

Thursday, October 1, 2015

## **The Colombia Working Group Welcomes Steps Towards Peace Agreement in Colombia**

The Colombia Working Group (CWG) welcomes the historic announcement made by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC head Timochenko, which outlines their commitment to signing a final peace agreement within six months. This is an important step forward in ending an armed conflict that has lasted approximately 50 years and offers hope for a better future for ordinary Colombians.

The conflict has resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people and the forcible displacement of millions, as well as the threatening and imprisonment of many others, including human rights workers, trade unionists, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous leaders.

We welcome agreement by the parties to address human rights abuses that have occurred during the conflict. Both parties have agreed to form a truth commission, to provide reparations to war victims, and to a form of “transitional justice,” which creates special tribunals to judge crimes committed by both members of the FARC and state agents.

Years of international campaigning have undoubtedly played an important role in helping to create the conditions for peace. In this respect, we also pay tribute to the trade unions and international solidarity groups whose efforts have helped the process reach this point.

Colombian civil society has been striving for justice and peace for several decades. An end to the armed conflict between the FARC and the Colombian government is an important step in that direction. However, there are still many challenges to constructing peace with social justice in Colombia. To overcome them, Colombia will have to break with its traditional political model of social and economic exclusion, opening up spaces for massive democratic participation at all levels.

We support the call for participation of Colombian civil society and popular movements in the process, through tables of peace called “Mesa Social para la Paz,” that seek to contribute solutions to the problems of political and social inequality that created the conditions for the armed conflict.

We call on the international community to remain fully involved in this process, and to ensure that the agreements made are respected, thereby establishing the basis for a lasting peace.

### **For further information:**

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*The Colombia Working Group is a platform of Canadian unions, NGOs, and social organizations focused on human rights in Colombia.*