August 7, 2018

Open Letter to Colombian President Iván Duque

Dear President Duque,

As U.S. civil society organizations that have accompanied Colombian society through both difficult times of conflict and hopeful times of peace, we urge you to continue and strengthen Colombia’s commitment to a just and lasting peace.

We ask you to ensure the full and vigorous implementation of the peace accords between the Colombian government and the FARC. This starts with the accords’ most fundamental promise: to fulfill the rights of victims—including victims of the FARC and of state actors—to truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition. Moreover, the government should ensure that the demobilized former guerrillas are fully reintegrated into Colombian society, with the accords’ commitments to their security, economic reintegration, land, and political participation fulfilled in their entirety.

Implementing the peace accords includes carrying out rural reforms so that the population in the former conflict zones has access to land, rights-respecting citizen security, and basic government services. The accords’ promise to forge a drug policy that works closely and cooperatively with rural communities to replace coca production with sustainable livelihoods is also essential, both to secure peace and to reach more sustainable results.

We support the application of the peace accords’ welcome emphasis on the rights of women and the LGBTI population. We exhort your administration to fully implement the accord’s Ethnic Chapter to protect the rights of the Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities of Colombia, which have suffered the brunt of the war.

To ensure that Colombia reaches a “complete peace,” we urge you to advance negotiations with the ELN, securing a bilateral ceasefire and finding ways, despite real obstacles, to move towards a final peace accord.

We urge your administration to abide by all international human rights obligations, as well as provisions of the current legislation and constitutional orders regarding the victims of the internal armed conflict. The drafting of the next National Development Plan (2018-2022) will be an opportunity for your government to address ongoing obstacles that ethnic communities face in order to overcome historical exclusion. In addition, we encourage your administration to comply with the provisions established to
guarantee the right to free, prior, and informed consultation for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

Finally, we urge you to protect one of Colombia’s greatest assets: its human rights defenders and social leaders. There has been an onslaught of violence against these leaders which must be addressed immediately. The conflict is not over if Colombia’s human rights defenders—including environmental activists, union members, and social leaders—cannot work and organize to protect their communities without putting their very lives at risk.

We know that the road to peace and reconciliation is not easy. Rest assured we will stand by Colombian society as it advances towards a just and lasting peace.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO
Amazon Watch
Center for International Policy (CIP)
Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
Church World Service (CWS)
Colombia Grassroots Support, NJ
Colombia Human Rights Committee, Washington D.C.
International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights
International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF)
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Movement For Peace in Colombia, NY
Oxfam
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)