

Cuba always committed to peace

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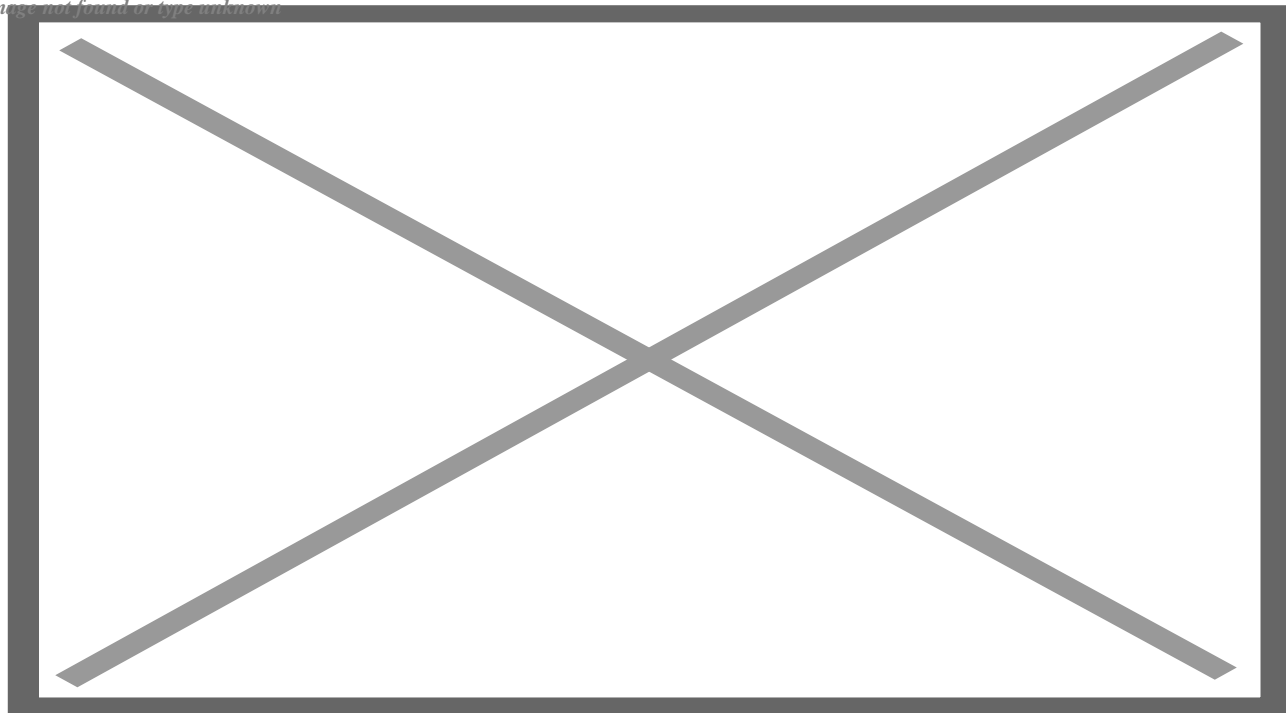


Photo taken from the Twitter feed of Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez.

By María Josefina Arce

Under the presidency of Gustavo Petro, Colombia is opening up to peace. And once again Cuba has been chosen to host talks on this path, now between the government of the South American country that took office on the seventh of August and the insurgent ELN, National Liberation Army.

This was stated in recent days during his trip to Havana by the Colombian Foreign Minister, Alvaro Leyva, who stressed that he aspired to restart negotiations in the Cuban archipelago, which he defined as a territory of peace.

Cuba is seriously committed to security and stability worldwide. Let us recall that under its pro tempore presidency of CELAC, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, in Havana in 2014 the region was declared a Zone of Peace.

In the case of Colombia, our country was, together with Norway, guarantor of the dialogue between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the former guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo).

From 2012 to 2016, the Cuban capital was the scene of these talks that led to the signing of the historic peace agreement, aimed at putting an end to more than five decades of armed conflict that left many dead, disappeared and displaced people.

Participants in those negotiations described as extraordinarily important the role of the Caribbean nation, which, as expected, performed with total professionalism and neutrality. Army General Raul Castro had already made it clear when he stated that they could count on Cuba's full support, that there would be no deviations or interference on our part.

In addition, Cuba has been seriously committed to the implementation of the agreement. Thus, it granted a THOUSAND scholarships to study Medical Sciences on Cuban soil.

Thanks to this gesture, described as supportive and generous, former combatants and victims of the conflict have had the opportunity to train as health professionals and return to Colombian territory to contribute to the construction of peace, providing their services to the most vulnerable communities.

Regarding the negotiations with the ELN, these began in 2017 in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and were then transferred to Havana. However, the government of the now former president Iván Duque, 2018-2022, broke off the dialogue, after the guerrilla action against a police school, and also tried to break the protocols established for this type of exchange.

Moreover, human rights and civil society organizations denounced Duque's failure to implement the agreement, under whose mandate violence increased and former combatants and social leaders were assassinated.

Today a new opportunity is opening up for Colombia. Cuban authorities have at all times expressed their total commitment to this process in order to contribute, among all of us, to truly achieve peace in that South American nation, which is also peace for Latin America and the Caribbean.

As Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canel emphasized, we will give continuity to the efforts of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, and Army General Raúl Castro, who at all times supported Colombia in the search for peace and stability.

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