

UN Warns Peace Could Destroy Environment in Colombia



Bogota, January 23 (RHC-EFE)-- Implementing some of the agreements reached during peace talks between the Colombian government and the leftist rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) could destroy a great part of the country's environment, the Colombian office of the United Nations has warned.

The strong warning was sent to the government and FARC negotiators in Havana where the talks are being held so that it could be kept in mind while proceeding with their discussions, the UN chief representative in Colombia, Fabrizio Hochschild, said Wednesday.

The agreements in the peace talks center around regions that have a very high environmental relevance, and could cause irreversible changes in Colombia's landscape, 50 percent of which is comprised of forests and other ecosystems that have global relevance, according to a UN study.

The report focuses on areas where it is expected that the agreements reached in

Cuba would be applied on a high-priority basis, covering a total of 125 municipalities in the south, northeast and northwest of the country afflicted by armed conflict, high poverty and lack of basic necessities and infrastructure.

All of these areas fall within, or next to, large forest lands which for decades have been a safe haven for armed groups like FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

When the agreements are implemented, the UN explains, many of these territories would be affected by the new land distribution system and the change in crops that have been cultivated there over the years, for example coca from which cocaine is made.

The UN says that in order to prevent the destruction of the country's natural heritage and socio-economic failure of many of the measures that may be implemented, it is necessary to plan the agreements in a

proper manner.

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