

Colombia Peace Forum  
March 27, 2015  
Ginny Bouvier **Talking Points**

**Welcome to the U.S. Institute of Peace and to this afternoon's** Colombia Peace Forum on "Peace from the Regions in Colombia". The Institute was founded by the U.S. Congress to contribute to the prevention, resolution and management of international conflicts. I am Ginny Bouvier, senior advisor for Latin America programs here at USIP, and the founder of The Colombia Peace Forum.

The Colombia Peace Forum is a series of policy discussions sponsored by USIP to support a peaceful resolution to one of the world's longest-running internal armed conflicts. For today's forum, we have assembled a panel of experts to discuss how a peace accord might be implemented on the ground.

Today's program will be conducted in Spanish with simultaneous English translation. We are webcasting live in Spanish and an English video of the event will be available early next week.

We are grateful to today's distinguished speakers for making the time to join us, particularly those who have come from afar to do so. Let me just briefly introduce and welcome my fellow panelists:

- **Andrés Santamaría Garrido**

President, National Federation of Ombudspeople (Personeros)

- **Marino Córdoba**

Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CNPA) and Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES)

- **Diego Bautista**

Adviser for Territorial Peace and Post-Conflict Institutional Architecture, Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of the Colombian Presidency.

Unfortunately, two of our women panelists, **Adela Aguirre**, ombudswoman of Pasto from the Department of Nariño, and a UNDP representative were unable to join us today.

Before we get started, I would like to ask the members of our audience to briefly introduce yourself and your institution so that our panelists know with whom they are talking.

I'd like to welcome all of you, and also those of you who are **joining us virtually**. And I'd like to thank in particular Maria Antonia Montes for her assistance in putting together today's meeting, as well as the many staff at USIP who have provided support. To our

tweeting audience, please note that the hashtag for today's event is

**#ColombiaPeaceForum.**

As we meet in Washington today, the peace delegations of the FARC and the Colombian government have just completed their 34<sup>th</sup> round of talks in Havana. During the most recent session, the parties have been focusing in parallel tracks on the issue of victims and on ending the conflict. Progress at the table has been steady, and in recent months a number of developments are worth noting:

- A series of measures agreed on by the parties to help reduce the intensity of the conflict:
- In recognition of the advances at the table and the success of the unilateral ceasefire declared in December 2014 by the FARC, on March 10, President Juan Manuel Santos announced that the Army would temporarily cease bombing FARC camps;
- On March 7, the FARC and GOC announced an historic agreement to demine areas that have been particularly affected by landmines. During the latest round of talks, the parties agreed that the de-mining project, which will include participation of the FARC and the Colombian military, will begin in selected regions of Antioquia and Meta, two of the areas most severely affected by landmines.

- In February, the FARC announced that it would cease recruitment of minors under age 17.

Other important developments in past weeks include:

- the naming by Secretary of State John Kerry of a U.S. Special Envoy for Peace, Bernie Aronson;
- The presentation in February of the report of the Historical Commission on the Conflict and Its Victims;
- Meetings in Havana of the technical subcommission on ending the conflict, which has brought together face-to-face six active duty Colombian military officers with the FARC military leadership;
- The visits to the peace table of three delegations of gender experts from women's and LGBTI organizations at the invitation of the Subcommission on Gender.

Support for the peace process back in Colombia appears to be on the rise, with the latest polling data by *Invamer Gallup* indicating that some 72% of those surveyed support the government's decision to initiate negotiations with the FARC. This represents an increase of ten percentage points from earlier in the year, and may reflect a growing effort by the government's team to take a more aggressive stance in defense of the process inside Colombia, where skepticism of the process has been high.

As talks continue in Havana, however, many are beginning to think ahead to the implications of an agreement back home. Sergio Jaramillo, the government's High Commissioner of Peace, has called for building "paz territorial," or "peace from the ground up." This idea is meant to engage regional institutions, local authorities and diverse social sectors and communities in translating an eventual peace accord into practice.

USIP has been engaged for the last decade in working to strengthen and develop the capacity of civil society to be able to contribute to peacebuilding in the regions. In this regard, we are currently supporting projects and processes whose participants are potential allies in the development of paz territorial. These include groups like the Citizens Commissions for Peace and Reconciliation, which have created a model for a multisectoral process to spearhead discussions on peace and reconciliation in 8 depts on the North Atlantic Coast and in Arauca; this process is now expanding to Antioquia and Narino. We are supporting Planeta Paz to generate and sistematizar propuestas y agendas de construcción de paz elaboradas por organizaciones sociales populares de varias regiones del país en el contexto de la negociación política del conflicto armado con las FARC y un eventual proceso con el ELN y el EPL. Esta labor de sistematización busca identificar lineamientos comunes en las agendas populares que contribuyan a construir los puentes entre la construcción de paz y la negociación.

We have been involved in a consortium of universities and social organizations that is working on a project called the Day After, which most recently facilitated a series of

interethnic and intersectorial dialogues in Popayan. And we have been supporting the fortalecimiento de capacidades de mujeres mediadoras en 11 departamentos de Colombia.

El tema de la paz territorial, sin embargo, deja mucho para definirse. Who will lead and organize the process? How can territorial paz be developed in a way that challenges the historic exclusions of large portions of the Colombian population—Afro-Colombians, indigenous, women, youth, peasants? How will it build on existing efforts? How can this be done in a way that is transformative and that creates new relationships between Bogota and the regions? How will paz territorial be supported logistically? And finally, what is the potential role of the international community?

Today's meeting on Paz Territorial will look at these questions and at some of the challenges and opportunities presented by the peace process.

And now, let us turn to our other panelists to address these questions. We begin with Andres Santamaria Garrido, President of the National Federation of Ombudspersons, who will talk about the role of the personeros in the construction of paz territorial.