Dr. JUAN MANUEL SANTOS CALDERÓN
President of Colombia

I, [NAME], after having accompanied from far the pilgrimage of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and of the GRACE Foundation, in Bogotá, realized from November 1st to 9th 2010, as one more version of the GRACE pilgrimages realized in conflict areas of the world, want to express you gratitude and make a petition.

I got to know the letter Sabine Lichtenfels, co-founder of the Peace Research Community Tamera (Portugal), of the Global Campus and director of the GRACE foundation, gave to you through the delegate of the vice-president, Dr. Tomás Concha, on November 3rd 2010, signed by the international pilgrims. I fully support the content of this letter.

I want to thank that one of the delegates of the vice-president of the republic has received, in the afternoon of November 3rd, a delegation of the pilgrims both from the international group and of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. Up to that moment, members of the Colombian police had visited accommodation places of the pilgrimage to try to convince the hosts that the pilgrims were members of the Colombian guerilla and the foreigners their supporters. Fortunately, after this fact had been reported to the vice-presidents representative, a change of attitude was perceptible, same as some acceptance of the request made by the Peace Community San José de Apartadó not to be accompanied on their marches by armed members of the police, given that they have chosen not to participate in any activities with presence of armed actors. This option forms part of one of their most firm principles, which is fully understandable when one looks at the history of the Peace Community, in which so many of its members have been exterminated in attacks of armed actors, mainly of the state. I support this option of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and would like to ask to your government a sacred respect for this principle of the community, which is essential part in their peace strategy.

Now that all pilgrims, including those who afterwards spent a time of Global Campus, meaning, of mutual learning and reflections, in the vereda Mulatos of San José de Apartadó, have travelled back to their countries of origin, I want to address you, mister President, to highlight the fact that, for the first time, there have been no attacks to the Peace Community in the time of the presence of the GRACE foundation, and so the research and reflections could be held in a certain calmness. I would like to think that this is a sign that your government wants to realize a change of attitude towards the Peace Community and I deeply hope that the petitions made by the community, asking for not being forced to cooperate with any armed actor and for being respected in their option for peace which does not come from a balance of weapons but from the progressive achievement of justice, will be heard.

You will understand, Mister President, that while the crimes which eliminated so many lives in the Peace Community and created so much suffering, have not been clarified and penalized, and while so much damage is not repaired, no stability can be guaranteed. Therefore, supported by the positive signs I see in your first days of government, I want to ask you urgently to realize a plan to overcome impunity in this region and that a population which has suffered during so many years can rejoice in their elementary rights.

I am sure many young people in the region, seeing a different perspective, would not feel attracted by the armed groups. Also for the international organizations it would be easier to cooperate in the creation and strengthening of a peace research centre, like the one growing in the vereda Mulatos, in the “Aldea de Paz Luis Eduardo Guerra”: the search for a sustainable model with new forms of ecology, technology, and new social structures based upon the principles of solidarity, mutual support, truth and transparency within the community. This would for sure help the country in a humane development and would make a turnaround to the processes we see today, of destruction of nature, of scavenging and waste of the natural resources, without thinking about the future nor the surviving of the planet.
I know the GRACE foundation and many other institutions are ready to continue cooperating for the creation of a model of sustainable life within the Peace Community San José de Apartadó and I want to insist, Mister President, that the fundamental premiss is to end the aggression exercised for so many years against the Peace Community. I hope the small windows of dialogue opened in the appointment with the vice-president are a symbol of a new era of dialogue and of not-aggression.

I thank you in advance, Mister President, for your attention to our petitions.