

COLOMBIA TODAY

A Weekly Update from the Embassy of Colombia

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Santos: 'Colombian model of peace is an example for the world'



President Juan Manuel Santos delivering his final address before the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 in New York City. Photo Credit: UN

On Tuesday, September 19, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos delivered his last remarks as head of state before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), highlighting the country's historic achievement of a Peace Agreement with the FARC and the UN's ongoing support for and role in implementation of the Agreement.

President Santos stated:

"This is the eighth and last time I address this Assembly in my capacity as President of Colombia. A lot has happened since September 24, 2010, when I made my first speech. ...

"Today, seven years later, I feel very happy ... Today, I come to tell you that the peace process with the FARC not only culminated in an agreement but with something bigger, more important: thousands and thousands of human lives saved!

"If in Colombia we could end an armed conflict that left us hundreds of thousands dead and millions of victims and displaced, there is hope for the conflicts that still exist on the planet.

"It was not easy. Ending a war, overcoming hatred, overcoming fears, involves a complex process of dialogue and compromise.

"But we did it because we had a will and because we were aware of a fundamental premise: peace is a necessary condition for the progress and happiness of any society.

"Today, I want to acknowledge and thank the United Nations because it has fully fulfilled the mission for which it was created, which is none other than to end the scourge of war.

"On behalf of some 50 million Colombians, I would like to say to the Secretary General, the Security Council, to this Assembly: THANK YOU!"

President Santos also discussed the threats to peace, security and democracy in the world, including provocations by North Korea and the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. He also discussed the global issue of drug production, trafficking and consumption, stating:

"The war on drugs has claimed too many lives – in Colombia we have paid a very high price, perhaps the highest of any nation ...

"It is time to accept – with realism – that as long as there is consumption there will be supply, and that consumption will not end. It is not a simplistic way of pointing out who is solely responsible. We all are, under the principle of shared responsibility that we assumed several decades ago. ...

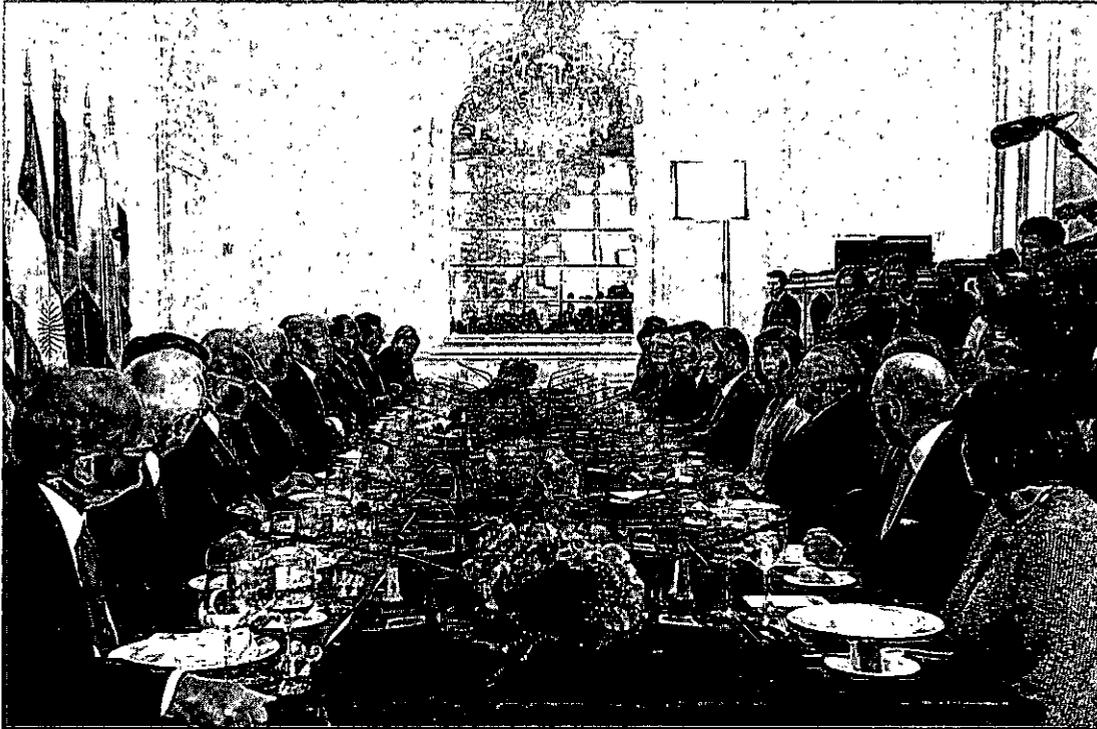
"Colombia will continue to fight this scourge decisively. For us it has been and continues to be a national security problem.

"Peace has allowed us – for the first time – to initiate processes of voluntary substitution of coca crops.

"These processes, accompanied by the forced eradication that we have been advancing - and the seizures, which we have increased to unprecedented levels - allow us to achieve even stronger and long-term results."

For video and a summary of the President's remarks, click [here](#).

President Santos Participates in Meeting of Latin American Leaders with President Trump



On Monday, September 18, in New York City, President Santos joined President Michel Temer of Brazil, President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama, President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski of Peru and Vice President Gabriela Michetti of Argentina for a meeting with President Donald J. Trump on the sidelines of UNGA. The purpose of the convening was to discuss the deteriorating situation in Venezuela, the global problem of drugs and transnational organized crime, as well as trade.

In opening remarks, President Trump stated:

"I'd like to thank the leaders in this room. We have some great leaders in this room, and I want to thank them for condemning the regime and providing the vital support to the Venezuelan people. ... We're fortunate to have incredibly strong and healthy trade relationships with all of the countries gathered here today. ... Our economic bonds form a critical foundation for advancing peace and prosperity for all of our people and all of our neighbors."

For the White House readout of the meeting, [click here.](#)

National Geographic Society Honors President Santos for Unwavering Commitment to Protecting Biodiversity



At the ceremony in which he was recognized for his great efforts to preserve the environment at the headquarters of the National Geographic Society, President Santos highlighted the enormous natural wealth of the country. Photo Credit: César Carrión

On Thursday, September 21, the National Geographic Society honored Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos for his efforts to conserve biodiversity and foster sustainable development. Gary E. Knell, president and CEO of the National Geographic Society, and Jean Case, Chairman of the National Geographic Society Board of Trustees, recognized the Colombian head of state in a ceremony at the Society's headquarters "for service to humanity in promoting a more balanced and peaceful world." On several occasions, **President Santos** has made public his commitment to this cause, stating:

"Colombia is a world treasure of biodiversity. Our duty with current and future generations is to protect it and guarantee the sustainable development of our country."

Colombian Ambassador to the United States Camilo Reyes stated:

"For a nation with such abundant natural resources that it is committed to conserve them for future generations, this is an extraordinary honor. We thank National Geographic for recognizing the nation's efforts, and specifically the efforts of President Juan Manuel Santos, to ensure that Colombia remains the second most biodiverse country in the world."

Among the milestones highlighted is Colombia's achievement of the goal of increasing the number of hectares of protected ecosystems in the National Development Plan and of the Convention on Biological Diversity, advances on the nation's international commitments to protect biodiversity. Another recent achievement is the expansion of emblematic indigenous territories, which guarantee the connectivity of those protected areas with national protected areas and the protection of indigenous traditional

territories to ensure their quality of life and well-being in the future. Examples of this achievement include the extension of the Puerto Sábalo Los Monos Indigenous Reserve, Monochoa and Putumayo to a total of 9,644,323 hectares in the municipality of Solano (Caquetá), south of the Chiribiquete National Park.

The **Amazon Conservation Team**, which carried out with the national government the technical work for the expansion of the reserves connecting with the Chiribiquete Natural National Park, stated:

“National Geographic supports bold people with transformative ideas that can change the world, and President Santos is a brilliant example of a government leader who is advocating policies that will help us reach a planet in balance.”

President Santos Sits Down with Bloomberg TV to Discuss Top Issues on Bilateral Agenda



*President Juan Manuel Santos with Bloomberg TV's David Gura on Monday, September 18, 2017 in New York City.
Photo Credit: Bloomberg*

While in New York City for UNGA, on Monday, President Santos sat down with *Bloomberg TV's* David Gura to discuss a range of issues of mutual concern between Colombia and the United States, including Venezuela and the shared responsibility to fight against the production, trafficking and consumption of drugs.

To watch the interview, [click here](#).

What We're Reading

Catch up on these recent stories about Colombia:

- *The Guardian*: "An Oasis of Orchids, Animals and Architecture in Medellín, Colombia" | September 20, 2017 ([Read](#))
- *Post & Courier (Charleston, SC)*: Editorial: "Colombia a Key Regional Ally" | September 16, 2017 ([Read](#))
- *Associated Press*: "Israel, Colombia Pledge Cooperation in Post-conflict Era" | September 13, 2017 ([Read](#))
- *Los Angeles Times*: "More Than a Million Colombians Celebrate Mass with Pope Francis" | September 9, 2017 ([Read](#))

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