

Colombian president announces the first assembly of coca leaf growers



Colombian President Gustavo Petro.

Bogota, August 27 (RHC) Colombian President Gustavo Petro confirmed Friday that the Catatumbo region would have the first assembly of coca leaf growers.

The project seeks to help coca-growing families transition from illegality to the formal market. "We want to find the way and the public policies to achieve the replacement of these crops with activities that improve their quality of life," said the president after presiding over a security council in the municipality of El Tara, department of Norte de Santander.

"I propose, friends of Catatumbo, to stop being the first cocaine exporting region in the world and to build the first place of peace in Colombia, the first line of peace, so that society's conversations can take place

here", declared Petro.

In that line, he informed that all armed groups in that area of the country, bordering Venezuela, have already communicated with his administration to open peace negotiations.

Different illegal armed groups operate in Norte de Santander, such as drug traffickers of the Clan del Golfo, members of Mexican cartels, paramilitary gangs, and guerrilla fronts of FARC and ELN dissidents. The region is one of the regions with the highest concentration of illicit coca crops in the world.

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