

Colombian President Reinforces Peace Negotiating Team with Foreign Minister



Havana, May 22 (RHC) -- As a new round of peace talks between the Colombian rebels and government got underway in Havana on Thursday, President Juan Manuel Santos announced that Foreign Minister Maria Angela Holguin and a renowned business man will reinforce the official delegation in an effort to step up the peace process.

The patience of Colombians is not endless and this is a moment to take decisions and work harder. We cannot miss this opportunity; time has become the enemy of trust in this process, Santos said in a statement on Thursday.

He said he decided to reinforce the negotiating team in Havana with the country's foreign minister, who will continue to do her job, and with Gonzalo Restrepo, a well-known Colombian business man.

Restrepo is a member of the board of directors of Ecopetrol oil company. The peace talks in Cuba have achieved more

advancement than all other previous peace efforts and the two parties have reached accords on mine sweeping, fighting drug trafficking, opening access to lands for the poor and turning the rebel forces into a political party.

But there are still complicated issues to address, such as compensation to the victims of the armed conflict and the end of the conflict itself. Once a general accord is reached, the Colombian people will approve or disapprove the agreement in a referendum.

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