

December 22, 2017

Gustavo Bell
Chief Negotiator, Colombian Peace Team

Nicolás Rodríguez
Maximum Commander of the ELN

Dear Sirs,

We, the undersigned organizations and activists in the United States, are monitoring closely the peace dialogue that is taking place in Quito, Ecuador. To begin we wish to encourage both parties to do their utmost to make a peace agreement a reality since we believe this is the only viable solution to resolve the decades long conflict between the Colombian State and the National Liberation Army (ELN). We salute you in your brave effort to find resolution utilizing political dialogue and negotiation. As the recent accord between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) shows peace is possible and political transformations can take place without violence. The international community and in particular U.S. civil society views such a path to be the best way forward.

With relation to this, we wish to respectfully recommend the following:

- 1) That the temporary ceasefire between the parties is extended beyond January 9. While this ceasefire has been imperfect, it has reduced violence and combat operations in the areas where both parties to the conflict are present. It greatly facilitates advancing properly with a negotiated solution.
- 2) We encourage both parties to quickly move forward in setting up a mechanism of participation for civil society. With this mechanism, which can be regional or/otherwise agreed upon we strongly feel the process will not only be enriched but advance forward.
- 3) We vehemently condemn the October murder of indigenous Governor Aulio Isarama Forastero in Alto Baudó in the Department of the Chocó. Such killings must be stopped and all actions taken to prevent further incidents such as this from taking place.
- 4) Once the ceasefire is renewed, we encourage both parties to abide by the agreement in full. In this vein, we urge that the international humanitarian law principle of distinction for civilians is applied in full. Any violent or other action such as the laying of landmines that can adversely affect civilians and their capacity to access their lands for farming should be halted.
- 5) In the case of the Chocó, we strongly encourage the parties to fully integrate the ELN Western War Front into the peace negotiation process. Communities, civil society and the church are all clamoring for there to be a full and inclusive peace in the Chocó. For this to happen, this Front

needs to be listened to and engaged in the Quito peace table.

- 6) Civil society (Inter-Ethnic Forum Chocó (FISCH), Afro-Colombian community councils and Indigenous Cabildos, the Church and others have presented to the Quito table the *Humanitarian Accord Now* for the Chocó. We strongly encourage the parties to formalize this agreement within the framework of the peace talks. By doing so, the parties are guaranteeing the full backing and integration of Chocoan civil society's wishes in this peace process.
- 7) The Colombian State must do its utmost to fully implement the commitments it has made to the FARC guerillas in their peace accord. The State must also do its utmost to guarantee the safety and security of demobilized members of the FARC and their families, social leaders, Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders.

Again, we encourage you to continue on this most important task of solidifying peace and finding political solutions to Colombia's long-standing problems. We will continue to follow the process and look forward to on-going advancements towards peace.

Sincerely,

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Regional Council of Africans in the Americas (ARAAC/RCAA)

OXFAM

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights

IBW

Encuentro Diaspora Afro

Diaspora Dance

DC Afro Latino Caucus

Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network (ACSN)

Association for Internally Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES) International

UNIAFRO

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Dr. Peter Jackson, Professor, Benedict College

Richard Garcia, Electrician, Newark, New Jersey

Maritza Figueroa, Real Estate Broker, Summit, New Jersey

Leonardo Garcia, Firefighter, Newark, New Jersey

Additional signatures

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Forrest Hylton, Universidad Nacional de Colombia

National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC)

#40 Acres and More

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*Affiliation for information purposes only, does not imply institutional support.