

A real treat to the eye

For the very first time in The Netherlands, Colombia's most acclaimed public ballet school presented its unique show: "Barrio Ballet", a fusion of urban popular music and classical ballet portraying the evolution of some of the most famous Latin tropical rhythms that form part of our African-American Heritage.

Last Monday 12 of April, the Lucent Dans Theatre, one of the most renowned theatres in The Netherlands and home to the famous Nederlands Dans Theater ballet company, hosted a spectacular performance by the Colombian Institute of Classical Ballet, Incolballet. Members of the Dutch Royal Household and



Institute of Classical Ballet, Incolballet, delighted the viewers with its colorful and unique performance.

Dutch Parliament, Judges and members of international organizations, as well as representatives of a large number of embassies and consulates in the Netherlands, entrepreneurs, journalists and Colombian nationals living in the Netherlands were amongst those who assisted the event.

"With Barrio Ballet the paradigms of ballet are broken; the team successfully combines the complex language of salsa with the precision of classical ballet. This is a young, talented and energetic group", were the words

used by Ambassador Francisco José Lloreda to praise the young artists. The show included two parts: "El último botón and Tanguendo"; and "Barrio Ballet" a creation of its founder Gloria Castro with choreography of Cuban artist of Cuban artist Gustavo Herrera.

The Embassy also took this opportunity and venue to launch the second Colombian Tour: "Exuberant Colombia" with a promotional video inviting the audience to take part on this successful adventure, held for its consecutive time in October this year.

Free Trade agreement: "a tool to generate prosperity"

Colombia and the EU have concluded -by reaching consensus- the negotiations on a free trade agreement. The agreement was achieved following ninth rounds of talks held in Brussels in the second week of March. Its signature is expected to take place during the EU-Latin America summit that will take place in Madrid during May of the current year. Following this, the agreement will have to be submitted to the European Parliament for its final approval before coming into force, as it is expected, in 2012.

By means of the agreement, it is estimated that the Colombian GDP will have an additional increment of 0.46%. In the same manner, exports and imports will increase 0,71% and 1,73 respectively. (Colombian Ministry of Commerce)

A free trade agreement will benefit Colombia's economy and foreign investment significantly, and will contribute to social development. In the words of the EU Trade Commissioner, Karel de Gucht, free trade must be a "tool to generate prosperity, stability and development."

A FTA with the EU will also strengthen the already existing cultural, historic and economic ties between the two parties.

Regrettable decision of the European Court of Human Rights

Last April 1st, the European Court of Human Rights passed a Chamber judgement on the suspension of the extradition of the convicted Israeli mercenary Yair Klein, currently held in prison in the Russian Federation.

The Colombian judiciary convicted Mr Klein "in absentia" for having trained and taught military and terrorist tactics to some of the first paramilitary forces in Colombia. Later on, these groups went on to commit some of the worst



The European Court of Human Rights is based in Strasbourg. It was set up in 1959. It rules on individuals as well as State applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights as set up in the European Convention of Human Rights.

political crimes in the country. Colombian Vice-president indicated that the decision had marked "a black day for human rights around the world".

"The Court's decision undermines not only our *independent* judicial system but also the efforts made by Colombia in its fight against impunity and victims' reconciliation and reparation", said Ambassador Lloreda.

Successful visit to the Netherlands of Adriana Mejia, vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs

Colombian Vice-minister for Multilateral Affairs visited The Hague last March 19. During her visit, various meetings were held with members of the Dutch government, as well as with NGO' representatives and labour union members. Her visit was successfully welcomed as she exposed the advances made by the current government in the area of human rights, emphasizing the protection and respect for life (with a focus on labour leaders) and the respect for the rule of law. After the Netherlands, the vice-minister continued its tour to other countries in Europe promoting



Vice-minister Mejia during a meeting with Peter Gortzak vice-president of the Dutch Trade Union Confederation - FNV -

among other things, the support for the Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and the EU.

Second consecutive participation of Colombia in the "Vakantiebeurs" (Holiday's Fair) in Utrecht

On January 12, 2010 the Colombian Embassy attended for the second consecutive year, the "Vakantiebeurs" or "holiday's fair" hosted in Utrecht, The Netherlands. This yearly event unites more than 135,000 visitors and it's the largest tourism' industry show in the country. Though the show is mostly directed to general public, it also opens its doors to professionals in the travel industry. It is a great way to promote Colombia as a desired holiday destination and moreover, to offer the client another perspective of our marvellous country.

Since 2006 Colombia launched a campaign named: "*Colombia is passion*" aimed at

promoting the country abroad, and investment in our tourist sector. The campaign has been successful at showing another face of Colombia as well as at educating consumers about some of the countless positive realities of our country. According to official sources from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Tourism in the country has increased 9% in 2009 as opposed to a world decrease of 6%. At the same time, Colombia is currently a member of the Executive Council from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a step towards the improvement in the confidence gained in Colombia's tourist industry.

Labor rights: An untold success

Colombia has been categorised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a "case of progress".

Ever since the Tripartite Agreement for the Freedom of Association and Democracy that brought together the government, labour union and business leaders in 2006, the number of crimes committed against labour union leaders has decreased by 80%. Statistically, this means that a common person has eight times greater risk of becoming a victim of violence than a labour union member. Equally, the number of sentences passed against crime perpetrators has increased: 334 people have been sentenced in 2009.

Bogota, a Latin American Gateway

Recently, Bogota status of "up and coming" tourist destination, was praised in one of America's leading newspapers, America Today.

The column, written by Jayne Clark, is positive at its most and highlights the evolution the city has gone through during the last decade making it today one of the most important Latin American cities, not only due to its "business hub", but also because the city offers a wide diversity of entertainment activities, restaurants and a very rich arts and culture scene. No longer a "tourist no-man's land" Bogota is definitely raising up.

Highlights

- "Economic empowerment [is] a key factor in achieving all of women's human rights" were the words of the Colombian representative during the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women where Colombia presented the Draft on Women's Economic Empowerment, urging the need to ensure women equal opportunity in many aspects of the socio, political and economic environment. The Draft was approved by consensus.

- Colombia denounces the systematic attacks committed by FARC on city council members. Since 2005 up until 2009 there have been 39 homicides reported against council members from different political parties and country regions. This event goes against Colombian democratic institutions and contrary to International Human Rights standards and treaties to which Colombia is party.

- The OHCHR praised Colombia in its last report presented on March 4. The governments' commitment to the respect of human rights and its openness to international scrutiny as well as its self-monitoring of the human rights situation were some of the highlights of the report.

- Colombia is to become part of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons during the 61st session which will take place this upcoming May. Next EC meeting is programmed for April 20th. Implementation status of Articles X and XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention will be at the core of its agenda.

- Colombia Exuberante, The Embassy of Colombia, Aviatour and Avianca Airlines will launch the second "Colombia Exuberante" tour following the overwhelming success of its 2009 edition. Join soon, your only risk is "wanting to stay". For more information contact Juliana Botero, Commercial and Tourism attaché: julianabotero@xs4all.nl

- Laura Thompson, the Director of the International Organization for Migrations, indicated that Colombia was a "worldwide example" due to its administrative victims reparation' initiative.



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