



His Excellency Juan Manuel Santos
President
Republic of Colombia

July 22, 2015

Dear Mr. President:

As a group of former Foreign Ministers who meet regularly under the auspices of the Aspen Institute, we write to express our strong support for the efforts underway to negotiate an end to the war in Colombia.

Having worked on a number of different peace initiatives in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions of the world, experience has taught us that opportunities to pursue serious peace negotiations are rare and often short-lived. Thanks to the success of Plan Colombia, the important strides made by Colombian security forces, and the work of administrations across the political spectrum in Colombia, your government is in a strong position to broker a peace. Such an agreement, if achieved, would unleash tremendous economic and security benefits for the Colombian people and have a positive impact throughout Latin America and beyond.

We are keenly aware of the enormous obstacles facing the negotiators in Havana, and know that the talks have been frustratingly slow. As with many other similar negotiations, the most complex and difficult issues have not been and will not be resolved until the end.

Given these realities, the extraordinary political will that you have shown so far will have to be maintained to keep the peace process on track. The recent agreement to create an 11-member Truth Commission was a positive step forward, as was the decision to reciprocate FARC's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire with a reduction of the government's military activities. We believe it is well worth moving forward with these talks, even under these difficult circumstances and amid an ongoing conflict.

As the talks continue, we know that one of the most challenging – and important – tasks will be coming to an agreement on transitional justice. Peace and justice are sometimes viewed as competing or conflicting goals. This need not be the case. In our experience, it is important for peace negotiators to engage in regular dialogue with both the domestic and international legal establishments, including the International Criminal Court. Such dialogue can support the pursuit of justice, and help lead to a stronger and more durable peace.

Of course, peace in Colombia can only be achieved by the parties involved. As outsiders, we do not wish to impose ourselves on the complicated and delicate negotiations that are underway. However, we believe in what you are trying to accomplish and stand ready to assist in any possible way, because there is no cause more important than the cause of peace.

Signed,

Madeleine K. Albright
United States

Lloyd Axworthy
Canada

Shlomo Ben Ami
Israel

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Italy

Don McKinnon
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