

Colombia's Santos to UN: Peace from Patagonia to Alaska

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“Today, we have reason for hope, because we have one less war in the world,” President Juan Manuel Santos said to the United Nations.

On the International Day of Peace, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos celebrated at the United Nations in New York Wednesday his government’s peace deal with the FARC guerrilla army bringing to a close [the longest-running civil war](#) in the Western Hemisphere.

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“After more than half a century of internal armed conflict, I returned to the United Nations today on International Day of Peace to announce ... that the war in Colombia has ended,” said Santos as the hall erupted in applause.

The president summarized the recent landmark achievements in the nearly four-year peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, in Havana, Cuba, and detailed the next steps that will set the country on its path toward building stable and lasting peace.

Government and FARC negotiators unveiled the [groundbreaking peace deal in Havana on Aug. 24](#), and five days later, Santos and FARC commander Timochenko launched a definitive bilateral cease-fire. The president told the U.N. that since the start of the much-awaited cease-fire, conflict between the military and the FARC has not seen a “single shot fired” after 52 years of hostilities.

Santos and Timochenko are set to [officially sign the peace deal on Monday](#), before Colombians head to the polls on Oct. 2 to vote in a plebiscite on whether or not to accept the 297-page agreement. Recent polls show that a majority of Colombians will vote “Yes” to peace.

Following the signing of the deal, the FARC will also begin the process of disarming and demobilizing at so-called “concentration zones” monitored by the U.N.

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"Their weapons will be melted down and will be turned into three monuments for peace, one in New York, one in Cuba where the talks took place, and one in Colombia," Santos explained. "These monuments will remind us that the bullets are behind us and that the construction of a new and better country has begun."

The president highlighted a number of provisions, including the transformation of the FARC into a political party, the establishment of truth commissions to support transitional justice and the rights of victims, substitution of illicit coca production for legal crops, and joint efforts to eliminate land mines in the country.

Santos thanked the countries that have supported Colombia in its peace process, and said that the experience of ending the war should offer hope in other conflicts.

"Colombia is turning the page of war to start writing the chapter of peace," he said. "Colombia should give hope to the world that it is possible to realize the dream of peace when there is will and when there is commitment."

Over more than half a century of fighting between the government and the FARC rebels, Colombia's war has claimed more than 220,000 lives and victimized some eight million people, including some 6.3 million who are internally displaced. Campesinos, Indigenous people, and Afro-Colombians have been among those hit hardest by the conflict.

"From Patagonia to Alaska, this is now a zone of peace," said Santos. "Today, we have reason for hope, because we have one less war in the world, and that is the war in Colombia."
