷ For example, in 2005, USAID funding supported a coca substitution project that established an oil palm factory under the Labor Union of Urapalma, a corporation under investigation for illegal appropriation of lands in the Cacarica region and links to paramilitaries and drug dealers.

7. As the Colombian government has failed to protect and guarantee human rights to African descendants and indigenous communities, such as access to land and food and the right to live, U.S. policies contribute to the undermining and violation of those rights by certifying that Colombia is in compliance with human rights standards.

A call on the Colombia-US Free Trade Agreement

8. By approving the U.S.-Colombia FTA, the U.S. government would effectively be continuing the policies of Plan Colombia and undermining African descendants' rights to self-determination. In 2008, 168 grassroots organizations and Community Councils manifested their opposition to the U.S.-Colombia FTA because the policy lacks meaningful provisions to strengthen human rights protections, particularly those of African descendants.⁸ In order to keep the economic preferences granted by the reciprocal U.S. trade policy, President Uribe's government made significant concessions regarding intellectual property, environment and labor, which further weakened enforcement and penalty mechanisms in the labor and economic chapters of the U.S.-Colombia FTA. This will disproportionately affect already vulnerable communities already vulnerable under unfair competitive conditions. Besides failing to include regulations to prohibit racial discrimination in labor law, the U.S.-Colombia FTA does not include provisions to articulate national development goals with those of Long Term Developmental Plan for the Black, Raizal and Palenque communities. Furthermore, the U.S.-Colombia FTA was elaborated and approved by the Colombian government in violation of the communities' right to consultation. In the actual context of violence and impunity directly affecting Afro-descendant and indigenous communities, approval of this policy will only invite continuity of existing abuses and legitimization of a government that is failing on basic democratic principles.

Positive Developments and Recommendations

9. In 2008 aid bill (H.R. 27654) specific language and funds were appropriated for social and economic development of Afro-Colombian communities, and conditions on fumigations and human rights were strengthened. In November 2009, the United States agreed with the U.N. Third Committee of the General Assembly to "adopt energetic and effective measurements to protect human rights defenders." Also, in approving the 2010 Foreign Operations Appropriations Law, the U.S. Congress established new conditions on granting aid to Colombia, requiring the Colombian government to protect human rights defenders. This provision will require the State Department to reinforce diplomatic efforts to encourage the Colombian government to comply with this new condition.

10. While these steps indicate progress towards improving human rights conditions in Colombia, we recommend that U.S. legislators remove further military and fumigations appropriations from foreign aid policies with Colombia and that the State Department refuse to certify Colombia as compliant with human rights standards until this government recognizes the existence of internal armed conflict, the re-configuration of paramilitary structures, and the structural discrimination and exclusion of African descendants as significant factors of their current plight. Without these recognitions, the Colombian government is *not* in compliance with basic human rights protections.

11. U.S. policies toward Colombia should prevent further violation of Afro-Colombian rights. The U.S. government must ensure that the Colombian government creates the conditions for Afro-Colombians to return to their ancestral territories, rectify any negative impact on Afro-Colombians that resulted from Plan Colombia, and ensure

that any development or usage of land and resources of Afro-descendants only proceed after effective consultation.

Haiti

12. In the aftermath of Haiti's devastating earthquake, released figures put the death toll at an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 people, claiming more lives as a percentage of a country's population than any recorded disaster. A study by the Inter-American Development Bank predicted that, ten years after the disaster, Haiti's economic output is likely to be roughly 30% lower than it otherwise would have been.

13. There are several direct connections between U.S. economic and political policies and earthquake mortality in Haiti. First, U.S. economic policies created a captive labor force for assembly manufacturing in Port au Prince, which contributed to the city's over-population. Over the last 20 years, Haitian farmers have been forced out of business and off their land through food aid, forced tariff reductions, and forced reduction in governmental rural investment through conditions imposed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other donors – all policies sponsored by the U.S. to benefit American corporations.

14. For example, in 1986 the United States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced Haiti to drop tariffs as a condition for urgently needed loans. As a result, cheap, subsidized U.S. rice flooded Haiti and destroyed the Haitian rice market. Haitian farmers could not compete and the Haitian rice market collapsed. Before 1987, Haiti grew nearly all of its own rice. As of 2009, Haiti imported 80% of its rice, mostly from the United States.⁹ Former President Bill Clinton acknowledged that his free-trade policies forced dramatic tariff reductions and helped destroy Haiti's rice production. "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake," said Clinton to a U.S. Senate Committee in March 2010. "I had to live everyday with the consequences of the loss of capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people because of what I did."¹⁰

15. U.S. "aid" policies have helped create a cycle of poverty that left poor Haitians vulnerable to the earthquake. Before the earthquake, 80% of the population lived below the poverty line and 54% lived in extreme poverty, barely surviving on less than \$1 per day.¹¹ The majority of those that suffered from extreme poverty in Haiti lived in rural areas, where domestic farming had been undermined by foreign trade with the U.S. Impoverished Haitians left the countryside to find work in the city, but Port au Prince lacked the infrastructure to support such massive migration. Work was hard to find and 66% of the Haitian workforce still did not have consistent work. Desperate to find housing, Haitians moved into substandard housing on steep slopes of Port au Prince, which collapsed in the earthquake.

16. Secondly, U.S. "aid" policies, while benefiting U.S. corporations, reduced the Haitian government's autonomy and ability to provide the basic government services that would have reduced vulnerability to the earthquake. The United States and IFIs

conditioned aid to Haiti on the government making “Structural Adjustments,” including privatization, trade liberalization, and reduced social service spending. Funds were diverted from essential services, such as health care, roads, rural programs like agriculture, education, urban planning, and enforcement of building codes. Without basic infrastructure, the Haitian government was unable to enforce building standards, provide safe housing, or adequately respond to a disaster of this magnitude.

17. Thirdly, the Haitian government has been further destabilized by U.S. political interference. In the 1990s, former Haitian President Aristide questioned implementation of the “Structural Adjustment” conditions on aid that was weakening the country. After Aristide was re-elected President in 2000 (by 90% of the vote), the United States imposed a development assistance embargo on Haiti, holding up over \$200,000,000 in aid. The U.S. government financed Haitian organizations that were working to undermine and overthrow the Haitian government and, on February 29, 2004, Haiti’s President Aristide was forcibly removed and sent to exile in Africa on a U.S. government plane. The U.S. replaced the constitutional government with an unelected Prime Minister flown in from Florida.¹² By contrast, the United States gave over \$40,000,000 to the Duvalier dictatorship during its bloodiest years, much of it without condition, which the Haitian people have been forced to pay back. Repayment of such odious loans cost Haiti over \$1 million dollars a week, further weakening the country.¹³ Fortunately, the United States led the effort in canceling Haiti’s \$1.2 billion in external debt owed to lenders including the IMF, World Bank, and the U.S. government itself, which was cancelled in June 2009.

18. The U.S. recently undermined Haiti’s democracy by providing political and financial support to unlawful parliamentary elections in Haiti held in April and June 2009. The 2009 elections illegally excluded several political parties, including Haiti’s largest political party, *Fanmi Lavalas*.

19. Outside of the effects of US foreign policy to earthquake mortality, US trade policies with Haiti through the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act and the subsequent HOPE II have drawn considerable criticism for their lacking human rights and labor protections, particularly on union rights.

20. Recently, a group of apparel-industry executives, with Haitian and U.S. trade officials, announced a program intended to encourage retailers to produce 1% of their U.S. imports in Haiti. The new program, called Plus 1 for Haiti, is an extension of HOPE II and allows duty-free sales in the U.S. of Haitian-made apparel.

21. The efforts of the HOPE Act and of the Plus 1 Program are aimed at expanding the low-wage subcontracting apparel industry in Haiti. This form of investment leads to minimal improvements in infrastructure or knowledge spillover to local populations. Further, problems persist with the HOPE Acts as labor rights are suppressed by the owners of the production facilities. According to Paul Loulou Chery, General Secretary of the Confederation of Haitian Workers, Haiti’s largest union center, “We have to tell you that the Hope Act is not the best option, but we have to use the

Hope Act to create jobs so some people can get jobs and create unions and social organizations inside the companies. Unfortunately, still with Hope I and Hope II, the owners say that if you get a union, you will lose your jobs.”

Recommendations:

1. We urge the US to overcome the mistakes of the past and to adopt a human rights-based response to the earthquake, which requires empowering the Haitian people, strengthening the capacity of the government to sustainably guarantee human rights, and making assistance accountable and transparent to the Haitian people—for all assistance to Haiti.
 - I. As a part of this “rights-based response,” we urge the US to empower Haitian people to build a stronger Haiti by:
 - a. assuring that projects are Haitian-led and community-based at every stage of the process, so that the bulk of the leadership and work goes to Haitians;
 - b. strengthening the Haitian government’s capacity to guarantee human rights by working directly with the Government of Haiti to identify needs and to develop, implement, and monitor programs to sustainably provide basic public services, including education and public health, water, and sanitation services;
 - c. make assistance accountable and transparent to the People of Haiti, including funding a mechanism, established together with the Government of Haiti, to: (a) deliver information about assistance projects to the Haitian people; (b) measure, monitor, and make public the outcomes of assistance projects at the community level; (c) provide a mechanism for Haitians to register complaints about problems with project implementation.
2. We urge the US government to amend trade policy with Haiti through the HOPE Act and its progeny and clearly link trade with promoting investments in infrastructure and labor. Clear standards and protections need to be placed over such investments, including independent and transparent monitoring efforts to ensure that workers rights are protected and that investments are tied to promoting rather than inhibiting basic human rights.

Puerto Rico

22. Since the U.S. militarily invaded and occupied Puerto Rico in 1898, Puerto Rico has continued to be a colony, or non-self-governing territory, with the United States maintaining authority over Puerto Rico’s defense, international relations, external trade and monetary matters. While people born in Puerto Rico are eligible for U.S. citizenship, they do not have the right to vote in the U.S. unless they reside in the metropolis, and they have no voting representation in either house of the U.S. legislature.

23. In 1952, the U.S. permitted Puerto Rico to adopt a U.S.-approved Constitution and elect its own governor, representing to the United Nations that Puerto Rico thus attained a full measure of self-government and decided freely and democratically to enter into a free association with the United States and was, therefore, beyond the purview of United Nations consideration.

24. Reports from the United States President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status virtually acknowledge that, regardless of what the U.S. said in its 1953 report to the United Nations in order to remove Puerto Rico from the list of non-self-governing territories, Puerto Rico remains a juridical colony, a non-self-governing territory, subject to the U.S. Congress' plenary authority under the Territory Clause.¹⁴ Under this power, the report says, Congress could even cede Puerto Rico to another nation.¹⁵

25. For nearly three decades, the United Nations Decolonization Committee has adopted annual resolutions reaffirming the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence in conformity with General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) and the applicability of the fundamental principles of that resolution to the question of Puerto Rico, and calling upon the U.S. to expedite a process that will allow the Puerto Rican people fully to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, as well as to release the long-held political prisoners serving sentences in U.S. prisons for cases related to the struggle for the independence of their nation.¹⁶

26. The U.S. has repeatedly and continually failed to comply with international law and the resolutions of the Decolonization Committee, and maintains to this day colonial control over the people of Puerto Rico. Legislation pending in U.S. Congress removes the initiative from the people of Puerto Rico, where a true process of self-determination belongs, and fails to provide for the necessary procedural consensus that could allow the people of Puerto Rico to present a collective expression of its aspirations for self-determination. Instead, the proposed legislation places the Congress of the metropolis and the U.S. court in Puerto Rico in full control - most certainly not a means to resolving the colonial status, as it skirts international law and avoids convening a Constitutional Assembly, the process advocated by the Puerto Rico Bar Association.¹⁷

27. Current manifestations of the colonial relationship include:

- * the presence of the FBI and its ongoing repression of the independence movement, its lack of accountability for its assassination of pro-independence leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos and for its assaults on the nation's journalists, its former agents serving as chief of Puerto Rico Police Department, and its insertion into local law enforcement matters;
- * the presence of the U.S. federal court, and its intervention into local matters, such as commonwealth elections;
- * the presence of the U.S. military, its dire environmental destruction, and its active recruitment in public schools and universities;
- * the lack of control over the economy, causing:
 - migration to the extent that the population of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora is greater than that of the island, a migration also referred to as a "brain drain";

and

- destruction of Puerto Rican small business, with the inundation of U.S. “big box” stores and franchises such as Walgreens, Walmart, Home Depot, Costco, Sam’s Club, Borders, McDonalds, Subway, etc.
- * the lack of control over cultural and civic institutions, undermining groups and institutions who protect and defend the Puerto Rican culture, such as the School of Plastic Arts, and Puerto Rican self-determination, such as the Puerto Rico Bar Association;
- * the isolation of Puerto Rico from neighboring Caribbean and Latin American countries in cultural, political and commercial affairs;
- * the use of non-Puerto Rican immigrants to support the political agenda of the colonial electoral parties, such that elections are decided by pro-annexationist foreigners;
- * the increasing imposition of the use of the English language, including in renaming cities and in signs in the public way;
- * the lack of control over the environment, causing devastating adverse consequences to the health of the Puerto Rican people as well as to the land, water, air, flora and fauna;
- * the imposition of the U.S. death penalty, in spite of the Puerto Rico constitutional prohibition; and
- * maintaining in U.S. prisons political prisoners for their participation in the struggle for independence, including two who have served 29 and 30 years behind bars.

Recommendations

1. The United States should expedite the process to allow Puerto Ricans to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in conformity with General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) and the applicability of the fundamental principles of that resolution.

2. As part of that process, the United States should withdraw its military, courts, the FBI and other repressive forces from Puerto Rico; disclose all documents documenting the repression of the independence movement, including those documenting the assassination of its members and leaders; and release Puerto Rican political prisoners serving prison sentences for cases relating to the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico.

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1. Plan Colombia is primarily funded by the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI). In addition Colombia also benefits from the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program, and the Department of Defense’s central counternarcotics account. ACI funding also supports alternative development programs administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development –USAID.
 2. WOLA, “La Estrategia Colombia Estados UNidos en la erradicacion de cultivos ilicitos. Revista Javeriana. Junio, 2008. See also ONODC, Junio 2006.
 3. See, HRW, “Paramilitares Heir’s. The new face of violence in Colombia”. February 2010. According with the report “new groups cropped up all over the country, taking the reins of the criminal operations that the AUC leadership previously ran”.
 4. Colombian Constitutional Court. Auto 005 of 2009
 5. NASGACC, “Comments Concerning Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Colombia (Docket Number USTR-2009-0021)”. September 15, 2009
 6. U.S. 2008 Foreign Operations Appropriations Law (H.R. 2764)
 7. See ACNUR, “Resistencia al desplazamiento por combatientes y agentes de desarrollo: zonas humanitarias en el sur-occidente colombiano”. Noviembre, 2007.
 8. See, “El Tratado de Libre Comercio Colombia-Estados Unidos, es una grave amenaza para el proyecto de vida y los derechos territoriales, culturales, ambientales y laborales del pueblo Afrocolombiano”. 2008
 9. http://www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/emergencies/global_food_crisis/news_publications/haiti-no-longer-grows-much-of-its-own-rice-and-families-now-go-hungry
 10. <http://www.stwr.org/latin-america-caribbean/bill-clinton-admits-neoliberal-policies-in-haiti-were-a-mistake.html#Katz>

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11. *Haiti: Saving the Environment, Preventing Instability and Conflict*, at page 6, International Crisis Group, April 28, 2009, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=60786>; Maureen Taft-Morales, *Haiti: Current Conditions and Congressional Concerns*, Congressional research Service Report R40507, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40507.pdf>.
 12. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/opinion/2006/0724beeton.htm>
 13. http://www.jubileusa.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Resources/Haiti/2008/haiti_fact_sheet_2008.pdf
 14. Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, December 2007, at pp. 5-6; Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, December 2005, at pp. 5-6.
 15. Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, December 2005, at p. 6.
 16. A/AC.109/2009/L.13.
 17. See, e.g., http://capr.org/dmdocuments/Protagonista_CAPR.pdf. The Bar Association has consistently opted for the Constitutional Assembly as the ideal means of resolving the status question, based on recommendations from the Commission on Constitutional Rights, comprised of members of all three ideological tendencies.