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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

ECUADOR

4 APRIL 2007

RDS-IND

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

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1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 4 April 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Ecuador is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

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It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any Home Office material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the

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2. Background information on Ecuador

Full Country Name: The Republic of Ecuador.

Area: 276,840 square kilometres.

Population: 13,363,593 (July 2005 estimate).

Capital City: Quito.

People: Indigenous 25%, mestizo (mixed Indian and Spanish) 65%, Caucasian (white) and others 7% and Black 3%.

Language(s): Spanish (official), indigenous languages, esp. Quichua, the Ecuadorian dialect of Quechua (language of the Incas).

Religion(s): Roman Catholic (95%).

Currency: U.S. dollar.

(US State Department, Background Note: Ecuador, March 2007) [16d]

Major political parties: Partido Social Cristiano (PSC), Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP), PRIAN (Alvaro Noboa's party). Democrática Popular (DP), Partido Roldista Ecuatoriano (PRE), Izquierda Democrática (ID), Pachakutik.

Government: Presidential system of democracy with presidential elections held every four years. The 1978 constitution (approved by referendum) provides for an executive and a legislature consisting of a unicameral 100-member Congress.

Head of State: Economista Rafael Correa Delgado.

Prime Minister: Licenciado Lenin Moreno Garcés.

Foreign Minister: Doctora María Fernanda Espinosa.

Membership of international groupings/organisations: Ecuador holds membership of the UN; WTO; G-11; G77; Organisation of American States (OAS); Andean Community (CAN); Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); Rio Group; Inter-American Developmental Bank (IADB). Ecuador is also on the Human Rights Committee of the UN.

(Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profiles: Ecuador, 7 March 2007) [8a]

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GEOGRAPHY

As noted by the FCO in its Country Profile of 7 March 2007, "Ecuador is in Western South America situated between Colombia (590km border) to the north, and Peru (1,420km border) to the south and east." The capital is Quito. [8a]

MAPS



Map courtesy of CIA World Fact Book



Map courtesy of Encarta (Microsoft Corp.)

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RECENT HISTORY

As reported by the FCO in its Country Profile of 7 March 2007

“Since 1979, civilian governments have held power in Ecuador. Powerful interest groups and public sector unions have all played an influential role in the political process. Since the 1990s, indigenous groups have also begun to exert greater influence on the political scene... Jamil Mahuad, a former mayor of Quito and the candidate of the centrist Democracia Popular (DP) was Ecuador’s elected President from 1998-2000. Mr Mahuad signed a peace agreement with Peru in October 1998. Corruption scandals and chronic economic problems, including the banking collapse led to a military/indigenous backed coup against Mahuad in January 2000.”

“The military officers announced the creation of a parliament of salvation and decreed that Mahuad had been removed from office. A triumvirate, which included the then commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the current, democratically elected President, was appointed to lead the government. However, the heads of the National Security Council swiftly negotiated the dissolution of the triumvirate in favour of a constitutional succession of power. On 22 January 2000, the then vice-president, Gustavo Noboa, assumed the presidency. Noboa was a political independent with no formal ties to any of the parties in Congress.”

“Presidential Elections were held in November 2002. Lucio Edwin Gutiérrez, a former Army colonel who briefly took power in a coup in January 2000, won with 54% of the vote. Gutiérrez’s main rival, Alvaro Noboa, a banana and shipping magnate secured 45% of the vote. Gutiérrez’s Patriotic Society Party forged an electoral alliance with the indigenous movement’s political arm, Pachakutik. President Gutiérrez took office in January 2003 with the aim of implementing a five point plan to tackle corruption and poverty - improve competitiveness and security and effectively manage international policy. In January 2004 the alliance with Pachacutik was formally broken...”

Lucio Gutiérrez was removed as President by Congress on 20 April 2005 for ‘abandoning his position’. Gutiérrez’s removal followed a series of large-scale demonstrations, predominantly in Quito. The main concern of the demonstrators was the removal, on two occasions, of the Supreme Court and the ‘politically endorsed’ return of former President Abdala Bucaram. A State of Emergency for 19 hours on 15 April was followed by more demonstrations on 19 and 20 April. Gutiérrez’s removal was preceded by the resignation of the Chief of Police and the withdrawal of support from the Armed Forces. He was replaced by President Alfredo Palacio, a cardiologist from Guayaquil. Palacio was Vice-President under Gutiérrez.”

“Former President Gutiérrez had left Ecuador for Brazil, and finally Colombia, where he was granted political asylum. Gutiérrez returned to Ecuador in October 2005 and was immediately arrested and imprisoned. The Ecuador Supreme Court released him in March 2006. Gutiérrez made an attempt to stand again for the Presidency, but this was denied.” [8a]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

As recorded by the FCO:

“Ecuador held Presidential (first round) and Congressional elections on 15 October 2006. Eleven Presidential candidates were accepted to run in the first round – a second round (of just two remaining candidates) was held on 26 November. Rafael Correa (Alianza Pais) was the clear winner (by some 13%).”

“President Correa was sworn in on 15 January [sic] 2007. He has appointed members of his cabinet, and has been visiting neighbouring countries in Latin America. He has vowed to stamp out corruption and to remove political influence from state institutions. With this in mind, he has announced that a referendum will take place on 15 April to ask whether the public support his idea for a Constituent Assembly to be formed to re-draft elements of the Constitution. This proposal also needs the support of Congress where Correa will require the support of other political parties since he has no political party of his own in Congress.”

“Former president Palacio had been keen to promote social policies in the health and educational sector, a theme which President Correa has undertaken to follow.”

“However resistance from the Executive and the Legislature meant that the Palacio's plans for constitutional reform were unsuccessful. A new Supreme Court comprising of 31 judges was finally appointed in early December 2005, almost one year after its dissolution by former President Gutiérrez.”

“During Palacio's tenure there was much criticism, mainly from the private sector, over reforms of the Hydrocarbons Law, which aims to limit oil company revenues in participation contracts with the State, the Oxy (Occidental Oil) affair and, as a consequence, the suspension of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the US and Ecuador. Correa has said that he will not re-open negotiations.”
[8a]

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ECONOMY

GDP: US\$ 40892 (2006 projected).

GDP per head: US\$ 3,271 (2006 projected).

Annual Growth: 4.32 (2006).

Inflation: 3.21% (October 2006).

Major Industries: Oil, bananas, fishing, fresh cut flowers, shrimp farming and timber.

Major trading partners: United States, Latin American countries, European Union, Japan and South Korea.

(Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profiles: Ecuador, 7 March 2007) [8a]

As noted by the CIA in their World Factbook on Ecuador, last updated on 23 January:

“Ecuador has substantial petroleum resources, which have accounted for 40% of the country's export earnings and one-third of central government budget revenues in recent years. Consequently, fluctuations in world market prices can have a substantial domestic impact. In the late 1990s, Ecuador suffered its worst economic crisis, with natural disasters and sharp declines in world petroleum prices driving Ecuador's

economy into free fall in 1999. Real GDP contracted by more than 6%, with poverty worsening significantly...In March 2000, Congress approved a series of structural reforms that also provided the framework for the adoption of the US dollar as legal tender. Dollarization stabilized the economy, and growth returned to its pre-crisis levels in the years that followed. Under the administration of Lucio Guitierrez – January 2003 to April 2005 – Ecuador benefited from higher world petroleum prices. However, the government under Alfredo Palacio has reversed economic reforms that reduced Ecuador's vulnerability to petroleum price swings and financial crises, allowing the central government greater access to oil windfalls and disbursing surplus retirement funds." [4a]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The US State Department in their Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006, published on 6 March 2007 stated:

"While the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there continued to be serious problems in the following areas: isolated unlawful killings and use of excessive force by security forces; occasional torture, abuse, and killing of suspects and prisoners by security forces, sometimes with impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; a high number of pretrial detainees; and corruption and denial of due process within the judicial system. Members of the National Police were accused of murder, attempted murder, rape, extortion, kidnappings, and alien smuggling. Societal problems continued, such as violence against women; discrimination against women, indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, and homosexuals; trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of minors; and child labor." [16a]

The FCO in its Country Profile of 7 March 2007 stated:

Ecuador's Human Rights record does not attract regular criticism from Human Rights organisations. However, the arrest of eight policemen for their role in extra-judicial killings in March 2002 showed that abuses, including against basic economic and social rights, still occur... Ecuador is a signatory of the six major Human Rights instruments, has a National Human Rights Plan and a Constitution that is one of the most advanced in terms of human rights principles in Latin America." [8a]

Amnesty International in their Annual Report 2006 (covering events from January to December 2005) stated:

"The political atmosphere remained unstable. Following public protests over interference in the appointment of Supreme Court judges, first by Congress and later by President Gutiérrez, Congress ousted and replaced the President on 20 April. In October, when he returned from Colombia, he was arrested and charged with corruption and undermining the security of the state.

The number of refugees fleeing the internal armed conflict in Colombia grew, asylum applications reportedly reaching 20,000 by October. Colombian state forces and armed opposition groups reportedly entered Ecuador's increasingly militarized border areas.

The appointment of the Human Rights Ombudsman in July was criticized by human rights defenders for apparently flouting procedures aimed at ensuring the involvement of civil society. The candidate supported by civil society organizations was denied the opportunity to be considered for the position.” [1a]

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3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[2a]	BBC, Country Profile: Ecuador, updated 15 January 2007 (accessed 9 February 2007) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1212882.stm
	[4a]	CIA, The World Factbook: Ecuador, 23 January 2007 (accessed 9 February 2007) https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ec.html
	[7a]	Ethnologue, Languages of Ecuador (accessed 9 February 2007) http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=EC
	[8a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Country Profiles: Ecuador, 7 March 2007 (accessed 27 March 2007) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1020190034271
	[16d]	US State Department, Background Note: Ecuador, March 2007 (accessed 27 March 2007) http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm
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	[28a]	Microsoft Encarta, Ecuador (accessed 15 March 2007) http://encarta.msn.com/map_701512238/Ecuador.html
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	[2b]	BBC, Timeline: Ecuador, updated 29 November 2006 (accessed 9 February 2007) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1212826.stm
	[4a]	CIA, The World Factbook: Ecuador, 23 January 2007 (accessed 9 February 2007) https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ec.html
	[8a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Country Profiles: Ecuador, 7 March 2007 (accessed 27 March 2007) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1020190034271
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<p>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL</p>	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[1b]</p>	<p>Amnesty International, Report 2006: Americas: Ecuador (accessed 9 February 2007) http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/ecu-summary-eng</p> <p>Amnesty International, 2006 Elections to the Human Rights Council, Background information on candidate countries, 1 May 2006 http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGIOR410062006?open&of=ENG-ECU</p>

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<p>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:</p> <p>(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</p>		
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