

**Statement issued by the Spokesman of the Secretary-General**

**ON COLOMBIA/HUMAN RIGHTS**

**TO BE ISSUED ON 24 March 2004**

The Secretary-General met on 23 March 2004 with the head of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Colombia, Mr. Michael Fruhling, who briefed him on the High Commissioner for Human Rights' new report on the situation in the country. The Secretary-General expressed deep concern over the continuing violations of human rights, and offered his full support to the work of the Office. He also voiced dismay over grave abuses of human rights by both the guerrillas and paramilitaries, especially actions against civilians.

The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the cooperation that the Colombian Government has extended to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia. He hopes that the Colombian Government will take urgent steps to implement the recommendations contained in the report; and that both the guerrillas and paramilitaries will cease their violations of international humanitarian law.