

COLOMBIA



Statement by
H.E. Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón
President of the Republic of Colombia

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Mr. President, dear colleagues, distinguished delegates:

Over the last year we have witnessed events and popular uprisings that are changing the face of the planet, both politically and economically.

As the President of a country that firmly believes in multilateralism, I come before this Assembly today to express the importance of the fundamental role of the United Nations in confronting these crises.

Because crises are not good or bad on their own: their outcomes depend on how we manage them.

And many times –many times – they can turn into opportunities.

The political transformations that have been taking place in North Africa and the Near East –for example-, if they lead to strengthening democracy and the Rule of Law in the affected countries, can be a factor for global stability.

What people ask for, what people seek, is freedom, is respect for their rights, is the ability to elect their own leaders, is democracy, and our duty –the duty of the international community– is to support them.

If we do not do this, if we turn our backs on them, it could generate a prolonged period of civil wars and conflicts, which we must avoid at all costs.

We must, therefore, commit ourselves to strengthening and applying the methods for the pacific settlement of disputes that are included in Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter.

Because the more effective we are in the use of preventive diplomacy, the lesser the need for interventions.

We must place a bet, with conviction, on effective mediation: a mediation that does not seek prominence and that is given the necessary tools to establish trust and work on convenient solutions for all parties.

And I am happy to be able to affirm today that Colombia not only believes in mediation and peaceful solutions, but has applied them successfully.

During my government we were able to normalize the relations with two of our neighboring countries, like Venezuela and Ecuador, and we did it on the basis of agreement and direct and respectful dialogue.

The late Nestor Kirchner, former President of Argentina and then Secretary-General of UNASUR, provided his good offices to bring Colombia and Venezuela together and his work was highly effective.

That was his great legacy to the region.

In Latin America we learned that governments and States can have diverging political conceptions, sometimes opposite, but this does not mean that they cannot coexist and cooperate peacefully.

We have also made important contributions in the search for dialogue, negotiation and mediation in our region.

Honduras is an example of this effort.

Venezuela and Colombia joined together to support the Honduran parties in their reconciliation through dialogue and the restoration of trust, and we were able to achieve the reincorporation of Honduras into the Organization of American States.

What has been said so far can be applied to chronic conflicts, like the one between Israel and Palestine, where progress can be made if consistent dialogue and effective mediation are favored.

We are concerned –as is the rest of the international community– with the suspension of peace talks and encourage, what is more, we beg the parties to return to negotiations as soon as possible. This is the only, I repeat, the only path that would lead to where we all want to be: two States living in peace and security.

On a positive note, we can highlight, as an example of adequate negotiation and understanding, the events that led to the creation of the Republic of South Sudan, the most recent member of the United Nations, to whom we give a warm welcome.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Colombia has put on the table the situation of Haiti, a country hit by natural phenomena and affected by inadmissible poverty, the solution to which continues being a priority for all.

We have participated in the meetings of the Working Group and Dialogue of the countries in the region with a presence in the UN mission in the field, MINUSTAH, and we have been discussing the possible renewal or modification of its mandate next month.

As both the country with the greatest biodiversity per square kilometer in the world, and a vulnerable country that has suffered like few the consequences of climate change, Colombia is committed to the mitigation of this phenomenon and the protection of the environment.

We are contributing to the preparations of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development “Rio + 20”, which will take place next June, with a thematic proposal that we have been consulting with other countries.

We believe that one of the main results of “Rio + 20” must be the establishment of a group of Sustainable Development Goals based on the agenda that was approved at the first conference, echoing the Millennium Development Goals.

The guiding principles of Rio were established in 1992; a Plan of Implementation was agreed at Johannesburg in 2002; now, 20 years later, it is our turn to define objectives that allow us to measure our success, establish the shortcomings and determine the opportunities for progress.

The planet and its future require us to work with goals and result indicators that guarantee the effectiveness of our work.

Mr. President,

One year ago I said that Colombia found itself—as a result of the security, economic and social progress—at a new dawn.

Today I can tell you, with realism based on optimism, that the first lights of that dawn have already started providing us with their warmth and their light.

The Government that I preside is a government of national unity where the main political parties have converged around the fundamental purposes of the nation.

It is a unity that has provided us a high degree of governability and has allowed us to approve, in the National Congress, historical reforms and laws that will help us have a more prosperous, more secure, more equitable and more egalitarian country.

I would like to highlight, among the initiatives approved, the Law of Victims and Land Restitution that guarantees that the State and society will work to repair and return lands taken away from hundreds of thousands of people affected by violence in recent decades.

We are repaying a moral debt to the victims, and we do it—for the first time in the history of the world- before having put an end to the internal armed conflict, as we decided that justice, truth and reparation should not have to wait.

It is worth stressing that the day this bill was signed into law in Bogotá we had with us Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who highlighted the progress it represented and offered the collaboration of the United Nations for its adequate implementation.

Another great reform that was achieved –as a result of the governability guaranteed by national unity– was establishing a more equitable distribution of the resources from hydrocarbons and mining so that they are available to the regions and population in greatest need.

Also –in these times of financial and economic volatility– we introduced into the Constitution the criteria of fiscal sustainability and we enacted a law that guarantees that the State will maintain discipline in managing public finances.

Responsible initiatives like these have increased the confidence of investors and credit rating agencies in our country and allow us to project a more economically stable future; a future where we can focus –as we want– on reducing unemployment and poverty, two of the priority goals of our Government.

Colombia has faced, as no other country, the world drug problem. We have had big successes but we still have mayor challenges. We know how terrorists profit from drug-trafficking. Let it be no doubt that drugs and terror post a threat to democracy and the rule of law. Colombia will keep on fighting these scourges. For us this is a national security problem. We are cooperating with the region in an active manner in order to fight against transnational organized crime. We will achieve success only if we keep on cooperating and act together in this fight affecting all States equally.

A year ago I also said the decade that was starting should be called the Decade of Latin America and the Caribbean, and today I reaffirm this prediction.

Our region, in an environment of political and economic stability, and with a firm determination to advance social policy, has the possibility and vocation to provide the world with solutions in terms of the environment, water, energy, food and labor force.

But our region does not want to grow or progress in an isolated manner.

We want to move forward hand in hand with the world, sharing the principles of respect and tolerance, and finding joy in the prosperity and peace achieved in every corner of the world.

This is why I would like to conclude calling upon the nations of the world, and upon the Organization that gathers us, to continue working –making effective use of the pacific means at our disposal–with a new purpose: turning the crisis we are going through into opportunities for a better tomorrow.

Because the future –as always– depends on us.

With will and positive leadership, we can turn this storm into favorable winds for humanity!

Thank you very much