

Celebration of the National Day of Colombia

Remarks by H.E. Clemencia Forero-Ucrós

Canberra, Australia

July 23

2014



Firma del acta de independencia el 20 de julio de 1810

Dr. Brendon Hammer, First Assistant Secretary for the Americas

Mrs. Sally Mansfield, Chief of Protocol

Mr Brett Hackett, Assistant Secretary for Canada and Latin America Branch

Mr. Richard Neumann, Director of South America and COALAR Section

His Excellency Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Apostolic Nuncio

Excellencies

Dear Colombians

Distinguished friends

Today we are celebrating the starting point of the history of Colombia as an independent nation, initiated on the 20th of July 1810 in a village on the Andes Mountains, Santafé de Bogotá, by then capital of the Viceroyalty of the Kingdom of the New Granada. On that historical day, the Declaration of Independence, which is the founding instrument of our constitutional tradition, was signed by a Junta that established

a free federal system and the representation of the people was defined through the holding of elections.

204 years have passed since that date. Colombia today stands as a vibrant democracy based on solid institutions that have helped us to surpass difficult challenges.

Our nation has become safer, more modern and fairer. We have sound macroeconomic policies in place and have been able to grow above 4 per cent in the last few years.

The Government is seizing the opportunity of this very positive moment of our economy to foster the creation of jobs and to fight against poverty and inequality.

At the same time, the implemented efficient measures in terms of security have allowed both nationals and foreigners to recuperate confidence in our country and thus Foreign Direct Investment reached in 2013 the highest figure of our whole history and a growing number of businessmen and tourists are coming to Colombia.

President Juan Manuel Santos has been re-elected for another four year term according to our Constitution. And one of the most relevant objectives of his new mandate is to turn over the page of violence and conclude the on- going negotiations in the framework of the peace process, in order to end a long period of conflict, foster reconciliation among Colombians and achieve durable and sustainable peace.

In this process we are being accompanied by all the Latin American countries, and important partners like the United States and the European Union, and we have received the support of the United Nations, the Organization of American States-OAS- and the Association of South American Nations - UNASUR.

With the re-election of President Santos there will be continuity in economic policy, in our efforts towards peace and in our foreign policy objectives. Our projection to the Asia-Pacific region and the bilateral relationship with Australia continue to be a priority of our foreign policy.

Together with Chile, Mexico and Peru, we have created the Pacific Alliance, a new platform for integration, open for trade and investment with a focus on the Asia-Pacific.

Australia assumed a significant role by becoming an Observer State. Colombia is leading the Group on External Relations of the Pacific Alliance and we are glad of having identified relevant areas of collaboration with Australia.

Our intention is to continue deepening our agenda with Australia and already we are consolidating fundamental pillars such as sustainable mining, energy, education and agribusiness. In each field, both Parties are finding strategic partners, belonging both to the government and the private sector of each country.

Tonight's event is a celebration of Colombian culture and talent. Andrés Gómez-Bravo, recognized pianist and his wife Braunwin Sheldrick, violist, have come all the way from Medellín under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia. They are both teachers of the prestigious Musical Centre of the School of Administration, Finance and Technology -EAFIT-, located in Medellín and well accredited for its green campus, its academic and research programs and also its cultural activity, based on humanistic values.

I wish to highlight the presence of Maestro Carlos Alvarado, Conductor of the North Sydney Chamber Orchestra and of

Camilo González, a young Colombian composer, arranger and teacher. It is a privilege for us to include in our program the Premiere of Terra Nova, a symphonic poem composed by Camilo Gonzalez in commemoration of the 204th Anniversary of our Independence. This composition reveals the musical poetry of a new encounter, a new world and a new era.

Today Andrés and Braunwin are going to interpret universal masterpieces like the Sonata for Gamba and harpsichord No.1 in G- major by Johann Sebastian Bach, followed by works of famous Colombian and Latin American composers. I invite you to enjoy this special Recital and I thank you all for your presence in this celebration.