



Embajada en Australia
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

**Celebration of the National Day of Colombia
Remarks by Her Excellency Clemencia Forero -Ucrós**

**WELLINGTON- NEW ZELAND
July 25th, 2014**

MINISTER HON CHRISTOPHER FINLAYSON

MS. CAROLINE BILKEY, ACTING CHIEF OF PROTOCOL

MRS JANE COOMBS, DIVISIONAL MANAGER OF THE AMERICAS DIVISION

DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF MFAT

EXCELLENCIES

MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

MR. PETER CULLEN, HONORARY CONSUL OF COLOMBIA IN WELLINGTON

MR. JUAN CARLOS CADENA, CONSUL GENERAL OF COLOMBIA IN AUCKLAND

DEAR COLOMBIANS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

It is a great honour to be in Wellington in this prestigious venue for the celebration of the National Day of Colombia. 204 years have passed since the 20th of July 1810, when we became an independent nation.

Today we can proudly affirm that our democratic institutions have helped us to surpass many challenges and that we have become a safer, more modern and fairer country.



Colombia has now become the third economy in Latin America and the 27th in the world. In the last three years, our economy grew above the regional and world average. In 2013 we reached a growth rate of 4.3% and a Foreign Direct Investment – FDI of USD16.772 million, a record figure in our history. These figures represent a growing confidence in the stability of our country and in the strength of our economy.

On June 15th, President Juan Manuel Santos was re-elected, according to our Constitution, for another four year term. And one of the main objectives of this new mandate is to turn over the page of violence and confrontation and to reach an agreement to put an end to a long conflict, to acknowledge and repair victims, to foster reconciliation among Colombians and to build a lasting and enduring peace.

In this fundamental purpose, we are being accompanied by all the Latin American countries, International Organizations and the international community as a whole. Our nation expects to build peace through democratic participation and to ban armed confrontation from our territory.

Our foreign policy during the last four years has been very dynamic in establishing close links with New Zealand as an important partner in the Asia Pacific region and there is a firm commitment and continuity in this purpose of building a strong agenda between our two countries.

The Visit of Prime Minister John Key to Colombia in March 2013 was indeed a historical occasion in our bilateral relations. It was followed by the opening of our Consulate General in Auckland, the celebration of Bilateral Foreign Policy



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Consultations held last November in Wellington, high level meetings in Bogotá and other cities of the Ministers of Trade and Agriculture of New Zealand, accompanied by a delegation of businessmen. Technical missions from the Colombian Ministry of Agriculture, FEDEGAN, which is our association of cattle breeders and CORPOICA, our corporation for agricultural research, visited New Zealand in February 2014, indicating the interest to build a solid cooperation based on the main pillars of our growing agenda: Trade and investment, agribusiness, education -including vocational training.

As members of the Pacific Alliance, together with Mexico, Peru and Chile, we welcomed the interest of New Zealand in approaching our process, by becoming an Observer State to this innovative and pragmatic platform of integration. Colombia is leading the Group of External Relations of the Pacific Alliance and we are glad to have already established areas of collaboration with New Zealand.

We particularly welcome the initiative of establishing a Pacific Alliance Integration Pacific Forum, where we can share experiences with New Zealand, regarding both the Closer Economic Relations –CER- integration scheme and the CER-ASEAN experience.

Colombia firmly believes in consolidating the partnership with New Zealand in political and economic terms. We will support New Zealand in its aspiration to become a Non -Permanent Member of the Security Council and we will continue working in areas of common interest at other fora such as the WTO and the Cairns Group. Our common agenda, as I mentioned before, is a solid one in its economic,



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educational and cooperation aspects. We certainly have a huge task ahead of us and Colombia is willing to develop this relationship further in all its components.

Tonight we are celebrating with Music the Independence of Colombia and the growing relationship of our countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia and the Embassy of Colombia to New Zealand offer tonight to this select audience a special Recital of two distinguished artists, who have come all the way from Medellín, Colombia to be here with us: Andres Gomez –Bravo talented pianist and his wife Braunwin Sheldrick, recognized violist. They will perform universal masterpieces and compositions by Latin American and Colombian artists. Please enjoy the music and I thank you for your participation in this event.