

Colombian Peace Process: IOM Weekly Report

April, 2014



1. Background

On September 4, 2012, President Santos announced the signing of a General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, setting in motion the fourth official peace talks with this group. The initial agenda includes: 1) integrated rural reform; 2) the guarantee of functional political opposition and civic participation; 3) the end of the conflict (laying down arms and reintegration into civilian life); 4) drug trafficking; and 5) rights of victims. Preparatory talks started in Oslo on October 17, 2012 and substantive dialogues, in Havana, on November 19, 2012. Two agreements have been reached so far: one on the first point on the agenda, integrated rural reform, on May 26, 2013; and the second on the next point, political participation, on November 6, 2013.

2. Key Developments from March 26th to March 31st

Law reinstated to create Council for Peace

Law 434 was issued in 1998, when a need was identified for a mechanism through which local government, guerrilla, ethnic minorities, unions, the church, and others could discuss peace. The law resulted in the Council for Peace, which functioned as a governmental advisory body. After criticism of the closed nature of current peace talks and a lack of opportunities for civil society participation, President Santos announced that Law 434 will be reinstated to allow participation through a new Council for Peace, which will meet every two months.¹

The group “Colombians for Peace”, led by ex-Senator Piedad Córdoba, wrote a letter of support to Santos, applauding the reinstating of the Council for Peace. They also called for broader participation in the mechanism than occurred in 1998. This would include demobilized people, new political parties, women’s organizations, LGBTQI organizations, and others.²

3. Dialogues & Agenda

Expectations for agreement on illegal drugs

GOC and FARC teams concluded another round of talks on Sunday. They highlighted progress on the current topic – illegal drugs – and expect to confirm an agreement on this issue soon.³

¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/busca-de-consejos-de-paz-articulo-483381>

² http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/piedad-crdoba-anuncia-el-consejo-nacional-de-paz_13738600-4

³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/negociadores-esperan-concluir-prontamente-debate-de-dro-articulo-483860>

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4. International

UN asks for information about mines and kidnap victims

At the launch of the Colombia 2013 human rights report, the United Nations requested that the FARC and ELN provide information about people they have kidnapped and that they reveal the location of anti-personnel mines. The entity also criticized the possible broadening of criteria under which the military can be judged for war crimes in military court. The UN stated that human rights violations should be judged by ordinary justice wherever possible.⁴

5. Other Voices

Ex-President Pastrana speaks out about peace talks

Ex-President Pastrana stated that it is not true that the achievement of peace will not be possible if President Santos is not re-elected. He called for more transparency regarding how the peace talks are progressing, and highlighted how information about dialogues held with the FARC during his own administration was shared with the public.⁵

Child recruitment should be prioritized in peace process

The Inspector General's Office confirmed that it will request the GOC include child recruitment in the peace talks with the FARC. The Office's statement highlighted the need for local governmental entities to do more to guarantee children's rights.⁶ This came after information was released indicating that child recruitment affects 108 municipalities of the country and is most practiced by the FARC, although the BACRIM frequently recruit children as well.⁷

Meanwhile, Vice President Garzón called for the FARC and other illegal armed groups to put an end to child recruitment.⁸

⁴ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/onu-pide-a-guerrillas-informacin-de-secuestrados_13730835-4

⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/el-presidente-no-se-va-reelegir-y-farc-estan-quemando-t-articulo-483915> and http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/crticas-de-andrs-pastrana-al-proceso-de-paz-en-la-habana_13737933-4

⁶ http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/P/piden_que_reclutamiento_de_menores_s_ea_tema_prioritario_en_proceso_de_paz/piden_que_reclutamiento_de_menores_sea_tema_prio_ritario_en_proceso_de_paz.asp

⁷ http://www.elmundo.com/porta/opinion/editorial/ninos_llevados_a_la_guerra.php

⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/ii-encuentro-de-alcaldes-por-la-infancia_13760661-4

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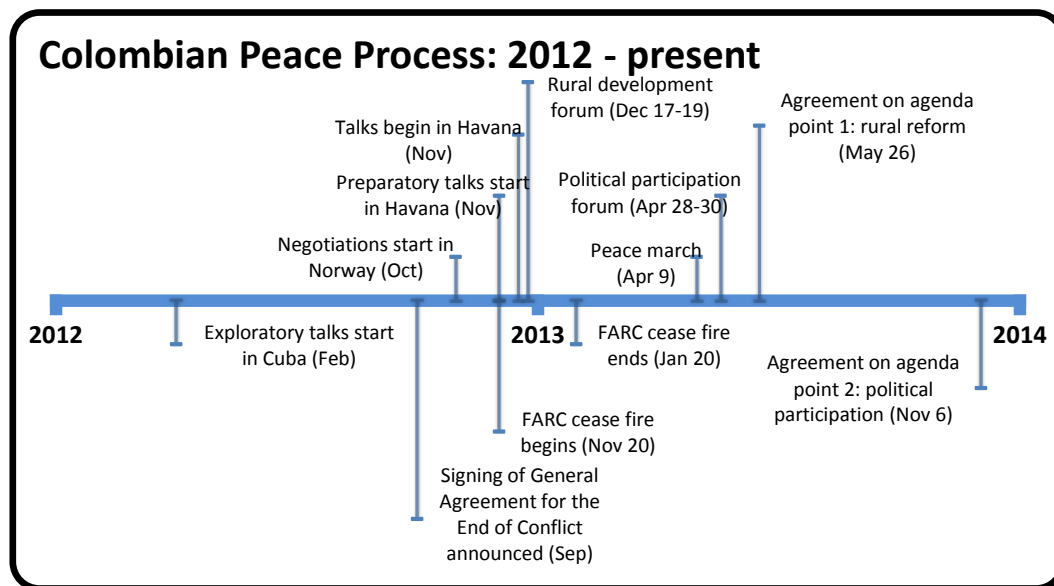
6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

GOC says that truth commission must come after peace agreement

The GOC expressed its belief that a truth commission should be created to clarify the truths of the conflict, but only after a final peace agreement has been reached. While eager to use this mechanism, the GOC does not want it to be manipulated as part of negotiations, but rather to serve to strengthen peace. After politicians close to the peace process stated their support of the idea, additional Congress members expressed further GOC support.⁹

Meanwhile, ex-President Uribe and his supporters have called for a truth commission to ascertain the terms of the current peace talks. The mechanism would be used to facilitate transparency about the peace talks and increase public access to information.¹⁰

7. Timeline



⁹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/gobierno-favorable-comision-de-verdad-tras-firma-de-paz-articulo-483819> and <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/8203congresistas-ven-positiva-una-comision-de-la-verdad/20140330/nota/2153320.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/uribismo-pide-comision-de-verdad-establecer-negociacion-articulo-483987>



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8. Further Reading

Journalist gains privileged access to talks

Jorge Enrique Botero, a journalist for Las 2 Orillas, was permitted access to meetings between the GOC and FARC dialogue teams. His article gives insight on the progress of discussions while external criticism from ex-Presidents Uribe and Pastrana targeted the talks, and discussions in Colombia centered on topics such as a truth commission and a Council for Peace.¹¹

Vice Prime Minister of Ireland gives thoughts on peace talks

Martin McGuinness, a member of the IRA and current Vice Prime Minister of Ireland, was interviewed by El Tiempo. He discusses the similarities and differences between the peace process in Northern Ireland and the current GOC-FARC talks, and analyzes the possibility of a ceasefire with the FARC.¹²

¹¹ <http://www.las2orillas.co/desde-el-corazon-del-proceso-de-paz-en-la-habana/>

¹² http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/entrevista-con-martin-mcguinness-viceprimer-ministro-de-irlanda-del-norte_13760639-4

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2. Key Developments from April 2nd to April 8th

FARC believe that conditions are right for peace

The FARC believe that for the first time since the beginning of the armed conflict, the conditions are currently right for the signing of a peace agreement with the GOC. Favorable conditions include the existence of international support, and both sides' willingness to dialogue. However, the guerrilla group criticized President Santos for not having sufficient political will to impose a peace agreement on those they consider "enemies of peace".¹³

Comments made on FARC jail time

Oscar Iván Zuluaga, Presidential candidate from Centro Democrático party (Alvaro Uribe party), stated that FARC commanders currently participating in the peace talks must fulfill jail sentences for their crimes before being considered as possible candidates for Congress. The guerrilla group responded that no-one who has taken a protagonist role in a peace process has ever been made to pay jail time.¹⁴

3. Dialogues & Agenda

FARC propose agreement on use of explosives

The 23rd round of talks began with the FARC's proposal that an agreement be made on the use of anti-personnel mines and other explosives. 'Iván Márquez' stated that the FARC are willing to

¹³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-creen-primera-vez-hay-condiciones-de-firmar-paz-articulo-485219>

¹⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/ningun-proceso-de-paz-acaba-sus-protagonistas-carcel-fa-articulo-485590>

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enter such an agreement, but noted that the military has also used anti-personnel mines and bombs that affect life and destroy the environment.¹⁵

Illegal crop substitution should be gradual: FARC

The FARC stated that programs facilitating the substitution of illegal crops should be implemented gradually, with structural changes and environmental considerations taken into account. They highlighted the need to focus on alternative income generation.¹⁶

Legal action taken to suspend peace process during elections

A writ was presented to Cundinamarca Administrative Tribunal calling for suspension of the peace talks during May 25th presidential elections and preceding campaigns. The writ states that Santos' use of the talks to gain support for his campaign is unconstitutional.¹⁷

4. International

High Commissioner for Peace speaks at Harvard

Sergio Jaramillo, the High Commissioner for Peace, spoke at Harvard University. His speech, titled "Territorial Peace", emphasized the need to build peace at the regional level with a focus on rural development and capacity building. He also highlighted the need for institutional strengthening and reform to support stable and lasting peace. The text of his speech is available on El Tiempo's website.¹⁸

5. Other Voices

Mayor of Montería speaks out about post-conflict

At a conference in New York University, Montería Mayor, Carlos Correa, discussed the ways in which the armed conflict has affected his city, and the role of cities and their leadership in the post-conflict phase. He spoke of institutional and service needs caused by conflict, and what cities can do to address these issues.¹⁹

¹⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-proponen-acuerdo-sobre-uso-de-explosivos-mientras-articulo-484892>

¹⁶ <http://www.economistaamerica.co/politica-eAm-co/noticias/5683992/04/14/Colombia-Las-FARC-piden-que-la-sustitucion-de-cultivos-ilicitos-sea-gradual.html#.Kku8KdNGKSKfiGv>

¹⁷ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/mediante-tutela-buscan-suspender-proceso-de-paz-eleccio-articulo-485557>

¹⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/conferencia-la-paz-territorial-dicada-por-sergio-jaramillo-alto-comisionado-para-la-paz_13791996-4

¹⁹ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/carlos-correa-alcalde-de-monteria-las-ciudades-tienen-que-liderar-el-postconflicto/383084-3>



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Peace process participation facilitated through TV show

El Tiempo television started a television program titled “My Voice Counts in the Peace Process”, which allows victims and other key actors to come together and discuss issues relating to the peace process. The first episode can be viewed on El Tiempo’s website.²⁰

Congress President calls for unilateral ceasefire

After Martin McGuinness, a member of the IRA and current Vice Prime Minister of Ireland, recommended a unilateral FARC ceasefire two weeks ago, the topic became the focus of discussions of peace. Congress President Juan Fernando Cristo agreed, and called for the FARC to enter a unilateral ceasefire to demonstrate their commitment to peace.²¹

Carlos Vives becomes USAID ambassador, comments on peace

Colombian singer Carlos Vives was appointed USAID’s first Inclusion Ambassador. He stated that the peace process will be incomplete until ethnic communities can participate. He also highlighted the importance of human and ethnic rights in efforts to make peace endure.²²

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

Poll shows increasing pessimism

Datexco conducted a study including 1,000 interviews of men and women over the age of eighteen in Colombia. The study found that the percentage of people who disagree with the way the peace process is being managed increased from 52% in late January to 65% in late March. President Santos’ favorability is at 29%, which is ten points lower than the last poll.²³

Universidad Nacional calls for media representations of peace

The Universidad Nacional made a call for contributions to a project titled “Communicate in Peace”. This project aims to demonstrate how Colombians envision peace and the post-conflict context through video and audio representations.²⁴

²⁰ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/reviva-la-primera-emisin-de-mi-voz-cuenta-en-el-proceso-de-paz_13796535-4

²¹ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz-piden-cese-al-fuego_13771036-4

²² <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/usaids-names-grammy-winning-carlos-vives-its-first-inclusion>

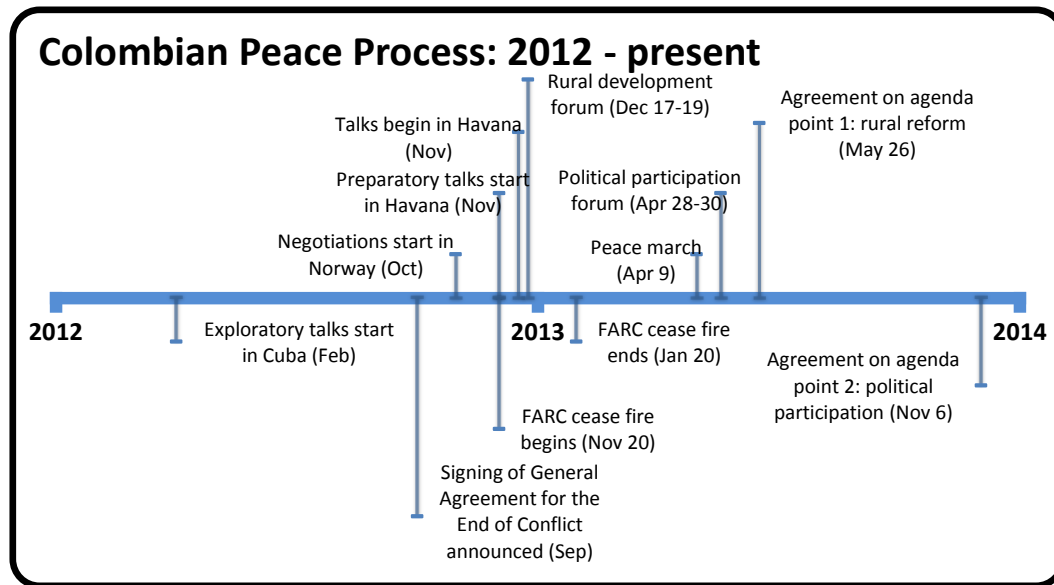
²³ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/resultados-encuesta-pulso-pas-colombia_13784091-4

²⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/le-suena-paz-los-colombianos-articulo-485376>

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8. Further Reading

New resource for information on conflict dynamics

The Center for Historical Memory and Verdad Abierta launched RutasdelConflicto.com, which provides interactive pages with information on massacres, their years, the group that inflicted them, their geography, and other factors. In 728 massacres committed from 1982 until now, 59% were committed by the paramilitary groups, 15% by unidentified groups, 12% by the FARC, 7% by the army, 3% by the ELN, and the rest by other groups.²⁵

Analysis of the options to obtain popular approval of a peace agreement

Debate continues over how to obtain popular approval of a final peace agreement. The GOC asserts that a final peace agreement would be approved via referendum, while the FARC and conservative groups push for a constituent assembly. Journalist Cristina de la Torre analyzes the constituent assembly option in her article for *El Espectador*, highlighting that it is inappropriate as a mechanism to approve an agreement because it is designed to restart negotiation and would allow assembly members to disregard, rather than uphold, aspects of a final peace agreement.²⁶

²⁵ www.rutasdelconflicto.com

²⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/neogolpismo-columna-485518>

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2. Key Developments from April 9th to April 15th

Accusations fly over Santos' Timochenko comment

President Santos commented that the GOC knows where FARC leader alias 'Timochenko' is but that due to the peace talks, he would think twice about giving the order to kill the guerrilla leader.²⁷ This provoked outcry from sources who claimed that Santos is too soft on the FARC and reminded him that Timochenko's arrest orders have not been suspended.²⁸ Minister of Defense Juan Carlos Pinzón stated that Timochenko is outside Colombia and that if he were in the country, the armed forces have the order to capture him.²⁹ The FARC stated that Santos should show more real commitment to peace, and that forgiving Timochenko is not enough.³⁰

ELN leader says GOC not open to peace

Alias 'Gabino', one of the high command leaders of the ELN, said in an interview that the GOC is not open to a peace built by all but rather wants a peace that suits only the government and does not benefit the poor and the peasantry. He also stated that the ELN continues to seek an opportunity to enter peace talks with the GOC.³¹

²⁷ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/santos-pensaria-dos-veces-dar-de-baja-timochenko-articulo-486125>

²⁸ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/timochenko-no-tiene-suspendidas-ordenes-de-captura-vale-articulo-486516>

²⁹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/fuerza-publica-tiene-el-deber-de-capturar-timochenko-articulo-486558>

³⁰ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-dicen-paz-no-perdonarle-vida-timochenko-articulo-486403>

³¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/el-gobierno-santos-no-tiene-voluntad-de-paz-gabino-articulo-486935>

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3. Dialogues & Agenda

Progress made in discussion of illegal drugs

Round 23 of the peace talks closed without an agreement. However, a joint press statement was released by the GOC and FARC dialogue teams, confirming that progress has been made in the talks on the current topic of illegal drugs. The statement highlighted that the problem of illegal drugs is closely linked to issues of rural reform, so the agreement being constructed on the current topic is taking into account the agreement reached on rural reform.³²

FARC discuss victims

The FARC expressed that they feel pain for the victims of the conflict and that they never plan to attack civilians.³³ The guerrilla group stated that a truth commission is necessary to enrich discussions on the fifth point on the agenda – victims. However, the GOC maintains that a truth commission would come after the signing of a final peace agreement.³⁴

FARC: No break in talks for presidential elections

After calls were made for the peace talks to be suspended preceding and during the May 25th presidential elections, the FARC rejected the idea and emphasized that the talks must continue in order to reach peace.³⁵

4. Other Voices

Ombudsman insists that victims must be heard

Ombudsman Jorge Armando Otálora stated that the victims of the armed conflict must be heard at the dialogue table in Cuba. He called for representatives who understand the situation of the 6.2 million victims to be included in discussions on the fifth point on the dialogue agenda – the victims.³⁶

GOC and FARC should explore humanitarian agreement: ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross called on the dialogue teams to evaluate the possibility of reaching humanitarian agreements before a final peace agreement, in order to

³² <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/proceso-de-paz-avances-sin-acuerdo-articulo-486539>

³³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-afirman-sentir-mucho-dolor-victimas-civiles-del-co-articulo-486109>

³⁴ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/farc-insiste-en-crear-comisin-de-la-verdad_13821956-4

³⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/descartan-receso-proceso-de-paz-elecciones-presidencial-articulo-485876>

³⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/defensor-del-pueblo-insiste-victimas-sean-escuchadas-cu-articulo-485975>



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improve humanitarian conditions in Colombia as soon as possible. In both its 2013 Colombia report and in a recent statement by ICRC Colombia Director Jordi Raich, the organization emphasized that while the peace talks demonstrate a step in the right direction, it is necessary to work to positively impact the lives of Colombians as soon as possible.³⁷

5. Emerging Challenges & Responses

ELN and FARC are weak, need peace agreement: Decisive Point

Conflict research consultancy firm Decisive Point released a report stating that both the ELN and the FARC have reached irreversible military weakness. Their only option is to continue with, or in the ELN's case initiate, peace talks in order to negotiate their demobilization and other points of interest while they still have at least some bargaining power.³⁸

BACRIM express wish to enter peace talks

The Urabeños and the Oficina de Envigado BACRIM (criminal groups) stated that they have reached a peace agreement among themselves, and are ready to enter peace talks with the GOC. They affirmed that they want to contribute to reparations for their victims. This is not the first time that BACRIM have expressed a wish to enter peace talks, and it remains to be seen if they will support this statement with a further demonstration of commitment.³⁹

³⁷ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/gobierno-y-farc-deberian-explorar-acuerdos-humanitarios-articulo-486429>

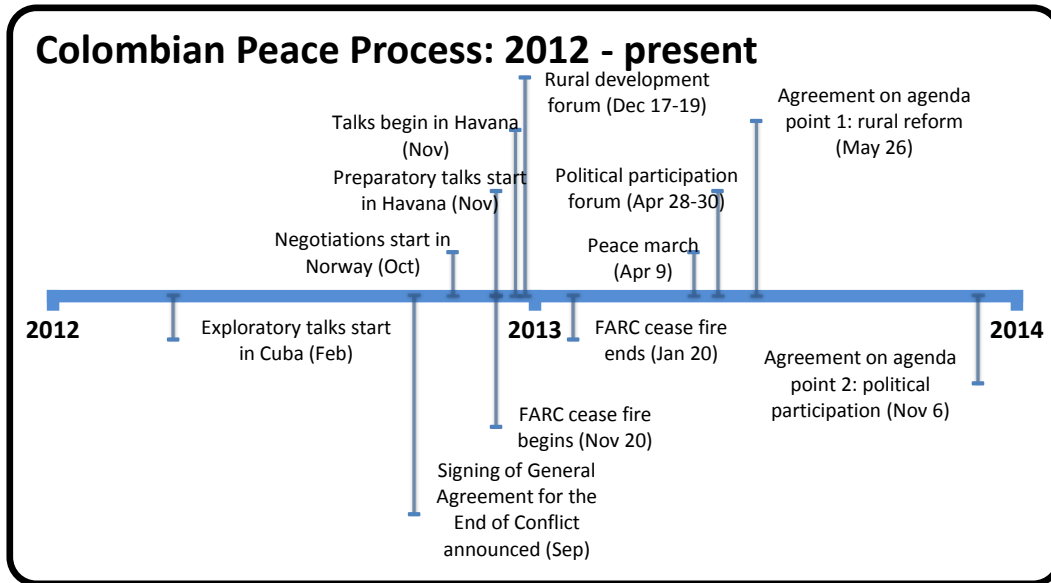
³⁸ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/el-ocaso-de-farc-y-el-eln-articulo-486290>

³⁹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/cuando-bacrim-hablan-de-paz-articulo-486974>

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7. Further Reading

Ex-Minister of Agriculture explains rural reform agreement

El Tiempo published an article by Ex-Minister of Agriculture Juan Camilo Restrepo in which he explains the agreement made on integrated rural reform between the GOC and FARC. The focus, he says, is on rural development in the post-conflict stage, in the form of a process of land grants through a bank of land parcels accompanied by improved public services, transportation and communications, and technical assistance.⁴⁰

Semana highlights mental health challenges in conflict

Semana magazine published an article highlighting the mental health effects of the conflict on the population. The article and accompanying interactive web platform present narratives from people who suffer mental health issues as a result of their experiences in the conflict.⁴¹

⁴⁰ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/entrevista-con-el-exministro-de-agricultura-juan-camilo-restrepo_13829175-4

⁴¹ <http://www.semana.com/especiales/conflicto-salud-mental/index.html>

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2. Key Developments from April 16th to April 22nd

GOC dialogue team to tour country

The GOC dialogue team will tour Colombia promoting the peace process, explaining the agreements and other progress made, and highlighting how a negotiated end of the conflict will benefit Colombia. The dates of the tour are not yet confirmed, but it is expected to begin shortly after the next round of talks ends on May 5th.⁴²

Laying weapons aside prerequisite for peace agreement: Vargas Lleras

Vice Presidential candidate Germán Vargas Lleras stated that an agreement that the FARC will lay weapons aside is essential for a final peace accord. He asserted that some politicians who oppose the peace talks have wrongly implied that the GOC would allow the guerrilla group to reintegrate without stopping armed activity. The candidate said this is false information being used in presidential campaigns by opposition candidates, and the GOC would not sign a final peace agreement without the FARC's confirmation that they would put down weapons.⁴³

3. Dialogues & Agenda

Santos praises peace process at event with indigenous groups

President Santos was in Cauca at a series of events with indigenous groups. He took advantage of the opportunity to praise the peace process and defend his administration's efforts to reach negotiated peace. Santos also highlighted the fact that Cauca and its indigenous population have

⁴² <http://www.lapatria.com/nacional/equipo-negociador-de-paz-se-va-de-gira-73786>

⁴³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/entrega-de-armas-requisito-esencial-firma-de-acuerdo-de-articulo-488060>

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been particularly badly affected by the conflict, and will see significant changes in the post-conflict phase.⁴⁴

4. Other Voices

Priests ask Colombians to support peace at Easter

During Easter, the clergy preached a coordinated message asking the Colombian population to forgive those who have caused the country wrong, and to work together for reconciliation and peace. Priests also asked the GOC and the FARC to show more commitment to the talks.⁴⁵

5. International

WOLA publishes report on peace talks

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) published 'Ending 50 years of conflict in Colombia'. The document analyzes the challenges remaining for the dialogue table: finding a solution for victims, establishing transitional justice mechanisms to hold those responsible for human rights abuses accountable, and implementing final agreements. The report highlights the USA's role in peace in Colombia, mostly in terms of post-conflict financial support.⁴⁶

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

Truth commission: point of contention?

Semana published an article analyzing progress made in the dialogues. The article states that while progress seems to have been made, the FARC said that if their wish to hold a truth commission as part of the agenda point on victims is not fulfilled, it could put the talks at risk. The guerrilla group wishes to use a commission to recognize responsibility for human rights abuses before discussing possible transitional justice mechanisms to hold them accountable.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/presidente-santos-comparte-avances-del-proceso-de-paz-con-indigenas_13843208-4

⁴⁵ <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/la-paz-tema-central-del-mensaje-de-los-obispos-en-semana-santa/20140419/nota/2184719.aspx>

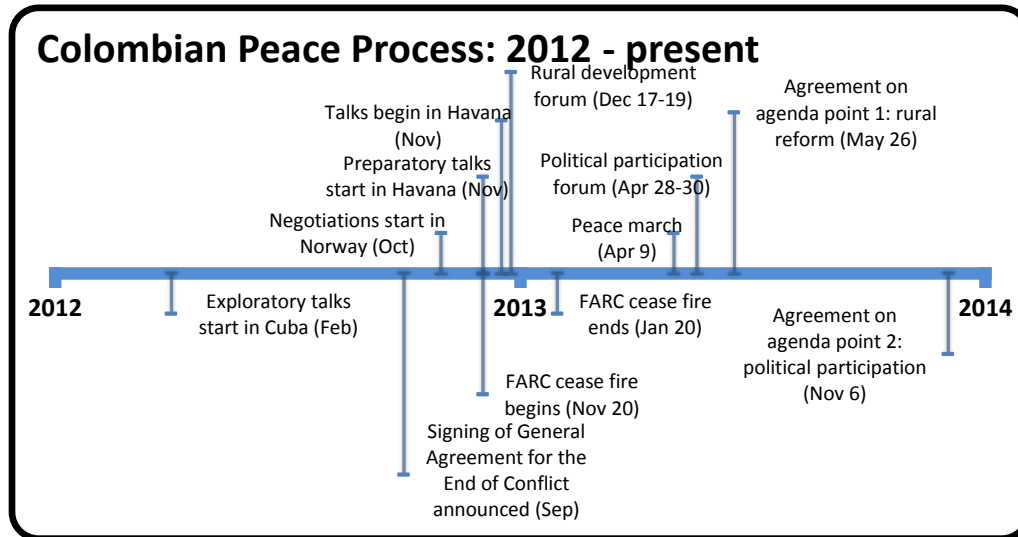
⁴⁶ http://www.wola.org/publications/ending_50_years_of_conflict

⁴⁷ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/paz-escollo-la-vista/383980-3>

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2. Key Developments from April 23rd to April 29th

Debates about peace process intensify as elections approach

The presidential elections are less than a month away (May 25th), and the peace process is one of the central debate topics as they approach. President Santos has reiterated his commitment to achieving a negotiated end to the conflict, with peace and post-conflict initiatives central to his Government Plan launched last week.⁴⁸ Alianza Verde candidate, Enrique Peñalosa, stated that the peace process is of extreme importance to Colombia, and discussed the possibility of a referendum to gain popular support of a peace agreement.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the FARC accused some candidates of trying to thwart the peace process by spreading false messages about it.⁵⁰

FARC have less than 6,900 combatants

Decisive Point consulting group released a report stating that the FARC have approximately 6,900 combatants – down from 9,000 in 2010. The group’s director, Román Ortiz, said that this weakening has caused a change in the strategy of the guerrilla organization.⁵¹

Clarification commission request: a cause for concern?

The FARC have agreed with the GOC that a truth commission can be established after a final agreement is signed, but they continue to push for a commission to clarify the origins and actors in the conflict to be created while the talks are in progress. They aim to use such an entity to

⁴⁸ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/mi-segundo-tiempo-sera-el-tiempo-de-paz-santos-articulo-489314>

⁴⁹ <http://www.elpueblo.com.co/elnuevoliberal/el-proceso-de-paz-es-mas-importante-cualquier-presidencia-penalosa/#ixzz30BxhV6YT>

⁵⁰ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-lamentan-falta-de-generosidad-de-algunos-candidato-articulo-488854>

⁵¹ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/las-farc-tendran-solo-6900-hombres-segn-informe_13868218-4

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demonstrate how their guerrilla group was established in response to government attacks, and to show that they are from the same social groups as the victims. The FARC stated that they will suspend the dialogues if the GOC does not agree to create such a commission.⁵²

3. Dialogues & Agenda

GOC denies negotiating a reduction in armed forces

As the next round of talks began on Monday, GOC dialogue team leader, Humberto de la Calle, denied rumors, seemingly originating in some presidential campaigns, that the GOC is negotiating a reduction in the armed forces as part of the peace process. De la Calle asserted that these rumors aimed to foment negative public opinion of the dialogues and thereby increase support for conservative candidates who oppose the peace process.⁵³

FARC: we would never try to avoid responsibility in conflict

The FARC stated they would never avoid taking responsibility for the damage their actions in the conflict have caused. They reiterated their proposal that a clarification commission be established to clarify every actor's responsibility and establish the historical truth of the conflict.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, the FARC denied being a drug-trafficking organization, as the US Department of State recently suggested.⁵⁵

Urgency to reach a third agreement

El Espectador published an analysis of the peace process in light of upcoming presidential elections. The article suggests that as the elections approach, it is ever more necessary to reach an agreement on the current topic – illegal drugs –to renew public support for the peace process and candidates who support it. This agreement would be the third, following that on political participation reached in November 2013 and that on rural reform in May 2013.⁵⁶

⁵² <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/farc-frenarian-proceso-de-paz-si-no-se-crea-comision/385389-3>

⁵³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/gobierno-desmiente-se-negocie-farc-reduccion-de-fuerzas-articulo-488391>

⁵⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-dicen-jamas-rehuiran-responsabilidades-conflicto-c-articulo-489016>

⁵⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/no-somos-una-organizacion-narcotraficante-farc-articulo-488591>

⁵⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/urgencia-un-tercer-acuerdo-articulo-489084>

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4. Other Voices

El Tiempo holds forum, creates virtual resource on transitional justice

El Tiempo held a virtual forum in which victims' representatives and civil society leaders debated aspects of the peace process. Attorney General, Eduardo Montealegre, spoke at the event, proposing that special tribunals be created to process crimes committed by the FARC, and that open jails be constructed for members of the armed forces who were responsible for violations. The result of the forum is an online platform with videos of participants' thoughts on reconciliation, victims, and topics relating to the peace talks and post-conflict.⁵⁷

Reconciliation Colombia holds final regional meeting

The last regional meeting of the Reconciliation Colombia initiative (supported by USAID and IOM) was held in Bucaramanga on Wednesday. Local authorities and representatives from regional NGOs and other entities discussed ideas on how to facilitate reconciliation. In contrast to other Reconciliation Colombia meetings, the emphasis here was on unemployment and inequality as issues that need to be resolved for peace and reconciliation to be achieved.⁵⁸

Transitional justice forum held in Medellín

The Ministry of Justice convened community leaders from Antioquia, Chocó, and San Andrés to hold a forum on the importance of effective use of transitional justice in the post-conflict phase. Conclusions from the event included the need for pedagogical programs that inform the public about transitional justice and its uses.⁵⁹

5. International

Pope expresses support for peace process

Chancellor María Ángela Holguín met with representatives at the Vatican to discuss progress in the peace process. She relayed a message that the Pope had sent to President Santos, stating his support for the peace talks and encouraging the President to persevere in his efforts to achieve a

⁵⁷ <http://www.eltiempo.com/Multimedia/especiales/debatesprocesodepaz/> and http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/foro-sobre-la-paz-de-el-tiempo_13900396-4

⁵⁸ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/el-gran-desafio-de-reconciliacion-colombia/384860-3>

⁵⁹ http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/R/respaldo_a_justicia_transicional/respaldo_a_justicia_transicional.asp

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negotiated end to the conflict.⁶⁰ The FARC asked the Colombian church to follow the Pope's example and support the peace process.⁶¹

US religious leaders ask Obama to re-direct assistance

A group of 45 religious leaders in the US wrote a letter to President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, asking them to redirect assistance for Colombia away from military aid and towards peacebuilding initiatives.⁶²

Vice President of Cuba affirms support for talks

Miguel Díaz-Canel, Vice President of Cuba, affirmed that his government believes in the peace talks and is doing everything possible to facilitate their continuation and success. He clarified that Cuba has not participated in the dialogues because the Colombian conflict must be resolved internally. Díaz-Canel also emphasized that the FARC must be ready to leave weapons aside for the peace process to come to a successful ending.⁶³

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

Peasant protest infiltrated by FARC?

Peasants in various regions of Colombia began a protest this week, claiming GOC's failure to fulfill commitments agreed upon during the last peasant protests in 2013. Minister of Defense, Juan Carlos Pinzón, stated that the GOC has evidence that the FARC have infiltrated the protest, which FARC dialogue team members have vehemently denied. Media reports state that the current protests will not have the same scope and impact as last year's, because some NGOs and social organizations who are engaged in the peace process are supporting the GOC and encouraging the peasants to turn the protest into a march for peace.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/santos-dice-papa-francisco-le-pidio-perseverar-el-proce-articulo-489189>

⁶¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-piden-iglesia-seguir-mensaje-del-papa-sobre-proces-articulo-489296>

⁶² http://presbypeacefellowship.org/content/churches-colombia-and-us-call-peace#.U1_50FVdU24

⁶³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/vicepresidente-de-cuba-habla-del-proceso-de-paz-colombi-articulo-488999>

⁶⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/los-correos-de-farc-sobre-el-paro-de-2013-articulo-489088> and <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/el-proceso-de-paz-se-le-atravesia-al-paro-por-ahora-47218>

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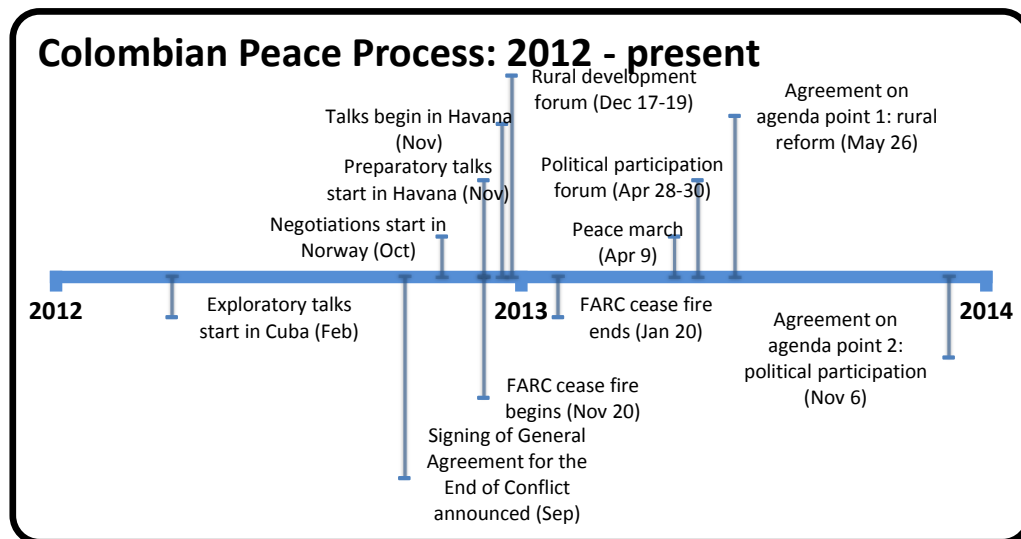
Peace agreement would allow us to find disappeared people: ICRC

Jordi Raich, ICRC Colombia Director, said that a GOC-FARC peace agreement would facilitate exchange of information that could allow the ICRC and its partners to find more disappeared people. Post-conflict would also reduce humanitarian crises and disappearances.⁶⁵

Constitutional Court rejects legal case against Legal Framework for Peace

An unnamed citizen presented a legal case against the Legal Framework for Peace. The case said that the Framework violates constitutional protections for the victims' rights to truth, justice, and reparations. The Constitutional Court rejected the case on the grounds that it was not presented correctly.⁶⁶

7. Timeline



8. Further Reading

Minister of Justice highlights lessons learned from Justice and Peace Law

⁶⁵ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/cicr-habla-del-acuerdo-de-paz-en-colombia_13873240-4

⁶⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/corte-rechazo-nueva-demanda-contra-marco-juridico-paz-articulo-489581>



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At a forum in Medellín last week, Minister of Justice Alfonso Gómez Méndez highlighted the need to increase incentives to tell the absolute truth in future demobilization processes, as this practice was not very effective in the implementation of the Justice and Peace Law.⁶⁷

El Tiempo analyzes the peace process topic of victims

El Tiempo published an analysis of the peace talks and highlighted the possible difficulties and opportunities that will arise in discussions about the conflict victims. This includes the FARC's acceptance of responsibility for their crimes. The article also discusses the implications of the upcoming presidential elections in light of the peace process.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/no-se-pueden-cometer-los-mismos-errores-de-proceso-de-j-articulo-489007>

⁶⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/vctimas-en-la-habana-una-oportunidad-para-las-farc_13888138-4