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Dear Ambassador

## **Colombian Peace Process and Human Rights**

I am writing on behalf of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) representing over 5.5 million workers in Britain. In recognition of the three year anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian state and the FARC-EP I wish to express our ongoing support for the peace process and to affirm our continued commitment to collaborate with all of those working to bring about its full implementation. I am also writing to bring to your attention some of our concerns surrounding the current state of the peace process and labour rights and trade union freedoms.

According to the ITUC, Colombia remains among the worst countries in the world for labour rights. Colombia accounted for almost two-thirds of murders of trade unionists in the world in 2018, with 34 out of 53 documented cases committed there. These shocking figures are more than double Colombia's tally of 15 murders the previous year, which even then made it the world's most dangerous country for trade unionists. We believe ending this violence, which exists within a broader context of killings of social leaders, will not only save lives but improve conditions for millions of working people.

In addition to direct measures to respond to this crisis we continue to view the peace agreement signed with the FARC-EP as an important tool to respond to the structural issues behind the violence. We recognise some efforts from within the government to demonstrate support for the peace process but are extremely worried at actions and underfunding that have contributed to an undermining of its implementation. We call on the Colombian government to do everything within its capacity to increase compliance to its commitments in the Agreement.

The repeated attempts to change the scope and reach of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), alongside underfunding of the transitional justice structures more generally, have put into question the government's commitment to ensuring truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition for all victims of the armed conflict.

Cuts in the institutions responsible for implementation of rural reforms and the lack of a specific budget for peace in the National Development Plan puts into considerable jeopardy the chapters of the agreement dealing with some of the core causes of the conflict.

We are aware of work being done from the Office of the Presidential Counsel for Consolidation and Stability in terms of the social and economic reincorporation of FARC former combatants, but as of October 2019 there was still only between 16.7% and 30% benefiting from economic projects according to a report from the Colombian Congress. There is urgent need for this to be increased but we know that the peace agreement is a comprehensive agreement and so for the socioeconomic reincorporation to be successful rural reforms must also be addressed. The rights to political participation will also only be satisfied once the murders of former FARC combatants cease, and their legal guarantees only assured once the JEP can operate with full funding and full political support. We believe that the FARC have repeatedly displayed commitment to their obligations; the overwhelming majority of those that entered into the process remain and the FARC political party remain wholly committed to the process, something which was reaffirmed once again during celebrations to mark the third anniversary.

In terms of human rights we are all too sadly aware that since the agreement was signed, over 170 FARC members and over 500 social leaders have been assassinated – we believe the government has failed to properly implement security guarantees as envisaged in the agreement and has a responsibility to urgently address this crisis. The international community has watched the numbers go up on an almost daily basis with horror and we believe your government has a duty to urgently mobilise all political will and resources to stop these killings and should publicly speak out against threats facing those striving to defend peace and justice in Colombia. Lawyers such as Diego Martinez, who has represented FARC members and relatives of those killed has faced dangerous threats and must be guaranteed full safety to do their job.

The TUC works closely with our trade union colleagues in Colombia and we give our full support to the demands of the recent Paro Nacional. We believe it is essential that the government enters into a constructive negotiations with the organisers of the Paro, investigates fully any incident of human rights abuses from state forces during the protests, and takes immediate action to demonstrate its full support of the rights of all Colombians to protest.

The TUC has prioritised Colombia as one of its key international focuses and we will continue to pay close attention to the situation. We also hope to continue a collaborative and constructive communication with yourselves.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances O'Grady". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

**FRANCES O'GRADY**  
General Secretary