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Embassy of Colombia in the United States

Update on the Status of Colombia's Peace Agreement

As a key stakeholder in the U.S.-Colombia bilateral relationship, we want to keep you up to date on Colombia's Peace Process and implementation of the Peace Agreement. Since our last update, His Holiness Pope Francis arrived in Colombia on the evening of Wednesday, September 6 for a five-day visit to Bogotá, Villavicencio, Medellín and Cartagena – the first papal visit to the nation since 1986. Both before arriving and during his visit, Pope Francis has expressed support for Colombia's efforts to achieve stable and lasting peace and has delivered a message of peace and reconciliation.

September 7, 2017



First Lady of Colombia María Clemencia Rodríguez and President Santos present gifts to the Pontiff, including a silver rosary from Ciénaga de Oro, a clay angel from Ráquira and an Arhuaca backpack.

On Thursday, September 7, Pope Francis delivered a number of addresses before the Colombian people. In a speech at the presidential palace in Bogotá – Casa de Nariño – during a meeting with President Santos, First Lady María Clemencia Rodríguez, the Cabinet and Diplomatic Corps, Pope Francis stated:

“This meeting offers me the opportunity to express appreciation for the efforts that have been made, over the last decades, to put an end to armed violence and find ways of reconciliation. In the last year, certain progress has been made in particular; the steps taken give rise to hope, in the conviction that the search for peace is an open task, a task that does not give way and requires the commitment of all. Work that asks us not to fall in the effort to build the unity of the nation and, despite obstacles, differences and different approaches on how to achieve peaceful coexistence, persist in the struggle ... I pray for you, for the present and for the future of Colombia.”

The Pope's visit added new energy to the reconciliation process among Colombians in the context of Peace Agreement implementation. Around 70 percent of the Colombian population is Catholic.

September 5, 2017

The government of Colombia announced on September 5, that it reached a bilateral and temporary ceasefire with the ELN, the first agreement reached with that guerrilla group in 50 years – a historic achievement. The government's chief negotiating team, including former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Juan Camilo Restrepo and current Minister of Defense Luis Carlos Villegas, made the announcement. During a press conference at the presidential palace in Bogotá, they explained the scope of the agreement, which was reached under the framework of the third round of talks between the government and ELN in the Ecuadorian capital of Quito.

Former Minister Restrepo highlighted the significance of the agreement:

“The first thing I want to emphasize is the importance of this agreement. It is the first of its kind of agreements reached with the ELN in 50 years.”

Minister Villegas stated:

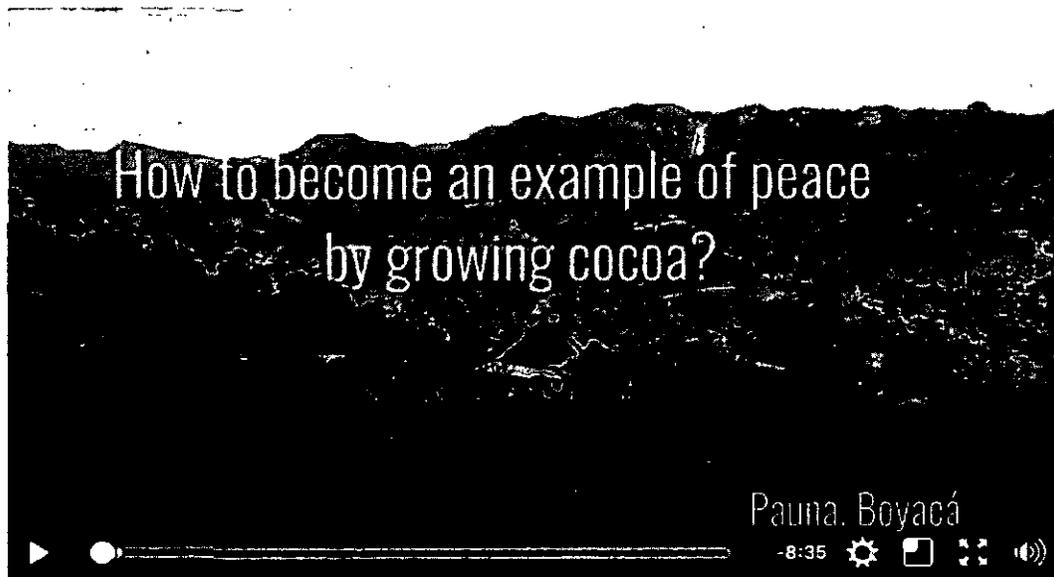
“... [T]his negotiation that ended last night is a decision that alleviates suffering, creates tranquility and improves security, including for our own Armed Forces, which have suffered casualties, which have suffered injuries for so long.”

August 29, 2017

Reintegration efforts include the transformation of rural communities through crop substitution programs for farmers who prior to peace grew illegal coca crops. Through these programs, in many places across the country, chief among them Boyacá, former coca growers have turned away from illicit drug cultivation and are now growing cocoa – the key ingredient in chocolate and chocolate treats.

The Colombian Ministry of Justice and Law released a video featuring communities in Pauna and San Pablo de Borbur in the Boyacá Department (state) that have stopped growing illicit coca crops and are instead cultivating cocoa. The Colombian government has made

substantial investments in crop substitution as part of Peace Agreement implementation and its counter-narcotics strategy, and cocoa is one of many "crops of peace."



(Click [here](#) or on the image above to watch the video with English subtitles.)

The video notes:

"In Pauna, San Pablo de Borbur and eight other municipalities in western Boyacá have turned cocoa-growing into their livelihoods, and they are on the brink of consolidating themselves at the national level as a powerful cocoa-producing region. In Pauna alone, they are producing 180 tons per year and they expect to reach 200 tons this year. Many of them are supplying the national industry and many others are seeking to create the whole production chain from growing the plants to the cup and commercializing their cocoa themselves, with a caramel and nutty aroma that has earned prizes in Colombia and is beginning to be appreciated in Europe as a delicacy."

August 16, 2017

Following the removal of the final container of FARC weapons by the UN, the government of Colombia began efforts to reincorporate former members of the FARC into civil society. The government released plans to transform what were Transitional Standardization Zones during the disarmament phase of Peace Agreement implementation into Territories for Training and Reincorporation now that the FARC has disarmed.

August 15, 2017

In the La Guajira Department (state), the UN removed and closed the final container with weapons from former FARC combatants. Upon removal of the final container of weapons, President Santos stated:

"Today begins the construction of a new country. ... Eight months after signing the agreement we are seeing the end of the abandonment of the arms. That is a record time. ... Today is indeed the last breath of that conflict, with the abandonment of

arms, with the last containers, the conflict really ends and a new phase begins in the life of our nation."



Photos (L to R): President Juan Manuel Santos talks with Head of the UN Mission in Colombia Jean Arnault and other UN officials moments before closing the final container of FARC weapons. President Santos delivers to UN officials the key to the padlock to seal the last container containing FARC weapons. August 15, 2017. Photos taken by the Presidency.

July 10, 2017

The UN announced it will lead a second mission, which will begin on September 17, to oversee former FARC members' reintegration into civilian life and civil society.

June 27, 2017

- As of June 27, 7,132 individual weapons had been handed over to the UN.
- National and international best practices for demobilization have been implemented in six steps:
 1. Registration and identification of weapons.
 2. Monitoring and verification of who had possession of the weapons.
 3. Collection and storage of weapons.
 4. Certification of individual arms removal by the UN and each individual FARC member signing an act of commitment administered by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.
 5. Extraction of armaments stored in containers held by the UN in remote rural areas.
 6. Final disposition and final certification of the process of arms abandonment by the UN.
- The last two steps will be taken by August 1, 2017.
- The weapons will be melted down and used to construct three monuments – one in Colombia, one in the United States and one in Cuba.

In an address to the nation, President Santos stated:

"...Today, June 27, for me - and I think for the vast majority of Colombians - is a very special day, a day that we will never forget: the day the weapons were changed by words! ... The abandonment of weapons is the symbol of the new country that we can be and we are beginning to be.

“A country where opportunities reach all Colombians; in the cities, in the towns and in the most remote paths, where the State could not arrive because of the armed conflict. A country where we can advance much more - now without the burden of internal war - on the issues of education, health, housing, provision of public services, construction of roads connecting us.

“We have achieved a lot - despite the conflict - and now we can do more, much more, to continue reducing poverty and inequalities and generating prosperity for all.”



Photo: President Juan Manuel Santos, Head of the UN Mission in Colombia Jean Arnault and FARC leader Rodrigo Londoño in front of a sculpture symbolizing the progress from the end of war to the construction of a country in peace. June 27, 2017. Photo taken by the Presidency.

We will continue to update you as implementation progresses.

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