

# JUAN MANUEL SANTOS' SECOND TERM IN OFFICE

## COLOMBIA DIVIDED ON ITS PATH TOWARDS PEACE

*Hubert Gehring / Diana Puentes*

During the elections in June 2014, Colombia confirmed President Juan Manuel Santos in office. In spite of unresolved issues in areas including the healthcare, education and justice systems as well as employment, which all figure in as inventory of his first term in office, the hope for peace acted as a catalyst for Santos' election campaign after a fierce election battle in the run-up to the elections and ultimately secured his re-election. The campaigning caused strong polarisation between the "Peace without impunity" promoted by the political party of former President Uribe and Santos' motto "Peace as engine for development".

No doubt, uniting Colombians in the pursuit of a collective and comprehensive peace plan involving the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, ELN) is one of the major tasks for the coming term. This mission is experiencing some head wind from the revitalised opposition in Congress under the leadership of former President Uribe, which is likely to inhibit progress towards both the ratification and implementation of the agreements on ending the armed conflict and the approval of the reforms Santos failed to implement during his first term. With this new political constellation, the important thing is to realise the chance for a peaceful future and to master the historic structural problems that are considered to be at the root of the armed conflict. Uniting the Colombian people and thereby consolidating a stable and enduring peace appears to be within grasp.



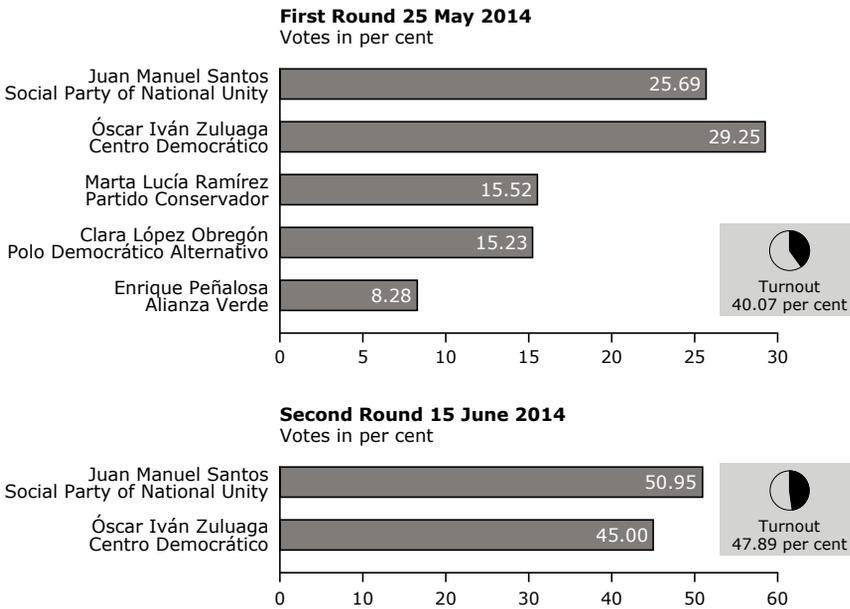
Dr. Hubert Gehring is the Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Colombia.



Diana Puentes is Coordinator for Political Cooperation at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Colombia.

Fig. 1

**Colombian Presidential Election Results in 2014**



Sources: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, “Elección de Presidente y Vicepresidente”, [http://www3.registraduria.gov.co/presidente2014/preconteo/1v/99PR1/DPR9999999\\_L1.htm](http://www3.registraduria.gov.co/presidente2014/preconteo/1v/99PR1/DPR9999999_L1.htm) (accessed 9 Sep 2014); “Elección de Presidente y Vicepresidente – Segunda Vuelta”, [http://www3.registraduria.gov.co/presidente2014/preconteo/2v/99PR2/DPR9999999\\_L1.htm](http://www3.registraduria.gov.co/presidente2014/preconteo/2v/99PR2/DPR9999999_L1.htm) (accessed 9 Sep 2014).

**JUAN MANUEL SANTOS’ FIRST TERM IN OFFICE – ACHIEVEMENTS, REFORMS AND PROBLEMS**

**“Locomotive” of Development**

Santos entered his first presidential term with the intention of increasing growth and reducing unemployment. In 2010, he presented a five-point plan to promote strategic economic sectors that were to act as the “engines for development”: infrastructure, the construction of housing, agriculture, mining and energy, and innovation. According to analyses of his first term in office, a great deal of progress was made in the implementation of government projects in some of these areas, while those in others became bogged down. In the area of residential construction, for instance, the majority of the planned projects were implemented,

including 675,000 social housing projects, which have been awarded, but most of which are still under construction. There has also been a high level of activity evident in the mining sector, and oil production was increased to over one million tons a day. Despite these achievements, there are still unresolved issues relating to environmental protection and to the living conditions of the local populations within the oil production and mining areas.

There is also an obvious lack of progress in the implementation of the projects in the areas of agriculture, infrastructure and innovation. To date, only 41 per cent of the rural population own any farming land. Further major investment and increased funding are therefore required to improve land distribution, infrastructure development to boost competitiveness, and technological development in Colombia.



Inaugurated: The people of Colombia have re-elected Juan Manuel Santos as President, here at his inauguration 2010. The most important task of the government is to advance the peace process and to overcome the polarization of the country. | Source: Luis Echeverría, Presidencia, flickr ©①②③.

### **Continuing Income Disparities despite Economic Growth**

Efforts to stimulate economic growth proved successful, which meant that Santos was able to end his first term in the middle of the strongest phase of growth of the last

seven years. In the first quarter of this year, the economy grew by 6.4 per cent, exceeding all expectations. This has put Colombia globally in second place in terms of quarterly growth in 2014, and the country even topped the ranking within South America. This trend is an indication of an energised national production system. The most significant growth sectors were construction and public and private services. Nevertheless, the country has not succeeded in making any major progress with respect to a more equitable income distribution or in the fight against poverty. According to figures from the Colombian office of statistics,

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the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (DANE), over 32.2 per cent of the population are classed as poor, i.e. almost 14.7 million people. That indicates that the revenues generated by the economic growth are concentrating on certain parts of the population, exacerbating social inequality in the country. According to the Gini coefficient of the World Bank,<sup>1</sup> Colombia is ranked third amongst the countries with the highest level of social inequity in the northern hemisphere, only exceeded by Honduras and Guatemala. Overcoming social inequality therefore remains a central task for the President's new term.

### **Social Movements – Expression of a Dissatisfied Society**

As regards politics, Santos took up his governmental responsibility with the intention of conducting important reforms and initiating a positive transformation of the country. With the majority backing of Congress, he succeeded in pushing through bills in areas such as the *regalias*, land-use regulation, formalisation of the labour market and support for people starting work as well as compensation for victims and restoration of land. The laws relating to the *regalias* (distribution of revenues from the mining of natural resources to the regions), tax regulations as well as tax sustainability have been seen in a positive light in that they promote the redistribution of resources as well as good economic management.

1 | "Reducir desigualdad social, la otra asignatura pendiente para el presidente de Colombia", Reuters, 17.06.2014, <http://Ita.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idLTAKBN0ES2S720140617> [09.09.2014].

However, the President met with resistance where other reforms were concerned. Following changes in Congress, Santos withdraw his judicial reform, as it would have granted parliamentarians and high court judges disproportionate privileges. There was also considerable opposition to the “Judicial Framework for Peace”,<sup>2</sup> which was ultimately adopted. Critics complained that former members of armed groups would go unpunished and could potentially participate in political life. This made relations between the President and the legislature difficult during the last two years of his first term. It dampened the government’s reforming zeal with the end result that numerous tasks in other areas such as healthcare, education and justice as well as agricultural and employment policy were shelved.

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The lack of progress in these areas led to complaints by the people, who felt that their needs were being neglected. There have been numerous public protests in various parts of the country since 2012. In the first quarter of 2013, demonstrations were held in several agricultural sectors. The complaints were increasingly about the inequitable conditions, which people frequently put down to the implementation of free trade agreements. These isolated demonstrations subsequently increased in intensity and spread to further regions and economic sectors of the country.

Farmers’ revolts, an agricultural strike and protests by numerous students, teaching staff, transport service providers and healthcare staff reflected the general climate of discontent with the policies of the Santos government. All this led to a crisis of representation at the end of 2013, during which a growing interest in political participation on the part of the population became apparent. People resented being excluded from the decision-making process, which is

2 | The “Judicial Framework for Peace” (El Marco Jurídico para la Paz) is a legal provision amending the constitution, which has been used to enact instruments of transitional jurisdiction to end the armed conflict in Colombia. According to this legal framework, punishment should be restricted to the key players involved in violations classed as crimes against humanity, genocide or systematic war crimes, while the middle echelons are to be granted amnesty.

closely linked to the person of the President in Colombia's highly centralist political system with its concentration of power. At the same time, the country's mood was an indication of the fact that Santos had lost touch with the people. Generally, the government responded to the protests with a show of willingness to negotiate, but it kept its distance at all times. In the words of the former liberal President Cesar Gaviria, Santos "takes very little political action and people do not feel close to him". The head of state and his government failed to establish direct channels of communication to better involve the population in political activities and to optimise the representation of interests. Not only did this fuel dissatisfaction within society, it also strengthened the negative impression of the way the government was conducting its business.

### **Light and Shadow in the Peace Process**

Peace in Colombia has been and remains one of Santos' important missions. He confirmed this in an announcement halfway through his first term.<sup>3</sup> The issue remained present throughout the most recent election campaign. In August 2012, after six months of secret negotiations in Cuba, Santos had announced the beginning of peace negotiations intended to lead to the signing of a "General Agreement to End the Conflict and Build Stable and Lasting Peace" with FARC. The definition of the negotiating agenda involved five key points: agricultural development, political participation (by former guerrilla fighters), a solution to drug trafficking, compensation for the victims and demobilisation. The negotiations were held under the motto "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". On completion of the negotiating phase and the signing of a final agreement, both the government and FARC are to

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3 | According to a study by the Conflict Analysis Resource Center CERAC and the United Nations, peace could produce economic growth in the region of eight per cent, an increase in per capita income of over 16,700 U.S. dollars as well as the recovery of 800,000 hectares of land. Cf. Centro de Estudios para el Análisis de Conflictos (CERAC), "Violencia Armada y Desarrollo. ¿Qué ganará Colombia con la paz?", <http://cerac.org.co/es/líneas-de-investigación/violencia-armada/¿qué-ganará-colombia-con-la-paz-una-perspectiva-económica.html> (accessed 9 Sep 2014).

begin the fulfilment or implementation of the agreements during the subsequent ratification and implementation phase.

Although a few milestones have been reached during the course of the negotiating process, there have also been problems. The achievements made since the start of negotiations nearly two years ago are of historic proportions and suggest that the prospect of finally halting more than 60 years of civil war is coming within reach. To date, the government and FARC have succeeded in reaching agreement on the first three points: development of the rural areas, political participation by former guerrilla fighters and a solution to drug trafficking. During the presidential election campaign, preliminary talks were held on the recognition of the victims of the conflict, and preparations were made for a potential dialogue with the ELN at the same time. Although the ELN is smaller than FARC in terms of numbers, its reach extends over wide swathes of the country.

For Santos, the peace initiative represents one of the greatest achievements. However, the concluding agreement, which had originally been planned for November 2013, is taking longer than expected. There have not yet been any talks about demobilisation, for instance, nor have any mechanisms for the ratification of the agreement, in the form of a referendum for example, been determined.

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The President has also shown little skill in preparing the Colombian population mentally for the peace process. Many people do not know anything about the peace negotiations and are not aware of their significance for the future of the country. This is a task the President must tackle as soon as possible as he will need the support of all Colombians if it comes to a referendum and to implementing the agreement.

The negotiating process also has its critics. Not only on the right of the party spectrum (including former President Uribe and certain groups of society), but also among the democratic Left. FARC is also showing signs of a split; there have been several violations of the unilateral ceasefire, which FARC has been observing over the last two

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years, by guerrilla groups that are gaining the greatest financial benefit from the drug trafficking. There are sizeable challenges ahead for peace in Colombia, as it is not just a matter of implementing the agreements. In a potential post-conflict phase, the country's structural problems also need attention, because otherwise, different armed organisations may rekindle the conflict.

### **The 2014 Presidential Elections – a Controversial Election Campaign**

After a turbulent pre-election period with party-internal deliberations over candidate selection, Colombians were presented with five applicants in the early summer of 2014: from the center-right spectrum Marta Lucia Ramírez from the Conservative Party (Partido Conservador), Óscar Iván Zuluaga from the Democratic Center (Centro Democrático), considered a Uribe candidate, Juan Manuel Santos from the Unidad Nacional party alliance (Partido de la U, Cambio Radical and Partido Liberal) as well as Enrique Peñalosa from the Greens. The left party spectrum was represented by Clara López from Polo Democrático Alternativo.

During the first round, the campaign was rocked by a number of scandals, which diverted attention from the election manifestos of the five candidates. According to some analysts, there were genuine "smear campaigns" being waged around the office of president. The most prominent controversies focused on Santos and Zuluaga. On the one hand, media reports revealed that funds originating in drug trafficking had flowed into Juan Manuel Santos' presidential election campaign in 2010. During the last week before the first round of voting, on the other hand, the country was shocked by a scandal involving the candidate of Centro Democrático, who had been found to have close links to a person responsible for the illegal interception of communications of some members of the negotiating teams in Havana and of the President. In this scenario, the election strategies of the affected candidates consisted of attempts to discredit their competitors in order to win over the "disappointed" followers to their side. The press played along with this strategy to some degree, with some of the most important media even siding with one or other candidate

and only few media representatives seriously examining the individual election programs. The same applied to most of the television debates. The candidates preferred to voice accusations against their rivals or to defend themselves against the accusations of others rather than discuss topics that were important to Colombians such as education, health and employment. This proved the point that there is a need for strengthening the mass media in their function to provide information, particularly at a regional level.

There were hardly any differences among the election manifestos regarding the topics of education, health and employment, as they were all limited to rather vague promises of improvements in quality and provision in these areas. Nor were there substantial differences apparent with respect to the justice system; here, the candidates merely mentioned a few key points of the impending legal reforms. Large differences were, however, apparent with respect to the strategies for a peace plan, which is why this probably became the crucial issue in the final phase of the election campaign.

### **The Situation after the First Round and after the Second Round**

Out of the five candidates of the first round, the two making it into the second round were Zuluaga with 29.2 per cent of the votes and Santos with 25.6 per cent, the latter only in second place although he had the entire state infrastructure on his side. The participation of the two female candidates was highlighted as a historic aspect of these elections. Marta Lucía Ramírez achieved 15.5 per cent of the votes and Clara López 15.2 per cent. This especially made the Conservative candidate Ramírez one of the winners of the elections, considering the difficult circumstances of her own campaigning. She could not rely on the full support of the Partido Conservador, as only 18 of 22 Senators from her parliamentary group endorsed her while the rest supported Santos. Undeterred, Ramírez continued her election campaign with limited funds, a strategic advertising campaign and support from the party base.

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Outlook 2018: In spite of not succeeding in the first round, Marta Lucía Ramírez, candidate of the Partido Conservador, has good prospects for a candidature in the next presidential elections. | Source: Juan Manuel Herrera, Organization of American States (OEA-OAS), flickr ©①©.

The almost two million votes that Ramírez ultimately won are all the more impressive as she was one of four candidates vying for votes in the center-right spectrum. She won over voters from other sectors of the political center, cultivating the profile of an alternative candidate. Several analysts viewed her achievement as political capital for the next campaign in 2018. It will depend, however, on how the situation within the Conservative Party will develop, because a split as in the current situation would no doubt be detrimental to Ramírez' ambitions.

Another remarkable aspect of the first round was the low turnout of 60 per cent, the lowest for 20 years. This suggests that many voters felt unable to identify with any of the candidates. But maybe the reasons also had to do with a certain political apathy or a general discontent with the achievements of the last few governments.<sup>4</sup> One area

4 | News emerged from some locations on the Atlantic Coast suggesting that people stayed away from the election by way of protest against the water shortage. There were media reports about placards bearing the slogan "Tagango won't vote without water", which inhabitants of the town were holding up next to the ballot boxes. According to the local registration office, the proportion of non-voters in Taganga was 87.5 per cent.

where turnout was particularly low was the Atlantic Coast region, due less to political dissatisfaction than to the fact that the “political machinery” had not yet been in gear during the first round. “Political machinery” is a term used in Colombia to describe voter mobilisation by party representatives or regional leaders, who buy voters’ support through promises of material benefits: positions in the public sector, social benefits, free transport to the polling stations and other amenities. Whether the wheels of the “political machinery” turn or not can influence the outcome of elections and be instrumental to the victory of a particular candidate. The 2014 elections were no exception in this respect.

### **Political Alliances Were Crucial to Santos’ Victory in the Second Round**

Three weeks after the first round, President Santos succeeded in outdoing the Uribe candidate and being confirmed in his post, having attracted the additional votes of over four million people who had not voted for him in the first round. In the second round, Santos won 50.9 per cent of the votes against Zuluaga’s 45 per cent. Voter turnout had increased by seven per cent, which meant that the proportion of non-voters had dropped to 52 per cent. Ultimately, the election alliances proved the decisive factor. The votes from the Caribbean Coast and from Bogotá brought victory to the old and new President. Turnout doubled in the seven Atlantic Coast departments, giving a 20 per cent boost to Santos’ votes, which analysts put down to the “cranking up of the political machinery”. In Bogotá, the outcome hinged mainly on numerous political alliances Santos had entered into with the Polo Democrático candidate and with the movement of the Mayor of Bogotá (Movimiento Progresista) as well as with several groups among the Greens. Analyses showed that Santos was able to attract 900,000 additional votes of the 1.2 million votes cast in Bogotá that had gone to first-round candidates who later dropped out, while Zuluaga mainly gained votes previously cast for Marta Lucía Ramírez, particularly in Bogotá.

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Fierce campaign: Although he had scored more votes in the first round, in the end, Óscar Iván Zuluaga, rival candidate from the Centro Democrático, could not win against Santos. | Source: Politécnico Grancolombiano Departamento de Comunicaciones, flickr ©[1](#)[2](#).

After the results had been announced, Zuluaga congratulated Santos on his election victory, acknowledged his own defeat and asserted that he wished to continue his work for the country: "Our movement lost with dignity and integrity. [...] Here, we shall go on fighting the political fight for our country."<sup>5</sup> Marta Lucía Ramírez also acknowledged Santos' victory and insisted on certain conditions during the impending government negotiations: "We shall not give in with respect to our values or our convictions and we shall continue to insist that any negotiation must be conducted under certain conditions. [...] I am convinced that peace depends on a government that operates efficiently, that gives us healthcare, security, jobs, that guarantees us justice and that simultaneously conducts peace negotiations that can achieve genuine peace."<sup>6</sup>

5 | TV address of 15 June 2014.

6 | Ibid.

No doubt the election results represented an endorsement of the peace process promoted by the President by millions of Colombians. However, there is currently a split emerging in the country. It is torn between supporting Santos and his peace plan as the engine for social and economic development or Zuluaga, the Uribist candidate and proponent of peace without impunity for former guerrilla fighters as well as stricter conditions for the negotiations. After all, this stance was supported by close to seven million followers in the elections, who were not convinced by Santos' government of the last four years. There are also many among Santos' supporters, who have a critical view of his first term in office, but who are even more determined to prevent a return of Uribism to power. The question that was probably at the bottom of many people's decision was therefore "Which is the lesser evil?". That should give the re-elected President some food for thought. The success of his second term will depend on whether he will manage to reunite the divided country, hampered by the fact that government action will be made more difficult by the majority situation in Congress, which is less favourable for him now than during his previous term in office.



Having formed political alliances, Santos was able to convince voters especially in the capital Bogotá. | Source: Justin Swan, City Clock, flickr ©①②③.

## GOVERNING A POLARISED COUNTRY

After his victory, Santos conceded that some errors were made during his first term: "We shall make corrections where corrections are needed and we shall make adjustments where adjustments are needed. And we shall conduct reforms where there is a need for reform." The first great challenge in the new constellation at the beginning of the second term is to form a government that is capable of tackling the tasks ahead. In the words of former President Gaviria: "The challenge for the President is a government that does not disappoint the trust placed in us by the Left on the one hand and that maintains a dialogue with the Centro Democrático and Óscar Iván Zuluaga on the other."

This is no easy task, and, unlike the last four years when he could rely on backing from almost 80 per cent of Congress, Santos will now have to contend with a strong opposition in the legislature. For the first time since the 1991 constitution came into force, this is dominated by the Right, more specifically by the Centro Democrático (the Uribist faction has 20 per cent of the senate seats in Congress), several parliamentarians from the Partido Conservador faction, as well as some left-leaning movements, which do support the peace plan, but will oppose other items on the agenda

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as soon as Congress has taken a position on the relevant issues. Santos will also have to involve sections of the left wing for the sake of legitimising his government, as they could otherwise place obstacles in the government's path with their powers of social mobilisation. The current scenario requires a strategic approach to government formation, which will satisfy the trust that the Left is demonstrating for the time being and simultaneously facilitate dialogue with the Uribist camp. As previously mentioned, Santos is beginning his new term in government in a polarised country and will therefore have to go some way to appease the almost seven million Colombians who had voted against the peace process he had advocated, who are concerned about the concessions to FARC and who are complaining about the failed reforms of Santos' first term. The government cannot afford to simply concentrate on the left-leaning center. It must bring on

board the groups of dissatisfied Colombians if it wants to win a referendum on the agreement being hammered out in Havana.

All these factors represent challenges for the government activities of the re-elected head of state. While the successful outcome of the talks in Havana and the implementation of the peace agreement remain among Santos' key concerns, he will have to make substantial efforts to explain to the population what the deal will mean in detail if he wants to have any chance of winning the proposed referendum. In addition to the implementation of the points agreed in Havana, the government's remit also involves the realisation of important and fundamental reforms in the area of infrastructure as well as efforts to improve access to healthcare, education and justice as well as the job market. For these activities, Santos' will not only need to establish alliances with the Left and the Right, he will also need to take steps to ensure that his coalition will be capable of taking effective action beyond handling the conflict resolution.



Low turnout: In the first round on May 25, almost 60 per cent of eligible voters did not go to the polls, the highest figure of the last 20 years. Reasons for this are lack of identification with candidates but also the dissatisfaction with the results of the first term of Santos. | Source: Globovisión, flickr ©©©.

## Outstanding Reforms

There are various outstanding tasks from Santos' first term in office in areas that are most important to Colombians: healthcare, education, employment and jurisdiction. And these involve not only qualitative improvements but also optimised provision and better access to public services and public infrastructure. This is where the true drivers for the country's progress lie. In education, the numerous actors within this sector must be brought round to cooperate on a new reform project, which will do justice to the requirements with respect to both provision and quality. There are major deficits in the Colombian education system. While 90 per cent of children have access to primary and secondary education in the capital Bogotá, there are still deficiencies in the preschool sector (50 per cent) and higher education sector (30 per cent). Furthermore, 80 per cent of the richest people in Colombia have a university qualification, while the proportion among the poorest is a meager 20 per cent. Currently, Colombia has the third worst results worldwide in the OECD PISA test.

After 20 years of pursuing a public healthcare model, the healthcare system is in crisis.<sup>7</sup> Although the government succeeded in passing a legal directive for reforming the fund management and the regulation of basic services, these reform efforts failed during the previous term and require restructuring to facilitate better access to medical services and to provide good quality care. There is also a need for action apparent in the justice system. A recent survey by the Ministry of Justice and Law showed that seven out of ten Colombians think the justice system works very slowly and that four out of ten believe that justice officials are "corrupt".<sup>8</sup> This calls for reform that will ensure better access to the justice system, more efficient court

7 | While there are rules in place in the UK and the USA dictating that qualified nurses working in an intensive care unit are responsible for the direct care of no more than two patients at a time, the ratio is more like one to eight on the intensive care wards of some institutions in cities such as Bogotá, and these nurses are mainly responsible for administrative tasks at that.

8 | Rodrigo Uprimny, Miguel Emilio La Rota, Sebastián Lalinde und Diego Eduardo López, "Encuesta nacional de necesidades jurídicas y acceso a la justicia", 2013, [http://dejusticia.org/files/r2\\_actividades\\_recursos/fi\\_name\\_recurso.619.pdf](http://dejusticia.org/files/r2_actividades_recursos/fi_name_recurso.619.pdf) [09.09.2014].

proceedings and official channels as well as better working conditions for justice officials. As regards employment, there is a need for tackling the formalisation of millions of informal jobs where labour conditions are currently inadequate. In Colombia, over half of all working people are in jobs without social security or labour rights.

Santos will have to tackle all these tasks, which are paramount for guaranteeing basic rights as well as promoting social mobility, whether there will be a “post-conflict” scenario or not. Further areas requiring action, for instance improvement of the country’s infrastructure and election system as well as amelioration of the agricultural crisis, will also need to be prioritised by the President, who is up against a stronger and more broadly based opposition. In view of the potential signing of the peace agreement, the government’s foremost task will be to define and implement the referendum about the agreement, which will require efforts to unite the divided country.

But even if this mission can be accomplished, Santos will still have a long way to go. First of all, he needs to create the appropriate conditions for the guerrilla fighters to lay down their arms, for their reintegration into civil society and for their involvement in the implementation of the agreements. Another challenge is to push the reforms for the implementation of the agreements through Congress so as to initiate badly needed change in Colombia’s rural areas. Important topics in this context include land distribution, political participation by minorities, as well as the inclusion of demobilised fighters into the political process, guarantees for the opposition, but also the compensation of victims of the conflict.

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Creating a consensus with respect to the peace plan and for the implementation of the changes, laws and reforms required for the agreement represents a complex task and the key to success at the same time. Santos will have to manage the balancing act of maintaining his extended coalition with the left wing of Congress while employing clever tactics in responding to the expected demands from the Centro Democrático faction.

## **Colombia's International Relations**

One of the most important foreign policy achievements of Santos' first government was the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Ecuador and Venezuela. Relations with the neighbouring countries have improved noticeably, and the country succeeded in adopting a leading role in the most important multilateral and regional bodies. As a result, Colombia chaired the UN Security Council for a period and co-chaired the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). A further event that marked the repositioning of the country within Latin America was the creation of the Pacific Alliance, whose members include Chile, Peru and Mexico besides Colombia.

The new government is faced with the challenge of further strengthening and consolidating these regional alliances, as they play a key role for the development of Colombian trade and for international cooperation. In connection with the opening-up process that Colombia is currently undergoing with respect to the European Union and the Free Trade Agreement with the USA, there is a need to create the appropriate conditions to protect national production and improve competitiveness. The peace process, for its part, requires support from the international community, because Colombia will need international assistance not only in the collective fight against the drug trade but also to monitor the agreements made in Havana.

## **CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK**

### **Challenges beyond the Peace Process**

Once the resolution of the conflict has become reality, legislature and executive will have to conduct a number of changes and reforms to put the agreements into practice. Aside from that, Colombia also needs long-term structural change to tackle problems that emerged before Santos came into office and that are at the root of many of the country's current problems.

One of the most significant causes of Colombia's problems is the extent of regional and social exclusion as well as the failure of the state to exert its presence at local and

departmental level. Consequently, structural changes entailing greater decentralisation is one of the central missions of the country's development. Although these measures are prerequisites for a stable and enduring peace, they must be pushed forward, whether the

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Havana peace negotiations will bear fruit or not. The most pressing task is to change the mechanism for the distribution of power and codetermination between central and local government. This will require the creation of an effective regulatory framework, which will ensure adequate inclusion of all regions and sectors of society.

A similarly important task for the next four years will be to overcome the economic and social inequalities, which have made Colombia one of the most inequitable countries of the Latin American continent, where corruption is widespread, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small minority, and large swathes of the population live in poverty. This will determine whether it will be possible to generate social mobility and to offer the population alternative job opportunities to satisfy their basic needs. Mitigating social tensions that stem from poverty and inequality do not only contribute to reducing crime; it is also essential to build confidence in the political system and democratic institutions. According to numerous studies conducted in the region, Colombians have very little faith in political institutions such as Congress, the political parties and local government authorities. The first task resulting from this state of affairs is to promote greater involvement of the citizens, who are currently feeling estranged from the institutions that represent them. In addition, the negative image of politics and democratic participation must be improved in a country that has traditionally suffered from low election turnouts, with the last presidential elections representing a disappointing record.

The challenge now is to unite the Colombians behind a common goal, to urge them to create a consensus and become involved, to fight for a better future, to exert their right to vote and to exercise the power that Colombian democracy affords them. The common goal is peace and its impact on the country's future. The Colombians have put their trust in Santos' slogan of peace as the engine

of economic and social development. It is now up to the re-elected President to focus all his energy on turning this vision into reality while simultaneously fulfilling all further conditions to facilitate the realisation of the mission of a stable and enduring peace.

This paper was completed on 9 July 2014.