



Address to World Summit 2014, Seoul, Korea, August 9-13, 2014

Richard Gamboa

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General Secretary, Colombian Assembly of Religions and Spiritualities

I met Rev. Moon and he changed my vision of the world. I proclaim that I had Rev. Sun Myung Moon as my teacher. Five years later, I come here to what I consider my sacred homeland, the Republic of Korea, not to give suggestions but to report successful projects in my country, Colombia.

The preamble of the National Constitution of Colombia recognizes the conviction of 95% of the population in the existence of a Supreme Being, proclaiming that, to establish a righteous political and social order, it is necessary to invoke God's protection. Also, our Religious Freedom Act says in Article II that the State, although it is not religious, it is not atheist or agnostic or indifferent to the religious sentiments of Colombians. Colombia, besides being a theistic state, recognizes that you cannot make public politics separate from religion.

We are a country which enjoys a wide diversity of religious belief systems and ancestral and emerging spiritualities; we are learning to live in fraternity, recognizing others' right to believe and pray differently. Colombia has one of the strictest anti-discrimination laws in the world, and although certain dark forces wanted to repeal it in order to impose medieval interests, the citizens have courageously joined to defend and enforce it. Anti-Semitism is one of the greatest crimes, according to the Constitution.

In my country, there are many interfaith groups working to defend religious freedom, such as the Confederation of Religious Freedom, Conscience and Worship [CONFEPREC] and some interfaith groups linked to the Mayor of Bogota. We created Tesquilla, a Territory of Peace. We have an interfaith working group supported by the Catholic Church. However, undoubtedly the work of the Colombian Assembly of Religions and Spiritualities has shown that religions can work together and unify their voices around values and common themes. This is a working forum at the national level. Furthermore, was given a voice to hundreds of religious and spiritual leaders who were never considered in ecumenical and interreligious dialogues. It is important to bring in indigenous spiritual leaders; nobody is rejected. We are so inclusive that the Colombian communist party is part of this council. There are wounds that must be healed.

This national interfaith council, which I represent, by the will of God and by the decision of its members, is so open and inclusive, that even the General Secretary of the Colombian Communist Party is a member, as we are very interested in promoting the dialogue between philosophical Communism and religions, especially with Christians, since there are historical wounds that must be healed in order to move towards a sustainable culture of peace.

The political and social impact we have generated is such that last week I received two letters, one sent by the Peace Delegation of Guerrillas of the FARC, and another sent by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of the Presidency of the Republic, where both sides expressed their willingness to end as soon as possible the armed conflict that we suffer and their desire to make peace a reality. We have unified our voices in a common cause, which is to support the peace process to end the armed conflict in Colombia.

Given the constant threat we have in my country that an extremist minority of non-believers are tearing out the heart of the Colombian people the ethical and moral consciousness which emanates from God. They want to establish an atheist state. We founded in December 2013 the CONFEDERATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM, formed by Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other monotheistic faith leaders. Its task is to defend God against the Colombian State, defend the traditional family model and spread at all levels of society universal ethical and moral values.

We celebrate interfaith marriages. I am Jewish and have been married to a Catholic woman for eight years. We show that there is more in common than what separates us. We promote interfaith liturgy; we brought together leaders from eight faiths; we work very hard. We have had a social impact. We show Colombia that it is possible for faith leaders to work together. We can have an interfaith parliament and go to the General Assembly and establish an interfaith council.

As you can see, we have achieved great interfaith exploits in Colombia, and it is our wish to see emulated these initiatives in all countries of the world. We hope that, by working in solidarity with the Universal Peace Federation and with each and every one of you, we can achieve this, because the hope for peace in the world is based on the love of the God of life, the God who listens to the prayers of people of all religions of the world, regardless of their affiliation ... because he is the God of all humankind.

Finally, I ask your permission to publicly read a letter the President of my country, Dr. Juan Manuel Santos, has sent special greetings to you to the dignitaries present here.

Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, JUAN MANUEL SANTOS,
TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON "PEACE, SECURITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT,"
CONVENED BY THE UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION

Seoul, August 2014

As President of the Republic of Colombia, and in the name of 47 million Colombians, I am pleased to greet the leaders and delegates from around the world who meet in Korea, under the sponsorship of the Universal Peace Federation, in order to discuss and debate how humanity in the various regions of the world can move towards a true and lasting peace, a peace that arises from the heart and bring a new era of understanding.

I've asked my countryman, Rabbi Richard Gamboa Ben-Elazar, General Secretary of the Colombian Assembly of Religions and Spiritualities, to transmit this short message to you so that you have in your deliberations the steps that Colombia is making towards peace and reconciliation.

In our country we have suffered for more than half a century an armed internal conflict generated by guerrillas fighting against the state; this affects the lives of the civilian population. It is a conflict that has bled us, caused millions of victims and hindered our path to progress.

My government has confronted and continues to confront militarily the guerrillas, but we also have begun -- because we believe that we have a real opportunity -- a process of conversation with the largest and oldest guerrilla group, which is the FARC, seeking an end to the conflict.

This dialogue is taking place in Havana, Cuba, in the presence of Norway, Venezuela and Chile as well as Cuba. Of the basic five points on the agenda, we have reached agreement on three and are making progress on the fourth, which refers to the rights of victims.

We Colombians hope to achieve success in this process. We have had the support of the international community, which encourages us to move forward. We know that the end of the conflict in Colombia is good news not only for our people but also for the whole region and the world, since this would end the only internal armed conflict prevailing in the Western Hemisphere.

If we achieve our goal, we will take up a new challenge, no less difficult, which is post- conflict management. But we will do so with the joy and the certainty of having left behind decades of death and suffering.

How good that there are initiatives and summits like the one you are convening today, where people think about peace and seek peace in the world! From Colombia, I reiterate my greetings and best wishes for the success of your meeting, for the benefit of all mankind.