



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

September 8, 2014

His Excellency
Juan Manuel Santos Calderón
President of the Republic of Colombia
Bogotá

Dear Mr. President:

A letter offers poor substitute for missing your August 7 inauguration, but I wanted to congratulate you all the same and to express my gratitude for your incredible hospitality during my visit to Bogotá so soon after your re-election. You assume a second mandate at a time of great promise for Colombia—within grasp of a historic peace, with limitless economic prospects, and ascending in diplomatic reach. Such opportunities, once unthinkable, are a tribute to your leadership and a testament to the perseverance, sacrifice, and undying optimism of the Colombian people. As Colombia embarks upon its ambitions, rest assured that the United States remains its most steadfast supporter and staunchest advocate. That is why President Obama and I would like to deepen our partnership in the months and years to come.

The future of the U.S.-Colombia relationship will be defined by our ability to build upon our bilateral trade agreement to promote our shared prosperity; broaden the scope of our bilateral relationship to seize opportunities and address shared challenges; and parlay our longstanding security cooperation into a strategic partnership with positive regional and global implications. We are already making quick progress, but as you told me in June, now is not the time to rest in our efforts to do even more together. I believe you would also agree that as we strive to realize the potential of our bilateral relationship we should also perfect the efforts currently underway. In that regard, I would like to outline some of the key aspects of our bilateral relationship as we have discussed them over the years.

First, Colombia's prosperity is in the national security interest of the United States. The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA), which entered into force in May 2012, solidified our trade relationship and currently represents roughly \$40 billion per year in two-way trade. The TPA has provided new opportunities to American and Colombian workers, while providing environmental and labor safeguards, and its benefits will only grow as Colombia continues to unlock its economic potential. At the same time, Colombia's long tradition of sound democratic and economic policies provide a model for other emerging economies, which is one of the reasons we are working with you to advance your timely accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The TPA was just the beginning. We are promoting our people-to-people ties, most recently by extending reciprocal concession of visas from five to 10 years. With regard to the priorities outlined in your inaugural speech on education and technology, we are working together to expand English teacher training to public schools in Colombia via teacher colleges and increasing private sector support for two-way student exchanges as part of President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative. I also applaud your efforts to establish strategic partnerships on education with U.S. states, like Massachusetts, and stand ready to support additional outreach by your government to U.S. states. On July 31, our governments kicked off an Information and Communications Technology Steering group where education, innovation, and development figured prominently on the agenda. There is still much more we can do and I look forward to our continued collaboration in these areas.

In order to deepen and expand our bilateral economic cooperation, we should maintain our focus on pressing matters of consequence to our trade agenda. Among these are the implementation of Colombia's intellectual property rights commitments and sustained progress on the Colombia Labor Action Plan. We remain concerned about the truck scrappage decree, which is hurting our bilateral trade (and arguably Colombian air quality, as well); new restrictions on the import of ethanol; and the biologics decree, which the World Health Organization and U.S. experts believe could put health and safety at risk. Ultimately, such discussions and policy differences should be understood as the result of our shared success and our desire to build on that success, and I am confident our governments can find a way to address these issues.

Second, our bilateral agenda today is increasingly characterized by issues beyond our borders in areas like energy and citizen security. We agreed on June 18 to redouble our efforts to promote energy security in the Caribbean. As previewed with you, I used my stop in the Dominican Republic to lay out a roadmap for the international community to support the Caribbean to secure its energy future. Toward this end, our Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Amos Hochstein is working closely with your Minister of Energy on joint strategies to implement our commitments to energy security in the Caribbean. I have also instructed the Departments of State and Energy to work with our partners to organize a conference that would include the participation of Caribbean governments, multilateral financial institutions, donors, and private sector representatives. I hope we can count on representation from your government at the upcoming conference.

Third, Colombia has much to offer the world on security matters. Particularly as the conflict winds down and Colombia moves toward a more sustainable security strategy, organizations like the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would benefit from your increased involvement in peacekeeping operations. Today's security challenges require multilateral responses, and we need allies and partners like Colombia to lead through the force of their example. You are already bringing significant expertise to bear in Central America and the Caribbean through our Action Plan on Regional Security, as well as your 2013 information sharing agreement with NATO, but we need Colombia's involvement in more places.

Most importantly, Mr. President, our support for your efforts to negotiate peace in Colombia cannot be overstated. Just as we supported Colombia's leaders on the battlefield, we fully support you at the negotiating table. We acknowledge the significant challenges that lie ahead,

and I applaud your efforts to take into account the rights of the more than six million victims of the conflict, your public pledge to prioritize human rights throughout this process, and your commitment to finding a balance between peace and justice that achieves a durable peace. The President and I look forward to our continued and candid discussions as you work toward a resolution of the conflict, and are hopeful for the historic day when all Colombians can live in a country free from fear and violence.

In closing, I offer you the full support of the U.S. government as you embark on yet another chapter of progress and development for the Colombian people. In that spirit, we look forward to seeing Colombia meet and exceed its own goals and continue to serve as an example of how a country can rise up from even the most difficult set of circumstances.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.