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Round table with presidential candidates, Bogotá, Colombia, 6 May 2002 Conclusive remarks by Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International

We have listened with interest to the presidential candidates. It is lamentable that in a country like Colombia human rights issues have been missing from the presidential campaign agenda. We hope that this debate has helped to give some attention to these critical issues.

Our expectation is that the presidential candidates will, not simply coopt the language of human rights, but commit themselves to concrete action to fully implement the recommendations repeatedly made by the United Nations, the Organization of American States, Amnesty International and other national and international human rights organizations. The future government must end impunity, break the links between the security forces and the paramilitary, combat and dismantle paramilitary groups, guarantee the protection of human rights defenders and other vulnerable sectors of the civilian population.

Amnesty International will watch closely how the incoming President will live up to his or her human rights and humanitarian obligations and we look forward to continuing this dialogue with the new administration.

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