



# **ALLIES**

**TWENTY-SEVEN BOLD  
IDEAS TO REIMAGINE  
THE US-COLOMBIA  
RELATIONSHIP**

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THE US-COLOMBIA  
RELATIONSHIP**





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# FOREWORD

## Working with Partners and Allies

**O**n July 4, 1795, the United States and Colombia formally established diplomatic relations. On that day, President James Monroe accredited Colombia's Manuel Torres as the first Charge d'Affaires from a Latin American country to the United States, assuring him of US support for the "welfare and success of his country." Today—two hundred years later—Colombia remains one of our closest allies.

To this day, we share a common purpose in the power of our democracies, although imperfect, to find answers to the most challenging issues of our time. Our deep partnership goes far beyond bilateral issues and extends to commercial, security, social, environmental, and humanitarian fronts.

Underpinning this partnership has been consistent, bipartisan US support for Colombia across recent administrations. In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Plan Colombia into law, a strategic framework designed to help Colombia counter drug trafficking and improve security. For the next sixteen years, and with \$12 billion in funding, Republican and Democratic presidents alike advanced Plan Colombia with bipartisan congressional backing. Plan Colombia provided financial support, but its most important contribution was the technical assistance that further united our two societies. Today, Plan Colombia is widely regarded as one of the most consequential foreign policy initiatives in modern US history, which explains the ongoing support for its successor project, Peace Colombia.

At the turn of the 21st century, it was nearly impossible to imagine the broader importance or possibility of a prosperous Colombia. US attention was focused on the threats posed by a country where insurgency groups, fueled by the drug trade, controlled 40 percent of its territory, approximately

the size of Tennessee or Louisiana. Bombings and kidnappings regularly featured in its daily news.



# INTRODUCTION

When my plane from Bogotá, Colombia, landed in Washington DC, and by 2019, I joined the Atlantic Council. In the three years since, I have been fortunate to work alongside many of the visionaries that have helped build the US-Colombia relationship. And if something is clear, it is this: our shared future is brighter and more hopeful than ever before.

As we celebrate the bicentennial of US-Colombia relations, we should recognize how far we have come, the new challenges we face, and the immense potential that remains. This book is a collective effort to do just that. Its twenty-seven essays by business leaders, politicians, philanthropists, artists, and academics invite us to think boldly and creatively about the future of the relationship, building on an impressive track record of adaptation and achievement.

We assembled a roster of nearly forty contributors, all well-established voices in their fields, to represent the many thought leaders who play a role in strengthening US-Colombia ties. Our hope is for this effort to serve as a launching pad for new thinking, dialogue, and a renewed commitment to our shared future.

This book is also an appeal to seize emerging opportunities for US-Colombia engagement in seven overarching areas reflected in the book's chapters. These include and go beyond traditional areas of collaboration, setting the foundation for a revitalized US partnership with Colombia.

The first chapter looks at the US-Colombia relationship in a global context, showing how a stronger and more resilient alliance will pay dividends far beyond our borders. Chapter two explores strategies to enhance our mutual security, building on our history of successful intelligence sharing and military-to-military cooperation while recognizing new threats and realities.

In chapter three, the authors offer innovative approaches to strengthen



“Today, Colombia stands out as one of the United States’ strongest allies, not just in the Western Hemisphere, but in the world. Together, we have dismantled transnational criminal organizations, defended democratic values, and advanced economic prosperity for the citizens of both nations. I am proud to have led the effort to formally recognize Colombia as a United States ally. As we celebrate the bicentennial of our diplomatic relations, I look forward to charting the path toward another prosperous two-hundred years of strategic partnership.”

**ROBERT MENENDEZ**

Secretary of State, 2013-2017



“I witnessed two episodes of intense collaboration between US and Colombian officials: the final negotiations of the US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) and the accession of Colombia to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For both, commitment at the highest levels of government had to be accompanied by the practical details to execute the vision. US government officials were tough counterparts but always constructive and professional. The TPA and OECD membership were structural advances for Colombian institutions; we will see their fruits for decades to come. Neither would have transpired without the strong bonds our countries cemented over two centuries.”

**CATALINA CRANE**

Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2013-2017





ESSAYS

"As a longtime supporter of the US-Colombia alliance, I am proud of what our two countries have accomplished over the last two-hundred years and look forward to the next two-hundred. As a key pillar of security, stability, and democratic leadership in the Western Hemisphere, Colombia serves as force multiplier for our shared interests. It is imperative we continue to deepen our bilateral relationship to confront regional challenges and capitalize on opportunities."

**MARK E. GREEN**

Special Representative for  
Western Hemisphere Affairs  
U.S. Department of State



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controlled about a third of the country. It was renewed several times by leaders of both countries, regardless of party—a commitment to give Colombia back to the people that has endured despite the massive migration from Venezuela, the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of violence, and increased drug production.

In the face of these challenges and the worldwide assault on inclusive, cooperating democracies, it is important never to forget that Colombia is a country rich in history, culture, natural resources, environmental treasures, and wonderful, hardworking people. Colombians have come too far to give up on better tomorrows and brighter futures for their children. And the United States must stand with the Colombian people.

There are several areas where further progress can be made. Colombia is especially well-positioned to transition to clean, renewable, more affordable energy systems. The World Economic Forum has rated Colombia third in South America in its Energy Transition Index,<sup>1</sup> with significant potential for developing solar, wind, and biomass sources. Already, the renewable energy sector employs about two million people throughout Latin America,<sup>2</sup> with significant room for growth. This is especially important as so much of Colombia's clean energy potential—especially for wind—is located near the Venezuelan border, where Colombians and displaced Venezuelans alike are yearning for new job sources.

Another huge opportunity to put people to work while strengthening the natural environment is agroforestry. Colombia's location makes it suitable for at least ten forest species, and the government offers strong incentives for reforestation projects. Colombia and its people also have the climate, farming knowledge, and skills to grow almost any crop, including high-level exports like its wonderful coffee, essential oils, and spices, which can support development in many rural and often underserved communities.

Colombia also boasts a growing and innovative tech sector. President

through the historic district of Cartagena, where we met and danced with Los Niños del Vallenato. Their wonderful voices and costumes, making their music a powerful message of peace and resilience, moved me so much that I invited them to perform at the White House and again four years later at the dedication of my Presidential Center. When I returned to Colombia in 2002, during the transition to President Álvaro Uribe, the children greeted me as I stepped on the plane, and a representative of Colombia's Indigenous people presented me with a traditional woven bracelet. I followed tradition and never took it off. Finally, the worn, faded strands fell apart after nineteen years.

In 2017, at the invitation of President Juan Manuel Santos, I went to Medellín, which was hosting the first World Coffee Producers Forum, bringing together coffee growers' associations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to unite the entire coffee value chain worldwide to promote sustainability and economic fairness for those who harvest the beans. Medellín—with its famous escalators up the mountain of Comuna 13, once the hotbed of narco trafficking, was the perfect place to gather attendees representing more than forty coffee-producing countries, including roasters, traders, and retailers; financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and government representatives. It symbolized the country's rebirth, the peace dividend of an emerging regional and global leader.

It is imperative that the United States and Colombia, the two oldest democracies in the Western Hemisphere, keep strengthening our relationship—as we did most recently when US President Joe Biden announced his intention to designate Colombia as a Major US non-NATO Ally. I am proud to have played a role in building that friendship, both in public office and as a private citizen.

People who visit my New York offices, the old farmhouse Hillary and I call home, or my Presidential Library all see evidence of how much Colombia means to me. In my Harlem office, there's a medal that the widow of a police officer killed in the drug wars gave me, saying she wanted me to show it to others because it told Colombia's story, and she didn't need it to remember who he was. In my Midtown office, I keep a first English printing of *100 años de la historia de Colombia*. In my home office, there's a photo of the late Culture Minister Consuelo Araújo, the patron of Los Niños del Vallenato, slain

me dancing with them in Cartagena in my home and a beautiful craft work commemorating their visit to the White House in my library. There are Colombian spices that remind me of my foundation's work for small farmers and fishers who support their families by providing restaurants with locally-sourced products.

Memories of yesterdays like these are most important when they drive us to make tomorrow better, so our children can make their own memories without the burden of our nightmares.

I believe our best days together are still to come, and I will continue to do whatever I can to make it so.



## Endnotes

1 *Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2021 edition*, World Economic Forum, April 20, 2021,



# 2

**The US alliance with Colombia is rooted in our shared values of democracy, transparency, and accountability. We can celebrate this year's bicentennial by reinvigorating bilateral, bipartisan, and bicameral support for the US-Colombia partnership to ensure our region's stability and continued prosperity.**

**BEN CARDIN**

*(Faint, illegible text, possibly a signature or a very light quote)*

, the United States and Colombia have maintained a robust and productive diplomatic relationship that has withstood economic fluctuations, internal and external conflicts, global crises, and political transitions in both countries. Today, the US-Colombia relationship is a key pillar of



ly-engaged workforce. The United States, working with Colombia, could be at the forefront of ushering in economic prosperity driven by values of transparency, accountability, and inclusion.

Our countries have a rich history of economic cooperation, and 2022 marks the tenth anniversary of the US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. This agreement has helped generate thousands of US jobs, expand US access to markets, and enhance US competitiveness on the world stage. The agreement eliminated tariffs and various barriers to US exports, promoting greater trade and economic growth in both countries. It also opened up a new world for US service providers looking to do business in Colombia. The agreement is expected to continue to provide positive advantages for US businesses and consumers.

Colombia has leveraged its excellent trade partnership with the United

President Joseph R. Biden announced in March 2022 that the United States intends to designate Colombia as a Major non-NATO Ally: “In recognition of our uniquely close cooperation in the hemisphere, Colombia’s significant contributions as a NATO Global Partner, its commitment to NATO’s mission to promote democratic values and commitment to the peaceful res-

## **An ongoing commitment to democracy, the rule of law, peace, and human rights**

There is no area more important to the US-Colombia relationship and our world today than preserving democracy worldwide. As Freedom House recently reported,<sup>5</sup> 2021 was the sixteenth year in which declines in democratic performance have outpaced democratic strengthening—meaning the world is deep into a global democratic recession. An

## Conclusion

The US alliance with Colombia is rooted in our commitment to collaboration and the shared values of democracy, transparency, and accountability. The partnership is strong precisely because it is as wide as it is long, encompassing a range of priorities that affect every one of our citizens. Future US bipartisan and democratic engagement with Colombia in strategic areas will strengthen the entire Western Hemisphere. As our two nations cooperate on immediate parallel challenges posed by COVID-19 and other health issues, democratic backsliding and hyper-polarization, and the Venezuelan political, economic, and human rights crisis, we must prepare for future challenges. We can celebrate this year's bicentennial by reinvigorating bilateral, bipartisan, and bicameral support for the US-Colombia partnership to ensure our region's stability and continued prosperity.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force, *A Plan for Colombia's COVID-19 Recovery and Why it Matters*, Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Institute, December 2021, [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/AC\\_ColombiaTaskForce\\_v18.pdf](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/AC_ColombiaTaskForce_v18.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, "The COVID-19 Global Action Meeting," US Department of State press release, February 14, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/the-covid-19-global-action-meeting/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Government of Colombia, "Acuerdos TLC Colombia," accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.tlc.gov.co/acuerdos/vigente>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Joint Statement by President Joseph R. Biden and President Iván Duque Marquez of the Republic of Colombia, US-Colombia Bicentennial Partnership," The White House, March 10, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/10/joint-statement-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-of-the-united-states-and-president-ivan-duque-marquez-of-the-republic-of-colombia-u-s-colombia-bicentennial-partnership/>.
- <sup>5</sup> *Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy Under Siege*, Freedom House, March 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>.
- <sup>6</sup> "Venezuela situation," UN High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Rachel Treisman, "Colombia Offers Temporary Legal Status To Nearly 1 Million Venezuelan Migrants," *National Public Radio*, February 9, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/09/965853031/colombia-offers-temporary-legal-status-to-nearly-1-million-venezuelan-migrants>.



Colombia's progress will help unlock an even stronger relationship



While Colombia has remained outside the BRI, Chinese investment in



## Endnotes

- 1 June S. Beittel, Colombia: *Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, updated



# 4

**As we celebrate the bicentennial of the US-Colombia relationship, we should focus on what lies ahead. Now is the time to develop new approaches and responses that will lead to more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies that can rebuild trust and confidence in our governments, democracies, and the ideals of freedom and the rule of law.**

**CAROLINA BARCO**

*—Ambassador to the United States, 2017-2021*

The anniversary of the signing of the 1790 Jay Treaty, a landmark moment in the history of US-Colombia diplomatic relations is a time to celebrate and reflect on our countries' deep, strong relationship, one built on shared values, mutual help, cooperation, and a firm commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy. Colombia and the United States have historically addressed their differences with respect and pragmatism and worked together to advance bilateral, regional, and international priorities.

Simón Bolívar and the founders of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela—looked to the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Men as guiding principles for the new nation. They studied how the United States defined and structured its new government with its division of powers. Bolívar sent Manuel Torres to Washington to learn firsthand about this inspiring project and seek support and diplomatic

recognition. Two years after its independence from Spain, Gran Colombia became the United States' first diplomatic partner in Latin America, and

tions. An early example was the Alliance for Progress, a far-reaching US

tures for dialogue between the government, civic groups and organizations, youth, minorities, the private sector, and other key stakeholders.

## **INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH**



strengthen science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

country has displayed remarkable solidarity toward incoming Venezuelans, implementing policies to assist and integrate them into the Colombian economy and society, including a ten-year temporary permit that grants them access to employment, education, and healthcare services, including COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>5</sup> It also gave Colombian nationality to children of Venezuelan mothers born in Colombia.

As the largest donor in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, the United States should encourage the international community to fully fund their pledges and increase financial support to Colombia as it absorbs 34 percent of the population forced to flee Venezuela. Moving forward, the US-Colombia partnership should also prioritize programs that address the principal drivers of the Venezuelan exodus, namely violence and the lack of economic opportunities. In addressing other migration crises, we should learn from the Colombian experience and respond with efficient, humane, and transparent procedures and programs.

### Final thoughts

Our two nations were founded on the ideals of freedom and democ

- 4 Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force, *A plan for Colombia's COVID recovery and why it matters for the United States*, Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, December 8, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/a-plan-for-colombias-covid-recovery-and-why-it-matters-for-the-united-states/>.
- 5 Rachel Treisman, "Colombia Offers Temporary Legal Status To Nearly 1 Million Venezuelan Migrants," *National Public Radio*, February 9, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/09/965853031/colombia-offers-temporary-legal-status-to-nearly-1-million-venezuelan-migrants>.





## The new Colombia

There is so much more to Colombia's present-day reality than "cocaine and war," as one of the Colombian creators of the animated film

*El Caido* commented after its Oscar award win.<sup>3</sup>

I thought so when I was the US ambassador in Bogotá between 2010 and 2013. We worked on security and counter-narcotics but we also prioritized finalizing a free trade agreement that transformed our economic ties and included landmark labor and environmental protections. We supported a peace process that ended fifty years of war and is a model of conflict resolution in the post-1989 world, and deepened US engagement with Colombia's vibrant literary, musical, and artistic communities.

improve health service delivery, and transform education for Colombia's next generation.

Generally, there is greater urgency to the innovations transforming key sectors of the economy, focusing on sustainability and digitalization. Colombia's commitment to training 100,000 programmers and its emergence as a center for fintech and a home for start-up unicorns suggest the scale of what is underway.<sup>4</sup> The transformation meshes with public policies focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions at one of the fastest rates in the world. Colombia, one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, has scaled-up environmental protections during the pandemic response.

Colombia is also adapting to a changing world landscape in the trade arena and is positioning itself to benefit in the post-pandemic period. Colombia has expressed interest in becoming a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, which includes most of Asia's important economies.<sup>5</sup> It has trade agreements with the European Union and Canada and is a regional leader in pro-market growth and integration as a member of the Pacific Alliance, which includes Chile, Mexico,

the Venezuelan situation deteriorated. With far less money and international attention, as the pandemic plunged millions of Colombians into poverty, Colombia set a standard for how to humanely respond in an orderly fashion to a major migration crisis.

### **A new relationship**

have suggested why present-day Colombia merits an updated approach from the United States. In looking forward, it should be possible for







“One of the great, unheralded contributors to Plan Colombia’s success was the Colombian Prosecutors’ o



## ESSAYS

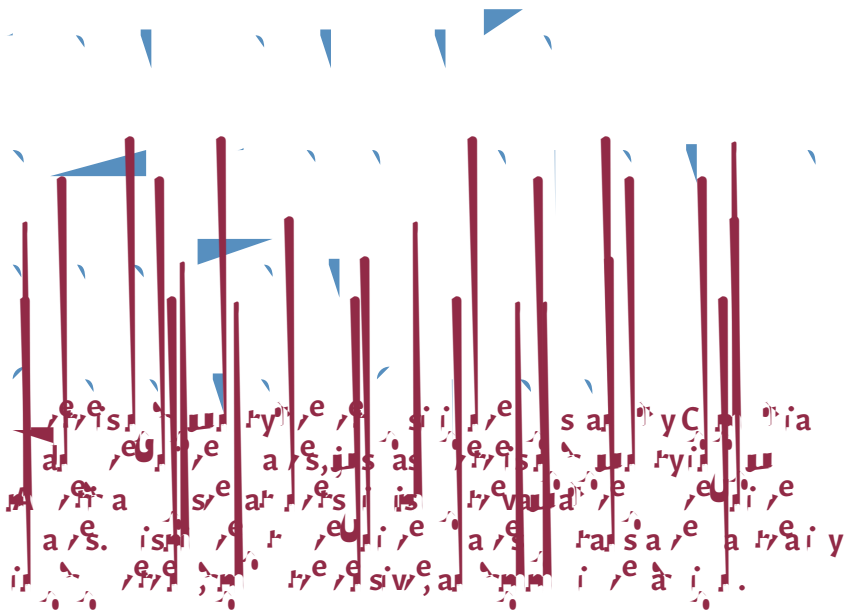


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**DAVID H. PETRAEUS**

*Former Director, US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA);  
Director, Board of Directors, Atlantic Council*

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Violent conflict among the various groups forced civilians to flee. The common denominator was the absence of the state in rural areas, which made displacement worse. The vacuum allowed the FARC, for example, to set up de facto governance structures, dislodging state control from certain areas for decades.<sup>6</sup> When the FARC was at its peak in the late 1990s, it controlled as much as one-quarter of Colombian territory.<sup>7</sup> While the Colombian government now has greater access to these areas, it still struggles to make inroads with historically under-resourced populations.<sup>8</sup>

The optimistic visions of the peace dividend have been undermined by the pernicious and persistent problem of coca crop cultivation. During my time as CIA director in 2012, coca cultivation was approximately 78,000 hectares (ha). In 2020, coca crops reached 245,000 ha, with 1,228 tons of cocaine produced.<sup>9,10</sup> New initiatives for partnership in reducing coca cultivation are essential for both the United States and Colombia. Otherwise,

national assistance for each Venezuelan refugee—less than one-tenth of the \$3,150 received by host countries for each Syrian refugee.<sup>13</sup>

## The way forward

The United States must build on its decades of partnership with Colom-

The United States should also continue making its funding contingent on increased training on human rights and the rule of law, underscoring

national security interest of the United States."<sup>18</sup> It is once again time for

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must invest sufficient resources in people, processes, and programs to build trusted security relationships.

I have met with all levels of Colombian officers and enlisted soldiers and found no nation more committed to education and professional development for its military personnel than the CAF. It often commits its funds to send commissioned and non-commissioned officers to attend US military academies, participates in SOUTHCOM's Women, Peace, and Security Program, and engages in numerous regional military exercises. But today's progress does not guarantee future success. Improvements in all militaries

rent systems and processes are inadequate for the tempo of conflict and competition the world now faces. They are under-resourced and often held hostage to annual budgeting exercises. When I was SOUTHCOM commander, I would often say, “why are we blocking our own field goals with respect to many of our security assistance programs?” To win in conflict and competition, we must be consistent, agile, and have an adequate level of investment. We must be on the field globally to compete and win; presence matters. We should not hold partner-nation militaries to higher standards than our own. The US Department of State (DOS) must lead for foreign assistance, but DoD security cooperation programs have a role alongside DOS. Programs should include sufficient flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing security environment. Develop multi-year security cooperation programs with a designated floor that is not subject to annual reprogramming or the debilitating impacts of continuing res-

that our intelligence sharing equals that of our closest NATO partners. Anyone who claims what we do now is adequate has not operated in the byzantine, arcane, slow, technologically-backward world of bilateral and multilateral intel-sharing. The crisis in Ukraine illustrates the importance of vigorous intelligence sharing.

**Keep pace with emerging threats.** Develop a US approach for foreign cyber assistance that brings together US and partner nation interagency teams and is strong and flexible enough to respond to emergent needs. Only recently has cybersecurity assistance been recognized as a valid area for security cooperation. The Colombian military and SOUTHCOM are working together to combat malign cyber activity and disinformation campaigns from Russia and Venezuela. Such cybersecurity collaboration is a good start, but the additional authority and capacity to conduct bilateral training, subject matter expert exchanges, information sharing, and operations, all at the speed of relevance, is needed.

**Double the US global international military education and training and exercise budget and authorize human rights training billets at all US combatant commands.** Now is the time to increase investments in professionalism as the bedrock of our global partnerships.

These ideas would benefit Colombia, the United States, and the world. We

ries. Democracy must deliver to all people. Professional militaries are a fundamental part of this.



## Endnotes

1. See, e.g., J. R. Brinkley, *Unsettled: A Journey of Faith, Family, and Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).



must follow through with basic services like building and staffing schools and hospitals, improving infrastructure, stimulating economic development, and enhancing the rule of law. As Colombia seeks to implement the 2016 peace accord, the complete execution of this strategy is more urgent than ever.

As a former US Department of Defense official, I can say with certainty that no matter how capable the armed forces are, Colombia will not be able to leave the cycle of violence behind without the robust presence of non-mil-



The US government provides significant support to this approach, particularly through USAID. The agency's Country Development Strategy for Colombia prioritizes PDET municipalities, estimating that approximately 75 percent of aid will be directed to these areas through 2025.<sup>2</sup> The PDETs have also attracted investment from US philanthropists and donors such as Howard Buffett. Still, they remain largely under-resourced. Further US-Colombia cooperation to enhance transportation, healthcare, education, and economic development in PDETs will be critical for their success and fulfilling the peace accords' promise of ending Colombia's cycles of violence.

### The way forward

Social recovery is possible. Although program names have changed, Colombia's leadership continues to advocate for stabilization as the main strategy to mitigate violence, strengthen state presence, and consolidate peace.

This whole-of-government approach should continue to inform US assistance to Colombia, which has increased 152 percent since 2016.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, aid geared toward governance has more than doubled to \$410 million since the signing of the peace accord, with a greater focus on civil society, economic development, and peacebuilding than in-country narcotics control and traditional security cooperation.<sup>4</sup> However, the multidimen-

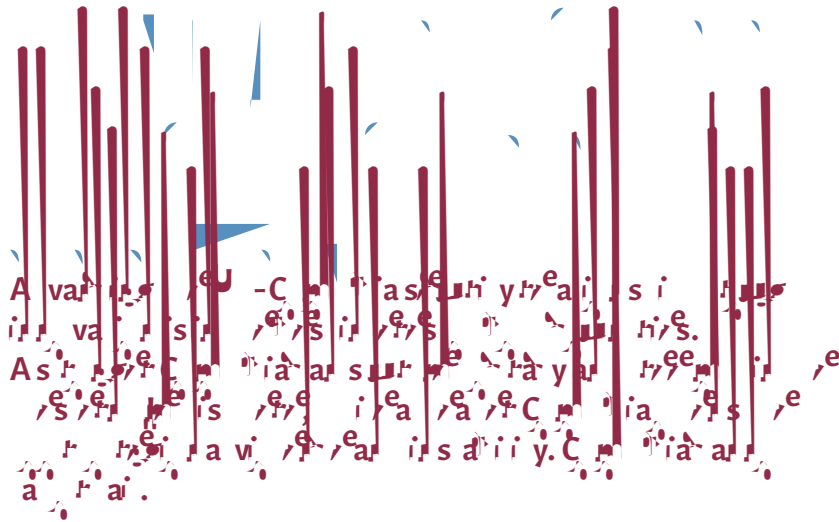


20,000 agricultural families, would benefit from greater attention from the international donor community.<sup>5</sup>

To inform future assistance, subsequent US administrations should look at the 2018 Framework for US Stabilization developed by the US Department of State, US Department of Defense, and USAID.<sup>6</sup> The United States could work with Colombia to scale up existing interagency initiatives such as the Misión para la Transformación del Campo (Mission to Transform the Countryside),<sup>7</sup> designed to narrow gaps between urban and rural Colombia and accelerate rural development—a prerequisite to achieving lasting peace.



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**JUAN CARLOS PINZÓN**

*Ambassador of Colombia to the United States; Former Minister of Defense, Republic of Colombia*

U.S. - Colombia diplomatic relations is an opportunity to reflect on an historic and enduring relationship. Our shared history is rooted in common values, a commitment to defending democracy, protecting human rights, and promoting shared prosperity. While the relationship continues to flourish on many fronts—from trade and investment to the deployment of advanced technologies and a green economy—the security partnership is especially vital for our nations’ future.

The security partnership has personally impacted me. It brought me to the United States as a child in the 1980s, when my father participated in a military education program. Years later, while visiting NATO headquarters, I met a US colonel who I would later learn advised the Colombian military and was a friend to my father. His support and care for Colombia was

a real push for Colombia's military agenda for years to come. The positive influence the security partnership has had on my own life reflects how it has charted a brighter future for both our countries. Personal connections and friendships matter.

## From a special relationship to strategic allies

Simón Bolívar was inspired by the ideals that led to the creation of the United States; a free republic as envisioned by the United States' founding fathers was the same vision patriots had for Colombia. Both countries also share a strong commitment to multilateral and international institutions, participating in the creation of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the Organization of American States. In 1951, Colombia became the only Latin American country that responded to the UN call for troops in the Korean peninsula. Our sacrifice of close to eight hundred Colombian soldiers resulted in a stronger military-to-military relationship with the United States.

The relationship grew even closer during the Cold War, with the United States providing support to enhance Colombian military equipment, education, doctrine, and training programs on counterinsurgency. The formation of the *lanceros* school, modeled on the US Army Ranger School, was a highlight. Colombia participated in UN peacekeeping operations in the Suez Canal in 1956 and the Sinai Peninsula, starting in 1981. During the 1970s through the 1990s, the security relationship focused more on counter-narcotics and law and order activities. By the 1990s, Marxist guerrillas and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia funded their activities through the drug business, which was rapidly growing and expanding. By the end of the twentieth century, violence was at its peak, and Colombia was close to failure.

In response to these threats, Plan Colombia, which was initially conceived by Colombia, became a US foreign policy initiative in the late 1990s to provide invaluable support to Colombia. It acknowledged that, as the largest consumer of cocaine globally, the United States shared responsibility











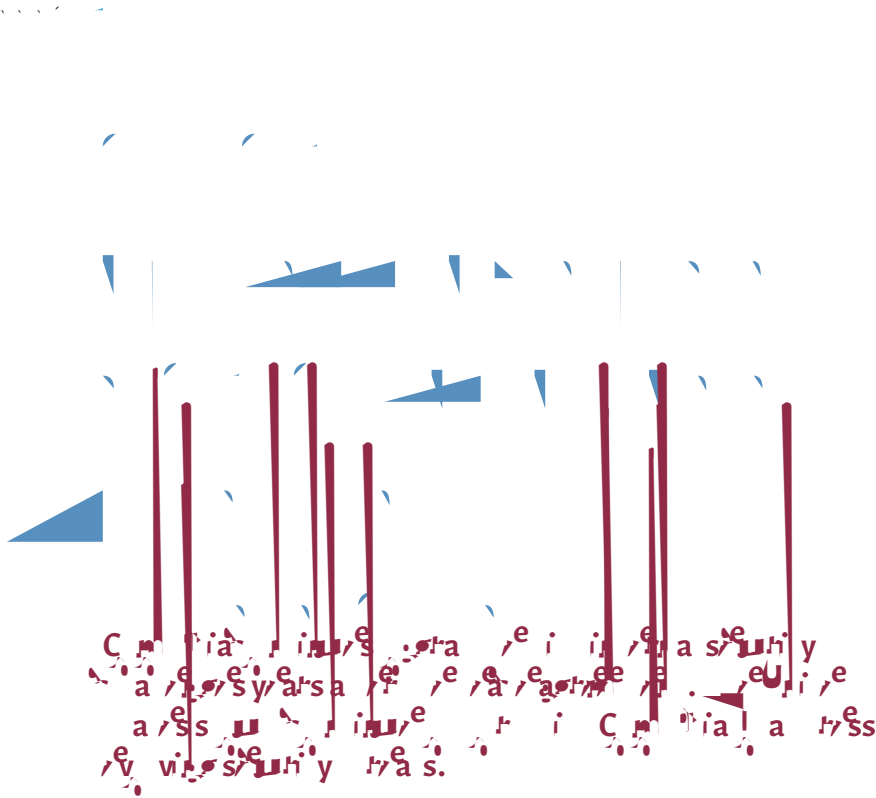
stated intent to designate Colombia a strategic Major non-NATO Ally, said that “we are taking the bilateral relationship to the highest peak ever.”<sup>2</sup>



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**DAVID R. SHEDD**

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are at a crossroads. Nearly six years after the Colombian government under then-President Juan Manuel Santos signed a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's armed conflict remains a reality. Violence is escalating in critical rural and border areas, while urban

centers report a deterioration in citizen security. The gains of two decades of sustained US security and intelligence cooperation are increasingly at risk.

### **A model for bilateral cooperation**

Colombia offers a template for a lasting mutually-beneficial security and intelligence partnership with the United States. Through Plan Colombia, the United States provided Colombia, nearing the brink of

shortcoming, while also focusing on addressing corruption, increasing transparency, and preventing excessive use of force and human rights violations.

## A crisis unraveling

Colombia continues to grapple with security and defense challenges, despite the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC. In 2021, the country reached the highest homicide rate since 2014. From January to March

the assassination of social leaders and FARC ex-combatants and regions with high narco-trafficking.<sup>12</sup> This demonstrates the state's failure to recover FARC-era strongholds, with military and institutional presence seen only



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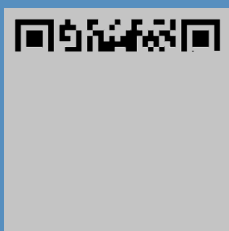
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# 11

Representative (R-TX, 10th District) page 90

## **MICHAEL T. MCCAUL**

*Representative (R-TX, 10th District); Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee, US House of Representatives*

# 12

Representative (D-NY, 5th District) page 94

## **GREGORY W. MEEKS**

*Representative (D-NY, 5th District); Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee, US House of Representatives; Member, US-Colombia Task Force, Atlantic Council*

# 13

Former US Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs page 100

## **PAULA J. DOBRIANSKY**

*Former US Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs; Senior Fellow, Harvard University Belfer Center; Vice Chair, Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, Atlantic Council*

# 14

Former US Ambassador to Colombia page 107

## **KEVIN WHITAKER**

*Former US Ambassador to Colombia; Non-resident Senior Fellow, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center; Member, US-Colombia Task Force, Atlantic Council*

# 15

Former US Ambassador to Colombia page 113

## **ALEJANDRO EDER**

# 11

## RECOGNIZE THE HIGH STAKES

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**MICHAEL T. MCCAUL**

*Representative (D-NY, 5th District); Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee, US House of Representatives; Member, US-Colombia Task Force, Atlantic Council*

**A** ... of bilateral relations, we should  
be proud of the many successes. Our mutually beneficial alliance







While I am proud the United States remains the largest donor for displaced Venezuelans, we should continue encouraging our international partners to fully fund their pledges and increase their contributions. With the growing migrant crisis in the region, Colombia's efforts—and those of regional

# 12

# INVEST IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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GREGORY W. MEEKS

Caribbean and Pacific communities. In my role on the bipartisan, bicameral Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force, I will continue to put forward policy that supports the growth and prosperity of Colombians and LAC.

Despite notable progress in the past two decades, I am concerned about Colombia's remaining challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare deep economic, educational, and health disparities in Colombia, as it has in the United States. It has exposed the persistent inequities faced by those who have experienced centuries of racial and ethnic discrimination and structural inequalities. That is why, as Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I continue to advocate tirelessly for increased COVID-19 vaccine accessibility and US support for global recovery efforts.

Ignoring opportunities to address root causes and propose constructive solutions to unrest in our countries hinders our ability to open pathways to prosperity and improved quality of life for more people. While I am proud of what we have accomplished together, I place a premium on peace for a sustainable future. We will not achieve lasting peace or any great endeavor without the participation of Black and Indigenous communities and women in Colombia and the Western Hemisphere.

Despite making up nearly 33 percent of the population in LAC, people of African descent too often remain “invisible.”







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# 13



## Counter-narcotics efforts



succeed against this longstanding challenge. We must work jointly to ensure that Colombia's democratic institutions and the rule of law are not weakened by narcotics trafficking.

## Democracy and the rule of law

# D

and punish those officials and others who committed human rights violations.

To protect human rights and human dignity, Colombia must further strengthen those mechanisms to safeguard the rule of law and human rights and enforce security. Forward-looking initiatives, like the Culture of Lawfulness Project, focused on educating the next generation on the importance of the rule of law, are paramount in fostering a more peaceful, vibrant Colombia.

## Environmental stewardship

One of the most innovative initiatives enacted by Congress in 1998 was the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, which has enabled eligible developing countries to reduce their debts to the United States and undertake action to protect their tropical forests.

In 2004, the United States, Colombia, and three environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, and the World Wildlife Fund—signed agreements to reduce Colombia's debt to the United States by more than \$10 million. In return, Colombia promised to use those funds toward conservation efforts in several important tropical forest areas, including Tropical Andes, the Llanos region in the Orinoco Basin, and the Caribbean. The program became known as the Debt-for-Nature agreement. Colombia became the fifth country in Latin America to benefit from this program; the others were Belize, El Salvador, Panama, and Peru.<sup>10</sup> It created a permanent endowment for preserving Colombia's tropical forests while advancing its economy. Since signing these agreements,



communications.

9 Paula J. Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global A







the 1990s, extrajudicial actors convulsed the nation with violence to seek the government's capitulation. Pablo Escobar ordered car bombs, destroyed an airliner in flight, directed the murders of hundreds of police officers, and was behind the assassinations of government ministers and two candidates for president in his battle against the state and justice. Four major and





models. The United States and Colombia embrace a liberal democratic system based on individual rights, open markets, and clear, universally applied rules. Its counterpart is the authoritarian vision of China, in which an unelected government grants rights to citizens on condition of behavior, subjectively and impermanently, and the center applies laws and norms variably following its own criteria.

Colombia and the United States are already collaborating on law enforcement and judicial matters in the hemisphere; our work should be broadened and deepened to partner on these governance matters. Given its painful experiences and vibrant democratic culture, Colombian insights can be uniquely useful.

In the summer of 2016, I joined a group observing a demining effort in Caquetá, a rural department long torn by insurgency, coca/cocaine, and disconnection from the rest of Colombia. As we flew that sunny morning in a Colombian army helicopter, I gazed out at a lush piedmont landscape dotted with small farms. The undulating terrain was marked by watercourses and dirt roads, rising into mountains just distinguishable through a blue haze. My reverie was interrupted by a colleague, who showed me a news flash on his phone that the government and FARC had reached a final agreement on the peace accord. There was a completeness to the moment. I looked again at the bucolic scene, and it struck me why it appealed to me so: it strongly resembled the piedmont of my beloved home state of Virginia. A peace and future in which the Caquetá piedmont could be a sister to the Virginia piedmont, with inclusion, education, and opportunities, seemed within reach.



## Endnotes

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values in Latin America and beyond. A further developed Colombia would





The final obstacle faced by Colombia is geopolitical. State actors such as Cuba, Russia, Venezuela and, to a different extent, China—and even Iran—would benefit strategically from a destabilized or discredited Colombia. Weakening Colombia in any of these ways would be a significant blow to US interests in the Western Hemisphere and those of liberal democracies. Not only would a major ally be put under significant pressure, but it would also send a message to other Latin American nations that being close to the United States one day means nothing the next. Further-13 (h) 3 (3 (-13 (h) 3 (-13 (-19 (oul (h (e)TF)

reforms, such as tax reform; strengthening the educational system, particularly in technology and bilingualism; increasing access to capital; training Colombian suppliers to serve the US market, and

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ESSAYS 16-20



# 14

## Improve Productivity *page 124*

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Member, US-Colombia Task Force, Atlantic Council*

# 1

## Invest in Peace *page 130*

### **HOWARD G. BUFFETT**

*Chairman and CEO, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation*

# 1

## Make Bold Bets *page 134*

### **LUIS ALBERTO MORENO**

*Managing Director, Allen & Co LLC; Former President, Inter-American  
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# 9

## Advance Energy Transformation *page 141*

### **THOMAS F. "MACK" MCLARTY, III**

*Former Chief of Staff, The White House; Chairman and Co-Founder,  
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# 20

## Diversify the Bilateral Agenda *page 149*

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# U

*page 154*

### **VICKI HOLLUB**

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Former Chair, US-Colombia Business Council*

*page 157*

### **ECOPETROL**

### **ISA**







65 percent of productivity increases are due to improvements in production processes and better product positioning.

Therefore, the most advisable work within companies would be technological extension and technical assistance programs, such as the previously mentioned Productive Factories Program, which has had positive results and became the star program of President Iván Duque's effort to increase productivity at the firm's level. It most definitely is a program that should be continued and strengthened by incoming governments.

### **Productive factories**

The Productive Factories Program is a solid example of cooperation between Colombia and the United States. The Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism united to increase business productivity and competitiveness by applying new technologies. The program was created in 2019, inspired by the technology extension model (Manufacturing Extension Partnership [MEP] and Georgia Tech MEP). It emerged from an initiative involving the public and private sectors in 2017 to transfer methodologies to Colombia and train in technology extension methods. Georgia Tech's E12 Business Innovation Institute supported its design and implementation.<sup>5</sup>

The program's first phase involved training and certifying 150 Colombian extensionists at Georgia Tech, who then returned to the country to work together with twenty-five Georgia Tech E12 professionals in a pilot program in forty companies and four cities, transferring their knowledge.

Based on these lessons learned, the program was extended to all regions

the program's limited scope in terms of economic and human resources to reach the bulk of the business sector.

### Scaling up

To visualize the magnitude of the productivity challenge, it is mandatory to characterize the Colombian business world. Unfortunately, limited information is available since an economic and business census has not been conducted since 1991 due to a lack of resources. Contributing resources to carry out this census is fundamental and a possible front for bilateral collaboration.

According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics





# 1

Colombia is poised to prove to the world that it will be known for the peace it has brokered at home rather than the conflict endured for fifty years. This requires an enormous investment in development and close coordination among all stakeholders to ensure these commitments meet the needs of the people most affected.

**HOWARD G. BUFFETT**

*Chairman and CEO, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation*

2016 after fifty years of conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), we knew the real work was just beginning. A peace agree-





any successes we achieve could be sustained or replicated locally and nation

informed by the needs articulated by local communities and governments in partnership with the national government to ensure that the personnel to support this new infrastructure is included in government budgets.

Finally, no investment in post-conflict development is sustainable without addressing the issue of ex-combatants. They need investment too, so they can have viable livelihoods that do not involve conflict, but this investment must be made in a way that is fair to the individuals who never took up arms against the government. The foundation supports the World Food Programme's work with FARC ex-combatants living in fourteen of the twenty-four reintegration camps across Colombia, including the one in Tibú. The projects provide a way for ex-combatants to gain new skills, earn a living, and make amends with their communities, many of which are victims of the armed conflict.

Over the last six years, our work in Colombia has underscored that history will not judge success based on the signing of the peace accords but rather by Colombia's ability to fulfill its commitments. This requires an enormous investment in development and close coordination among all stakeholders to ensure these commitments meet the needs of the people most affected. The role of outside donors is to listen and support efforts to achieve that objective.

As Colombia and the United States celebrate two hundred years of cooperation, it's important to recognize that Colombia's success or failure affects us here at home. Succeeding in Catatumbo will reduce the coca production that ultimately becomes cocaine in US cities.

# 1

**Colombia and the United States are uniquely positioned to enjoy an exceptional commercial partnership. Achieving**





fifty countries.<sup>3</sup> Colombia's robust domestic consumer market and comprehensive healthcare system make it attractive for medical tourism, clinical research, and medical device testing companies. The number of medical tourists to Colombia quintupled between 2010 and 2019, to more than twenty-one thousand patients.<sup>4</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary contraction of these flows, but long-term trends in US healthcare and cost structures will make Colombia extremely attractive to service providers.

college students and people in their prime working years. This market segment (ages twenty to fifty-five) numbers more than 300 million in LAC.

Using Colombia as a base, these partnerships could develop programs in Spanish, English, and Portuguese that range from full academic degrees to continuing-education certificates tailored to meet the needs of specific industries. In addition to the skills demanded by the KPO sector, these programs could focus on areas that Colombia has already identified as strategic, such as energy, infrastructure, construction, the creative industries, information and communications technology services, agribusiness, manufacturing, chemicals, and life sciences.

automobiles to large infrastructure investments. And like the rest of its neighbors, Colombia's trade strategy must look to Asia and Europe as well as North America.

As Colombia and the United States navigate the unknowns of this new era, their shared values and security priorities will become ever more important—as will the advantages of the enhanced economic partnership proposed herein. In a world where regional ties are becoming more vital than global ones, Colombia and the United States could model a new kind of political and economic synergy in the Americas. I see no reason why US direct investment in Colombia could not quintuple in the coming decade, generating tens of thousands of jobs in both countries. Achieving this will require a level of ambition, coordination, and commitment comparable to what enabled Plan Colombia. This time, the leadership and execution will depend more on the private sector. Old assumptions should be abandoned as a new generation of entrepreneurs and civic leaders forge a vision for a future attuned to an altered set of realities. But as was the case with Plan Colombia, a bold bet today could yield multiple gains and new opportunities well into the twenty-first century.



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Colombia and the United States could offer solutions to the world as it seeks to mitigate the effects of climate change.

**THOMAS F. “MACK” MCLARTY, III**

*Former White House Chief of Staff; Chairman and Co-Founder, McLarty Associates; Member, US-Colombia Task Force, Atlantic Council*

**1998: A turning point**

of my career was head-



bian leaders reiterated their country's determination to reduce emissions by

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-

One signature endeavor is Operation Artemisa, a joint effort launched in 2019 between the Ministries of Environment and Defense to crack down on illegal deforestation and the trafficking of plants and animals inside Colombia's national parks. As Bogotá's *City Paper* journalist Richard Emblin said, "Since launching in 2019, Artemisa's 22,000-strong jungle guardians have managed to recover more than 146,000 hectares of tropical forest belonging to Chiribiquete National Natural Park and the Llanos de Yarí watershed. Hundreds of military sorties have resulted in arrests of persons charged with environmental crimes, including setting fires in protected parkland, toxic chemical dumping, illegal mining, and animal trafficking."<sup>14</sup>

In January 2022, the Colombian government expanded Operation Artemisa to patrol the seas, with a goal of protecting coral reefs, atolls, marine wildlife, and the fundamental right to water.<sup>15</sup>

Back in 2013, the United States and Colombia advanced mutual progress on environmental protection with the US-Colombia Environmental Cooperation Agreement, which established the Environmental Cooperation Commission to spearhead joint activities to promote conservation and sustainability.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the Environment Chapter of the US-Colom-

tal crime offenders by 30 percent, and training 10,000 people in sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, and natural climate solutions.<sup>20</sup>

The signature outcome of Blinken's visit, as part of the US-Colombia high-level dialogue, was a joint declaration committing to renew and advance the strategic alliance.<sup>21</sup> As part of that announcement, the United States pledged \$50 million to support Colombian efforts to combat deforestation in the Amazon, conserve biodiversity, and increase environmental security.

### **Challenge = opportunity**

s much as US-Colombian cooperation in these areas is about combatting threats, it also presents tremendous opportunities for the US private sector. Investments bolstering climate resilience and renewable energy sources can expand the economy, create jobs, and promote equity in Colombia, the United States, and worldwide.<sup>28</sup>

At a time when the global public expects more of the private sector than ever, environmental, social, and governance standards are not a sidebar but a mainstay of successful businesses. Colombia ranks among the top ten





for-a-long-term-cooperation-and-friendship-between-the-republic-of-colombia-and-the-united-states-of-america/.

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# 20

Overcoming Colombia's security challenges will require investment, job creation, and a strong social agenda. The United States should play a key role in this endeavor.

**MARIA CLAUDIA LACOUTURE**

*Executive Director, Colombian-American Chamber of Commerce;  
President, Alianza de Asociaciones y Gremios; Former Minister  
of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Republic of Colombia;*

bia's digital transformation, and support technology transfers and investment in large-scale projects. Such prioritization can help boost development, particularly in Colombia's most vulnerable regions.

With critical US support, Colombia has strengthened the rule of law and increased state presence in remote, conflict-affected territories over the past two decades. Now is the time to build on Plan Colombia and its



ects, and the modernization of ports and airports. As Colombia's principal investor, the United States should not lose ground, since China would pick up the slack, as evidenced by its participation in the Bogotá metro system,



## U

**VICKI HOLLUB**

*President and CEO, Occidental Petroleum Corporation;  
Former Chair, US-Colombia Business Council*

As the inaugural chair of the US-Colombia Business Council in 2017, I agreed without hesitation. My work in supporting two different administrations to help broaden and deepen bilateral social and economic ties is rooted in the extensive history of Occidental Petroleum (“Oxy”) in Colombia.

Almost forty years have passed since a mid-April morning in 1983 when Oxy began to drill a well in the Cano Limon field in a remote part of Colombia’s Arauca Department along the Venezuelan border. Oxy’s geologists believed that a major discovery was possible even though other companies had explored the area without promising results.

The first traces of hydrocarbons were found in a matter of weeks. Increasing evidence showed that a major oil field existed. Roughly two years later, commercial production had begun with an average yield of 8,000 light crude barrels per day (bpd). It would eventually reach a peak of 300,000 bpd. That these geologists were proven correct not only helped change the course of Oxy’s history but also helped propel Colombia from a major importer of crude oil to a substantial exporter. It also spurred significant new investment in Colombia’s resource-rich hydrocarbons sector.

Oxy’s discovery occurred during a particularly challenging time for Colombia. While the first positive assessments of the Cano Limon field were being recorded, Time magazine devoted its cover to the spiraling debt in Latin America that would envelop the region for many years. The inability of several countries in the region to honor their obligations helped foster an international financial crisis that led many governments to adopt severe austerity measures. The social cost was immense: a decline in income per







## **ECOPETROL AND ISA**

### **Sustainability and energy transition: A bet on Colombia's comprehensive development and growth**

to one another and do business in the world has changed. Beyond delivering results or profits for shareholders, companies are expected to be key players in countries' development and sustainability, acting responsibly with the environment and society to ensure a better future for all.

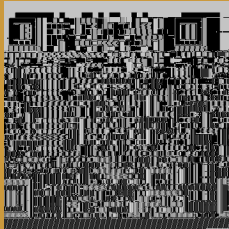
Colombia and the United States have established and strengthened bilateral ties, jointly advancing in this global dynamic, always coordinating

ization of operations through investments in new non-conventional energy businesses.

By doing this, we all win.



Use your phone to scan the QR code and access the video.





“Global cooperation is key to advancing environmental protection, while at the same time, supporting economic development in Colombia and in countries around the world. From tropical rainforests to alpine tundra ecosystems, Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, and its natural resources play an important role in sequestering carbon emissions from the atmosphere. The United States has already worked in partnership with Colombia to protect its natural resources as part of my Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act program through a \$10 million debt-for-nature agreement, which has helped lay a strong foundation that all nations, working together, can continue to build on.”

**ROBERT C. MANN**

*US Senator (R-OH), US Senate*



“As the impacts of climate change intensify, we urgently need collaborative policy making, improved early warning systems, nature-based solutions, and innovations in financing adaptation to build more resilient communities and institutions. The United States and Colombia are uniquely positioned to work side-by-side in favor of a safer, inclusive, and more sustainable world.”

**ADRIENNE ARSHT-ROCKEFELLER**

*Senior Vice President and Director,  
Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center*



# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

ESSAYS 1







# 21

## PARTNER FOR SUSTAINABLE PATHWAYS

The United States and Colombia can play a key role in supporting green recovery and nature-positive futures by applying the commitments and frameworks they have pledged to uphold to shift the balance of fossil fuels and renewables in their energy sourcing.

**ALICIA CABRERA**

*Regional Managing Director, Latin America, The Nature Conservancy*

**SARAH GAMMAGE**

*Director of Public Policy and Government Relations for Latin America, The Nature Conservancy*

# T

and one of the world's most important carbon sinks—the Amazon basin—veers toward an irreversible tipping point.<sup>3</sup>




reducing the threats against existing protected areas and Indigenous communities.

**D**eforestation is a major driver of climate change.

**H**owever, as the Climate Action Tracker analysis underscores, “Reducing emissions from deforestation is a vital part of Colombia’s climate action, but to fully decarbonize its economy, Colombia would need to focus on other sectors, especially energy and transport.”





**T**he United States and Colombia can play a key role in engaging on the global and regional stage supporting green recovery and nature-positive futures. They can use the commitments and frameworks they have pledged to uphold to shift the balance of fossil fuels and renewables in their energy sourcing. The two countries can potentially follow the route of the European Union<sup>13</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>14</sup> in legislating that trade involve only deforestation- and conversion-free commodities such as soy, beef, coffee, cacao, and palm oil. They can support Indigenous guardians









## US-Colombian conservation partnerships

**T**he most significant factor in US-Colombian cooperation for conservation has been through USAID programs. As part of its global mission, USAID initially concentrated on issues of industrial growth,



by Colombian members of the Andean Parliament, Amazon Parliament, Leticia Pact, and observer status at gatherings such as the Biodiversity Convention Conference of the Parties. Chiefly through the interest and engagement of these caucus members, the Colombian Congress has adopted the following new conservation laws in recent years:

**Law 1712 of 2013** (Decreto 1712 of 2013).  
 Led to Colombia's formal accession to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

**Law 1712 of 2013** (Decreto 1712 of 2013).  
 Regulates activities in and around the Andean highlands for the

strated by Rainforest Trust's commitment to subsidize the creation of a new national park. There is substantial potential for partnering with US-based NGOs and public-private partnerships for nature tourism infrastructure. In partnership with the US Government and with US-based nonprofits, foundations, and other private-sector actors, Colombia can preserve and leverage its vast biodiversity and natural wealth for the benefit of the Colombian people and for our shared future.



## Endnotes

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# VIDEO

**MICHAEL B. BLOOMBERG**

*Founder, Bloomberg LP & Bloomberg Philanthropies; Chair of Climate Finance Leadership Initiative (CFLI)*

U.S. Climate Action Summit





**ALLIES:**

TWENTY SEVEN BOLD IDEAS TO REIMAGINE THE US COLOMBIA RELATIONSHIP

# ADDRESSING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION

ESSAYS

“Since at least 2015, Colombia has demonstrated remarkable leadership, with uneven support from the international community, to address the unprecedented migration sparked by Venezuela’s collapse into chaos. Rather than respond with nativism and overzealous border enforcement or buckle under the weight of such a large, displaced population, Colombia—across two quite different presidential administrations—rose to the challenge. In so doing, it provides invaluable lessons to countries throughout the Americas, including the United States, and well beyond, in an era of accelerating dislocation.”

**DAN RESTREPO**

*Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress; Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs, US National Security Council*



## ESSAYS

### 24

**Priorities in Internal Displaced People** page 188

**ELIZABETH FERRIS**

*Research Professor, Institute for the Study of International Migration, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University*

### 25

**Support for Holistic Migration Strategy** page 195

**ANDREW SELEE**

*President, Migration Policy Institute*

**DIEGO CHAVES GONZÁLEZ**

*Senior Manager, Latin America and Caribbean Initiative, Migration Policy Institute*



**ESSAY** **24**

# PRIORITIZE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

The history of internal displacement in Colombia, government response, and the impact of the 2011 Victims Law and 2016 peace agreement provide the foundation for understanding recent challenges and possible solutions for ongoing and new displacement.

**ELIZABETH FERRIS**

*Research Professor, Institute for the Study of International Migration,  
School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University*

**A**mounting on the desperate plight of Venezuelan refugees and migrants—and indeed, their needs are enormous—it is important not to lose momentum for resolving Colombia's internal displacement. Despite significant progress in recent years, future improvement will partially depend on ongoing support to implement the historic 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This agreement ended a conflict that led to some 220,000 deaths and the internal displacement of more than eight million Colombians.<sup>1</sup>

More than five years after the peace agreement, Colombia is still grappling with a long-standing and difficult-to-resolve internally displaced person (IDP) population alongside continuing displacement. The gov-





placement, there are growing numbers of people experiencing “forced con-



nize a roundtable with representatives from government, civil society, IDPs, and academia to assess progress and identify









## Colombia's emergency response evolves

**I**nitially, no one could have imagined the number of Venezuelans who would eventually cross Colombia's border. At first, in 2017, the Colombian government issued a temporary two-year stay permit, the *Permiso Especial de Permanencia* (Special Stay Permit or PEP), to Venezuelans who entered the country legally through official ports of entry. Other regularization programs followed for those who had entered without registering, and by November 2020, Colombia had regularized the status of 707,000 of the 1.72 million Venezuelans in the country.<sup>3</sup> However, the measures never fully kept up with the demand, and the requirement to renew the PEP every two years created bureaucratic backlogs.

Finally, the government decided in February 2021 to conduct an even more ambitious effort by offering a ten-year stay permit to all Venezuelans who were already in the country, regardless of their legal status. The new permit, the *Permiso de Protección Temporal* (Temporary Protection Permit or PPT), sought to cover all Venezuelans who had entered the country by January 31, 2021, and would be available during the next year for those who entered Colombia legally from Venezuela. The PPT permit allows access to services and employment and creates a pathway for recipients to transition to permanent residence with time already spent in the country counting toward the five-year residency requirement.<sup>4</sup>

The Colombian government also offered a *Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza* (Border Mobility Card or TMF) to Venezuelans living in the border region, allowing them to cross the border freely. This mechanism was introduced to dissuade migrants from moving to the country's center by provid-

Colombia's healthcare system is not universal, making the incorporation of recent migrants into the healthcare system more complex; many are not yet affiliated.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these efforts to incorporate Venezuelan migrants through legal documentation and access to education and basic healthcare, according to a 2021 study, 97 percent of Venezuelan nationals in Colombia worked in the informal economy, compared to only 48 percent of Colombian citizens.<sup>9</sup> A

benefit equally. Some pushback against new arrivals has nothing to do with the migration itself but with the precarious nature of public services that were already overtaxed before Venezuelans arrived en masse.<sup>11</sup>

But ensuring a mutual sense of purpose between Colombians and Venezuelans also requires building new narratives about Colombian society that emphasize why and how Colombia has responded by receiving and integrating Venezuelans and how they share a common future.<sup>12</sup> The current administration—and many local political and social leaders—have been adamant about finding a future together, but there are also increasing voices of hostility toward the Venezuelans living in Colombia, especially on social media and in local politics.

The international community can play a vital role in supporting Colombia's efforts to integrate Venezuelan migrants in tangible and intangible ways. Among the most crucial international endeavors have been concessional loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, which have supported infrastructure development, healthcare access, and housing in parts of the country with significant immigration. However, moving from concessional loans to preferential interest rates and other measures to support Colombia as a recipient of the hemisphere's largest refugee and migration crisis would be a smart next step.

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ways that generate order in future migration movements—speak directly to Colombia's current challenges.

The key question is how to ensure that Colombia's commitment to integrating a large displaced population leads to positive gains for the country overall, not only in its international reputation and bilateral relationships but also in the everyday lives of Colombians. It is critical for the policy of the last two administrations to remain state policy as administrations change. This will require the ongoing commitment of the Colombian government and strong and consistent support from the international community. As a result, Colombia's solidarity with displaced Venezuelans will also depend, at least in part, on the solidarity of other countries around the world. Here, no country could play a bigger role than the United States. Using its leverage within financial institutions and its resources, it could help Colombia expand its education system, healthcare access, and infrastructure to incorporate the arrival of Venezuelan migrants and make sure that host communities benefit in the process.



## Endnotes

- 1 Only Turkey (and perhaps soon Poland) hosts a larger displaced population. Regarding Venezuelan displacement, see Andrew Selee and Jessica Bolter, "Colombia's Open Door Policy: An Innovative Approach to Displacement," *International Migration*, No. 60 (2022): 113–131, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/imig.12839>. Updated figures on the number of Venezuelans in Colombia (and other countries), compiled by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, can be found at [www.r4v.info](http://www.r4v.info).
- 2 Andrew Selee and Jessica Bolter, *An Uneven Welcome: Latin American and Caribbean Responses to Venezuelan and Nicaraguan Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, February 2020). There have been similar whole-of-government approaches from Argentina and Uruguay and, to a lesser extent, Brazil, but the numbers of arrivals compared to the overall population are a fraction of Colombia's. The signals have been mixed across different government agencies in other countries receiving large numbers of displaced Venezuelan migrants, including Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago.
- 3 Selee and Bolter, "Colombia's Open Door Policy," 119–120.
- 4 Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan and Diego Chaves-González, "What Comes Next Now that Colombia Has Taken a Historic Step on Migration," Migration Policy Institute, February 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/colombia-historic-legalization-what-next>.
- 5 Although the government discontinued using this permit in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this measure issued 5.2 million TMFs to Venezuelan nationals. Still, it is hard to determine how many of these holders remain in Venezuela, how many regularized their status under the PEP or PPT schemes, or how many transited to other countries. Selee and Bolter, "Colombia's Open Door Policy."

6 This decree allowed the National Registry of Civil Status to grant Colombian nationality to all children who had a Venezuelan parent and were born in Colombia as of August 19, 2015. This measure later evolved into a law expanding its validity for two more years.

7

“I celebrate the bicentennial of US-Colombia relations and think of the next two hundred years as an opportunity to promote and position art and culture as a tool for progress and partnership between our nations. Recognizing our artisans’ talent, alongside the value of and respect for our crafts and ancestral techniques should be at the forefront of our collaborative agenda for further development of our communities. We can find most of the answers and synergies to counter today’s challenges in our biodiversity, cultural diversity, knowledge of our communities, and the power of our women.”

**JOHANNA ORTIZ**

*Creative Director, Johanna Ortiz*



“The COVID-19 pandemic made technology an even more essential part of our daily lives, and this transformation also impacted art

**ALLIES:**

TWENTY SEVEN BOLD IDEAS TO REIMAGINE THE US COLOMBIA RELATIONSHIP

# ADVANCING STEM\* AND THE ARTS

ESSAYS

**\*SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS**



“Art has not only helped put Colombia on the map, but also opened doors for many talented Colombian creators and artists. Our close relationship with the United States has led to great collaborations and developments in the world of fashion, shining a spotlight on Latin heritage and beauty—our bright colors, diverse silhouette, and vibrant patterns. As a Colombian fashion designer, I have had the opportunity to position my brand in the United States and look forward to many more years of growth and helping to put Colombia and Colombian art on the world stage. Together, we can accomplish great things.”

**ANDRÉS OTÁLORA**

*Fashion Designer*



**26**

**Recognize the Power of Music** *page 206*

LEILA COBO

# 26

## RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF MUSIC

Colombian musicians have become global leaders. They are the single-most recognized ambassadors of the country's culture, folklore, and traditions. They are vocal agents of change, thanks to an ever-growing number of artistic collaborations and an increasingly solid business infrastructure.

**LEILA COBO**

*Vice President, Latin Industry Lead, Billboard; Author, Novelist*

**W** 1980s in Cali, Colombia, my father subscribed to *Time* magazine, and every week, the shiny, ostensible purveyor of everything that was of import in the world arrived in the mail.

I'd scour *Time* in search of any news—good, bad, whatever—about Colombia. Save for an occasional natural disaster reviewed in a paragraph

God for that “Colombia is the country with the most variety of birds” stat) and co ee?

When I auditioned for the Manhattan School of Music, a female profes-

Thanks in no small measure to a growing contingent of Colombian superstars that includes Shakira, Juanes, Maluma, Camilo, and J Balvin, music in Spanish has also sliced the language barrier and is listened to broadly by non-Spanish speakers worldwide.

How did this happen? Our circumstance as a country in near-perpetual conflict favored the development of music as an alternative, outlet, and solution. Yet, music was long insular in Colombia. We listened to local acts and imports from the United States, Spain, Argentina, and Mexico, as did most Latin Americans. Colombia was a depository of music from other places, but our own rhythms and beats were regarded as too, well, Colombian ever to be appreciated outside the confines of our borders.

Seen dispassionately, the evolution of Shakira is almost miraculous. As a young girl growing up in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, there was no one she could artistically emulate or aspire to and no industry to viably support her brand of youth-oriented, slightly rebellious rock. Shakira not only

Yet, until just a few years ago, the fact that musicians were leading the fray in terms of raising Colombia's visibility abroad was widely discounted. Until relatively recently, music was seen as mostly a trivial pursuit, certainly not a "real" career, and unworthy of serious consideration by influential decision makers and politicians.

Except, musicians overall have become the decision makers, and Colombian musicians, in particular, have become global leaders. This is obvious, not just in terms of fame—easily measurable nowadays by the number of social media followers and music streams and downloads, but also in terms of tangible social and economic impact and influence. Colombian musicians today are the single most recognized ambassadors of the country's culture, folklore, and traditions and are also vocal agents of change. Witness Shakira's *Fundación Pies Descalzos* (Barefeet), Juanes's *Fundación Mi Sangre* (My Blood), and Maluma's *El Arte de Los Sueños* (the Art of Dreams) foundation. Not only do they transform lives inside Colombia, but they raise the country's equity everywhere.

And now we have *Encanto*, an animated Disney film remarkable for its sheer visual beauty (which reflects the beauty of the Colombian countryside near the coffee-growing region where the mythical *casita* stands), uplifting family themes, and joyful music, much of it performed by—Oh My Goodness—actual Colombians! At the time of this writing in March 2022, the film's soundtrack had spent eight non-consecutive weeks at No. 1 on the fabled *Billboard* 200 chart, which measures consumption of all albums in every genre. No soundtrack has ever done that in the chart's history.

That's not the only record it's set. *Encanto* is the first soundtrack to go to No. 1 since 2019 and the sixth animated soundtrack to ever top the chart.

Beyond that, *Encanto* is a film set in Colombia, with a predominantly Colombian cast that sings and speaks in Spanish and English. Animated or

were both shot in Mexico because Colombia was deemed too dangerous, and Colombian characters were played by Mexicans or Spaniards speaking with the wrong accent.

*Encanto*

Animated Feature. At the 2022 Grammy Awards, there were eight nominees from Colombia in the four Latin categories, more than any other country.

It's not just about what happens with our music on an international stage.





States with the utmost honor and respect. Throughout my career in the arts—from performing in local New York City venues to opening a show





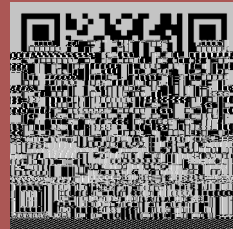


# VIDEO

**ANA MARÍA PORRAS**

*Biomedical Engineer, University of Florida*

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**A E D**

and partners around the





of experience and strength from which to draw. And the growing density of relations between our two societies provides an asset and further opportunity for deepening ties.

Let us not forget the sacrifices made or the hard work and commitment it took to get this far. We must work collaboratively to protect and strengthen Colombia's strong and vibrant democracy.

In the years ahead, it's clear that there will be bends in the road and many challenges to confront, just as there were over the last two hundred

**JASON MARCZAK**

Jason Marczak is senior director of the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, which he joined in 2013 to launch the center. Marczak has over twenty years of expertise in regional economics, politics, and development, working with policymakers and private-sector executives to shape public policy. Since 2016, Marczak is an adjunct professor at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. He was previously director of policy at the Americas Society/Council of the Americas, cofounder and senior editor of *Americas Quarterly* magazine, and has held positions in the US Congress. Marczak has testified on US-Colombia relations in the US Senate.

**CAMILA HERNÁNDEZ**

Camila Hernández is an associate director at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, where she leads the Center's Colombia and US-Mexico border work. Hernández manages Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force, co-chaired by Senators Roy Blunt and Ben Cardin. Previously, she served as Helms Fellow at the World Resources Institute. She also held positions at Human Rights Watch and Tuatara Group LLC.

**CYNTHIA J. ARNISON**

Cynthia J. Arnison is a distinguished fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center Scholars and former director of its Latin American Program. She is a widely recognized expert on Latin American politics and interna-

### **CAROLINA BARCO**

Amb. Carolina Barco formerly served as Colombia's foreign minister from 2002 to 2006, Colombia's ambassador to the United States from 2006 to 2010, and ambassador to Spain from 2019 to 2020. Barco was a consultant for eight years with the Inter-American Development Bank and is a member of the Atlantic Council's US-Colombia Task Force.

### **ROY BLUNT**

Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) has been a US senator for Missouri since being elected in 2010. Blunt chairs the Senate Republican Policy Committee, serves as the top Republican on the Senate Rules Committee, and is a member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. Blunt co-chairs the non-partisan Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force alongside Senator Ben Cardin.

### **HOWARD G. BUFFETT**

Howard G. Buffett is a farmer, photographer, businessman, and chairman

## **BEN CARDIN**

Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) has represented Maryland in the US Senate since 2007 and before that in the US House of Representatives. He works to integrate good governance, transparency and respect for human rights in American foreign policy. Cardin is a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and co-chairs the nonpartisan Atlantic Council US-Colombia Task Force alongside Senator Roy Blunt.

## **DIEGO CHAVES GONZÁLEZ**

Diego Chaves-González is senior manager for the Migration Policy Institute's Latin America and Caribbean Initiative. Before joining MPI, Chaves-González worked for the World Bank where he helped expand the scope of the Global Concessional Financing Facility, and the International Organization for Migration.

## **REBECCA BILL CHAVEZ**

Rebecca Bill Chavez is the Inter-American Dialogue's president and CEO. From 2013 until 2016, Dr. Chavez was deputy assistant secretary of defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs, where her focus areas included defense institution building, combating law enforcement militarization, and women, peace, and security initiatives. Before joining the administration of President Barack Obama, Dr. Chavez was a tenured professor of political science at the US Naval Academy.

## **PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON**

Bill Clinton served as the 42nd president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He previously served as governor of Arkansas from 1979 to 1981 and again from 1983 to 1992, and as attorney general of Arkansas from 1977 to 1979. Since leaving office, Clinton created the Clinton Foundation to address international concerns such as the prevention of HIV/AIDS and global warming.

## **LEILA COBO**

Leila Cobo is a Latin music expert and vice president/Latin industry lead for *Billboard*, where she also leads the *Billboard* Latin Music Conference and Awards. She has authored five acclaimed books, including *Decoding Despacito: An Oral History of Latin Music* (New York: Vintage, 2021). Cobo is a classical pianist and a Fulbright scholar.

## **ROSARIO CÓRDOBA**

Rosario Córdoba is the president of Grupo Argos' board of directors and served as president of the Private Competitiveness Council until July 2021. Previously, she worked at Fedesarrollo as an editor and *Coyuntura Económica* as an associate researcher. She was part of the Commission of Experts for

## **ELIZABETH FERRIS**

Elizabeth Ferris is an Institute for the Study of International Migration research professor at Georgetown University and previously served as senior fellow and co-director of the Brookings Project on Internal Displacement. Ferris has held positions at the World Council of Churches, the Life &



**P. MICHAEL MCKINLEY**

Amb. Michael McKinley is a former US ambassador to Colombia, Afghanistan, Brazil, and Peru. As ambassador to Colombia, McKinley helped finalize the entry into force of the bilateral free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia and provided support for Colombia's peace negotiations. His articles have appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, the *Financial Times*, and *Politico*. McKinley is a member of the Atlantic Council's US-Colombia Task Force and a non-resident senior advisor for the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Americas Program.

**THOMAS F. "MACK" MCLARTY, III**

Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty has been chairman and co-founder of McLarty Associates since its establishment in 1998 and serves as chairman of the McLarty Companies. He previously was President William J. Clinton's chief of staff, where he helped enact the North American Free Trade Agreement. McLarty was appointed as special envoy for the Americas in 1997. McLarty is a member of the Atlantic Council's US-Colombia Task Force.



## **JUAN CARLOS PINZÓN**

Amb. Juan Carlos Pinzón has served as Colombia's ambassador to the United States since 2021. He was the president of Probogotá between 2018-2021 and Colombia's ambassador to the United States between 2015-2017. During his first ambassadorship, Pinzón established the US-Colombia Business Council and contributed to Atlantic Council work on the US-Colombia relation

**SANDRA VALENZUELA**

Sandra Valenzuela is the chief executive officer of WWF Colombia. Valenzuela previously worked at the National Protected Areas Agency in different capacities, including policy development, negotiations with local communities on protected area boundaries and governance, and as director for the Amazon and Orinoco regions. She is the co-chair of the Green List and Effective Management Specialist groups from IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas.

**KEVIN WHITAKER**

Kevin Whitaker served as the US ambassador to Colombia from 2014 to 2019; during his tenure, Colombia signed and began implementing the land-





