

COMMUNICATION BY THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA AND THE
GOVERNMENT ON THEIR VISIT TO EUROPE

COMMUNICATION OF THE ROUNDTABLE FOR DIALOGUE IN SPAIN (I)

23 February 2000

Today we completed our visit to Spain, where we have received an extremely warm welcome from the government and the Spanish people.

Our agenda for work during these three days has allowed us, first of all, to see the Spanish system of autonomous communities from up close with a visit to the Community of Valencia. Talks with the president of the community, Eduardo Zaplana, the two deputy presidents and associated councillors showed the value modern and democratic Spain attaches to a local, decentralised and autonomous society in the framework of the territorial unity of nation.

Autonomy has transferred full territorial powers to the communities in areas such as education, health, housing, tourism and regional channels. The vibrancy of Valencia shows the confidence of the people in their system and the possibility of achieving the highest standards of well-being.

In Benidorm, in addition to the heartfelt tribute by residents of the municipality to Colombia, we met with business figures in the local chamber of commerce who reiterated their confidence in our country and their desire to develop bilateral economic links.

The agenda continued in Madrid, where we had an informative session on the operation of the Spanish social security system, headed by the Director General of the Social Security Institute, Fernando Gómez Ferreiro and members of his staff. The Spanish system is an advanced social network, with funding and clear benefits in areas such as employment, pensions and healthcare. We were offered permanent consultancy, which will be taken into account by the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation.

We also met with the Secretary General of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, Jesús Gracia, who offered Spanish experience and resources to contribute to implementing the agreements arising from the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation between the government and FARC–EP.

We exchanged experiences and opinions with representatives of the General Workers' Union (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, UGT) and the Workers' Commissions. We were impressed by the constructive experience of negotiations between unions and the business community during this period in the history of Spain, marked by the strengthening of its economy and democracy. Union activity is currently exemplary in Spanish society.

We had lunch at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs during a work session presided over by Eduardo Gutierrez, Director General of Foreign Policy for Ibero-America, in the presence of the Spanish ambassador to Colombia, Yaco Pico, and the Colombian ambassador to Spain, Carlos Julio Ardila. In a frank and constructive dialogue, we discussed issues such as European cooperation in the peace process, the need to produce peace results during the negotiations, the urgency of promoting respect for life and for the freedom of Colombians, and the role of the armed forces in a peaceful society.

We met with the leadership of the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (*Confederación Espanola de Organizaciones Empresariales*, CEOE), one of the most important institutions in the Spanish private sector. Once again, Spanish businesses expressed their confidence in the Colombian economy and the peace process led by President Andrés Pastrana with FARC–EP.

CEO also reaffirmed its good institutional relations with union organisations and shared its experiences of bipartite or tripartite initiatives on labour relations with the various Spanish governments since the establishment of democracy. We are sure this example will be helpful to Colombia.

Today in the morning, we met with the president of the Congress of Deputies, Federico Trillo, who expressed his satisfaction with the major peace initiative to which our country is committed.

The political leaders of Spain have expressed their willingness to help Colombians achieve peace. Issues such as fighting drug trafficking, poverty and corruption were discussed with President Trillo, stressing our desire to reach peace via political negotiations.

The delegation expressed its condolences to the Spanish parliament for the assassination of the Basque member of parliament Fernando Buesa, which occurred yesterday. Each and every violent death hurts us, without any distinctions. We held a minute of silence in solidarity with the Spanish people and all Colombians that have lost their lives.

Finally, we explained that we are working together to achieve peaceful coexistence in Colombia, a Colombia for all with social justice.

Por el Gobierno Nacional:

Victor G. Ricardo,
Alto Comisionado para la Paz

Luis Norberto Guerra,
Vicepresidente Camara de Representantes.

Fabio Valencia Cossio,
Negociador

Camilo Gomez Alzate,
Negociador

Juan Gabriel Uribe,
Negociador.

Miguel Pinedo Vidal,
Comite Tematico.

Ciro Ramirez,
Vicepresidente Senado.

Luis Carlos Villegas,
Presidente de la Andi.

Por las FARC-EP:

Raul Reyes
Vocero de las FARC EP

Joaquin Gomez,
Negociador

Fabian Ramirez,
Negociador

Ivan Rios,
Coordinador Comite Tematico.

Simon Trinidad,
Comite Tematico.

Felipe Rincon,
Comite Tematico.

Olga Lucia Marin,
Comision Internacional.