

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0288/04
by Marco Cappato (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Drug eradication programme in Colombia

During his recent visit to Colombia, Commissioner Chris Patten expressed European criticism of the drug eradication programme, which is supported by the United States. Commissioner Patten also said that the EU had refused to fund fumigations on the Andes, citing their impact on the life and well-being of Colombians, as well as the environment.

Mr. Patten also confirmed the European pledges for alternative development programmes of some EUR 50 million, tying the disbursement of the money to Colombia's compliance with United Nations High Commission on Human Rights recommendations.

Does the Commission intend to raise the issue of the impact of fumigation in its bilateral talks with the US Administration, emphasising their overall impact and massive failures?

Would the Commission take into consideration for funding some of the proposals that a number of Colombian organisations are currently drafting on the alternative development of the coca bush, which could lead to the use of the leaf, which some indigenous communities consider sacred, for the production of a variety of produce other than cocaine?

Bearing in mind that the upcoming session of the UN Commission on Narcotics of 16 - 25 March can provide an opportunity to suggest changes to the UN Conventions on Drugs, what are the scientific reasons why the European Commission is of the opinion that coca bush should be kept in Schedule I and not reclassified in Schedule IV?