



Declaration of the International Ecumenical Meeting for Peace in Colombia

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

(Matthew 5: 9)

We are a broadly representative group which has been brought together by DiPaz (Interchurch Dialogue for Peace in Colombia). We met from the 8th through the 11th of April in Bogotá Colombia. There were 90 delegates from 10 churches, 17 national church organizations, 15 ecumenical organizations and churches from three continents, and representatives of Colombian victims’ groups that are constructing their own proposals for the peace in various regions of Colombia.

Deep in our hearts and minds we have felt the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. We have also powerfully felt the presence of the children, youth, women and men who have been murdered and disappeared in this [long](#) internal armed conflict Colombia is suffering, and at this particular time in which a political solution through dialogue is being sought.

The clear messages brought to us by indigenous, afro-descent and mestizo Colombians accompanied us in our discussions. These people are recognized as the victims of murder, disappearances, torture, and forced displacement from their homes and land. But they have redefined and given new meaning to their pain, empowering them to bring forward very specific proposals for the resolution of the internal armed conflict. They are the artisans of peace whose ideas we will give preference to in our contribution to the work of building a peace with social justice, a concept of peace which is a key tenet of our church traditions.

We have also advanced in our analysis of the current peace process through the participation of various persons who have been close to the dialogues in Havana. We have heard and discussed the movement that has taken place in the dialogues with the FARC which has produced preliminary accords related to land questions, participation in the political process, the problem of drugs and drug trafficking, as well as the efforts being made to establish dialogue with the ELN.

We consider the unilateral cessation of hostilities by the FARC which began in December 2014 to be a positive step, as well as the public recognition by the FARC of their responsibility for their attacks on the civilian population in Bojayá (Department of Chocó). We also value highly the joint agreement between the Colombian government and the

FARC regarding clearance of land mines and specific steps to achieve a de-escalation of the armed conflict. Lastly, we see as positive the government decision to extend for an additional month the order halting aerial bombardment of FARC forces.

At our meeting we received a video message from the FARC negotiation team in Havana which sent greetings to our gathering and shared information about the progress that has been made at the dialogue table. We also heard from a representative of the Office of the High Commission for Peace of the Colombian government who presented his views on the dialogue process.

We would like to give special recognition to the report from the Historical Commission on the origins of the conflict in Colombia. We understand this report to be a significant contribution leading to the crucial use of truth in the effort to achieve peace. We believe it will be an obligatory reference point for our approach to the contemporary history of Colombia and a fundamental element in the eventual creation of a Truth Commission which will bring to light information about those responsible for this long confrontation. We understand that as the churches we ourselves are not exempt from this process. We have reaffirmed as Christians that it is truth that sets us free (John 8:31). It frees not only the victims, but also the whole of society, including the perpetrators and victimizers.

In spite of these encouraging advances, we are still very concerned that the number of victims of the conflict continues to increase because the armed conflict persists even as the dialogues are going on. The number of victims also increases because of the various exceptions and omissions which we see in all of the partial accords. We hold that these omissions will have to be revisited because these very themes which have not been dealt with have to do with the structural inequalities which originally led to the armed confrontation in Colombia. These issues are about social justice: Our faith commitment requires us to contribute to the construction of a society which protects life, provides bread for the hungry, water for those who thirst, clothing and shelter for those who have none (Matthew 25:31-46). This is a matter of the just distribution of the commonwealth which God has created, so that all human beings can have the abundant life which the Gospel announces (John 10:10)

In our prayers, in our Bible study, in our worship and in our deliberations we have reaffirmed our commitment to the peace process, but we are also quite clear that the signing of peace accords will be but one of the important steps leading to the silencing of the guns. We know that we must give specific support and solidarity to the communities that are engaged in peace building in the various regions of Colombia. Truth, repentance by those who have generated the violence, forgiveness as a civic value and social justice: all these will be necessary for swords to be beaten into plowshares, for there to be food security, for basic needs to be secured for all those who do not have them. (Isaiah 2:4)

We therefore commit ourselves to the following agenda and actions, so that we may make our contribution to this process as national and international actors, responding to God's call for us to be peace builders. We invite our brothers and sisters in the churches and international ecumenical organizations to also become co-dialogue partners ("CoDi") on this pilgrimage in the quest for truth, justice, demilitarization, non-violent action and reconciliation in Colombia.

1. Linking of national and international networks of churches, communities and organizations, in order to move forward in the construction of peace with justice, working at the global level, in Latin America and in Colombia.
2. Support for this agenda and these actions which will come from the resources of our national and international churches and organizations. This will include: political advocacy for peace with justice, drawing on the proposals of victims' groups; advocacy for the bilateral cessation of hostilities; and advocacy for compliance with potential accords.
3. The designing of a communications strategy for these initiatives, using the information sites and other media which exist in our churches and organizations, in order to have a significant impact on the construction of a just peace in Colombia.
4. The creation of communities dedicated to learning about peace. These would develop holistic educational proposals and would draw on the work of the Historical Commission on the origin of the conflict, so that this material can be better understood by our churches, organizations, educational institutions, et al.
5. Promotion of the crucial process of monitoring the implementation of the eventual accords which will come out of the peace. This would need to include verification commissions as agreed upon with the local communities.
6. Readiness to participate in the creation of a Truth Commission, in line with the proposals already put forward by victims. Such a Commission would include the participation of high profile international figures well-known to our churches and ecumenical organizations.
7. Accompaniment of communities in various regions of Colombia that are affirming their rights, emphasizing in particular action to provide protection for peace-building communities, for community leaders and for human rights defenders.
8. Part of our contribution to the quest for truth will involve investigation of possible responsibility of our churches for committing specific acts, and also for failure to take action in regard to specific situations arising in the context of violence in Colombia.

Bogotá, D.C., 11 April 2015