

# *Episcopal Conference of Colombia*

## STATEMENT MADE BY THE EPISCOPAL PEACE COUNCIL

“THE WORK OF JUSTICE SHALL BE PEACE” (*Is. 32,17*)

Bogotá D.C., 19 April 2013

In a spirit of fraternity, the Bishop members of the Episcopal Peace Council have come together today, at the seat of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, to continue reflecting on the dialogue in process between the National Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

With the intent to inform the faithful and public opinion we want to share the following considerations:

1. We remain committed to the belief that dialogue is the best way to bring an end to so many years of inhumane violence. The building of Colombia, as a country reconciled and in peace, requires a transparent dialogue, with no other aim than the authentic search for the common good of all Colombians.

2. As pastors we have always felt particularly close to the victims of violence. We wish to reiterate to them our firm support and solidarity. We are convinced that the path of reconciliation and forgiveness must include the recognition of their dignity and the effective guardianship of their rights to truth, justice and reparation. For that reason, it is our respectful request to the negotiators that the current process open participatory spaces, so that the legitimate demands of those who from one side or the other, have directly suffered the consequences of the conflict, are made visible, heard and responded to.

3. *The work of justice shall be peace (Is. 32,17). Peace can only come about as a result of justice* that highlights the restorative dimension and is capable of integral reparation for the victims of the armed conflict. Therefore, political and legal solutions to reintegrate armed actors into society need to be sought through dialogue with the victims and civil society, avoiding any manifestation or type of impunity.

4. The issue of land is fundamental to building authentic peace. Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the need for a fair land distribution and meaningful State policies which contribute to the social and economic development of the countryside: better programs for rural development, greater investment in infrastructure and technology, policies for employment generation, access to social credits for small and medium producers, etc. To build peace, we consider it urgent to create the conditions needed for all rural families to live a dignified life. The current conditions of impoverishment are a breeding ground for violence.

5. Another element necessary for ensuring a definitive end to the armed conflict in our country would be to reincorporate the militants of the National Liberation Army (ELN) into civilian life. Therefore, the Church commits its support to facilitate efforts that can promote and make possible encounter and dialogue.

6. Constant armed conflict continues to cause great harm to the Colombian people, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged. In the hope of finding a definitive end to the conflict we call upon the diverse insurgent groups, so that, taking advantage of this historic moment, they end all attacks on civilians, and by concrete actions, make evident their authentic desire for peace.

7. It is understandable that some sectors will have their doubts or concerns about the negotiation process. The diversity of opinions is a sign of a healthy democracy and pluralism. Nevertheless, we call upon all political and social leaders of our country and all forces so that their eventual differences may be expressed in a climate of respect and constructive interchange of ideas.

8. Peace is a constant longing in the heart of man. It is a gift from God which we must ask for and welcome into our life. We invite the faithful and the Colombian people to pray and take ownership of the cause of peace and each contribute as they can, to the elements needed to build the rule of law and a society where justice, solidarity and fraternity may prosper.

We unite our prayers for peace with fervour and conviction and call upon the God to bestow his abundant blessing on our country.

**Cardinal Rubén Salazar Gómez**

Monsignor Iván Antonio Marín López

Monsignor Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, IMC

Monsignor Oscar Urbina Ortega

Monsignor Darío de Jesús Monsalve Mejía

Monsignor Ricardo Tobón Restrepo

Monsignor Hernán Giraldo Jaramillo

Monsignor Leonardo Gómez Serna

Monsignor Nel H. Beltrán Santamaría

Monsignor Julio Enrique Prado Bolaños

Monsignor Julio César Vidal Ortiz

Monsignor Oscar Aníbal Salazar Gómez

Monsignor Francisco Javier Múnera Correa

Monsignor Luis Adriano Piedrahita Sandoval

Monsignor Camilo Fernando Castrellón Pizano, SDB

Monsignor Misael Vacca Ramírez

Monsignor Fidel León Cadavid Marín

Monsignor José Roberto Ospina Leongómez

Monsignor Francisco Antonio Nieto Súa

Monsignor José Daniel Falla Robles

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Monsignor Omar Alberto Sánchez Cubillos, OP

Monsignor Oswaldo Jaramillo Osorio, SMM

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Monsignor Juan Carlos Barreto Barreto

Monsignor Héctor Fabio Henao Gaviria

Father Pedro Mercado Cepeda

Father Darío Echeverri González