



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at the luncheon in honour of H.E. Juan Manuel Santos,  
President of the Republic of Colombia,  
on 9 May 2018 in Schloss Bellevue**

Let me welcome you once again in Schloss Bellevue. I am very honored and happy to be able to reciprocate the hospitality you have shown to me in Colombia when I visited your country on my very last trip as Foreign Minister last year.

If our archives are well-kept, you last travelled to Berlin in 2011 shortly after being elected President. Now your second term as President comes to a close. It is only appropriate to put in perspective what you have achieved over the course of these eight years, both for Colombia and for the broader world.

After your first election you quickly improved relations with neighboring countries Ecuador and Venezuela. There were marked improvements in the overall security situation. But hardly anybody thought a peace agreement with the major guerilla groups even a remote possibility.

But you wasted no time. Peace talks between your government and the FARC started in Oslo in 2012, with Cuba and Norway as guarantor countries and the facilitation of Venezuela and Chile. I will not try to recount the ups and downs of a complex negotiation. But time and again it was your personal determination that prevented the process from derailing. In September 2016 the peace agreement with FARC was signed. You lost a referendum at home but again managed to keep the substance of the peace process intact and it could enter into force in November 2016. The Nobel Peace Prize in December 2016 was the appropriate international recognition of your passionate fight for peace after decades of violence, after more than 300.000 victims and millions of displaced persons.

I personally have the highest respect for what you endeavored to do and for what you have achieved. That there is opposition and controversy in no way diminishes your record – rather to the contrary.

You have shown that peace is possible, against high odds and despite many structural obstacles. You have set an example that resonates far beyond Colombia: that the future is open, that the determination and perseverance of a courageous individual can bend history to a better, more peaceful future. We all owe you our gratitude for the encouragement you gave us through your example.

And, dear friend: Encouragement on the path to peace is what we truly need these days. Yesterday's decision by the American president to withdraw unilaterally from the Iran agreement has not made long-term peace in the Middle East more likely. The spirit of the agreement –to break through the spiral of escalation by way of negotiation and binding agreement is now being replaced by more confrontation, and more unpredictability in this tension-ridden region. Diplomacy – in my view – has suffered yet another setback. And that is bitter news in times when we need diplomacy more than ever.

Mister President, my country has tried to help Columbia wherever possible during its peace process, and Tom Koenigs here at the table is the living proof of that. We will continue to support Colombia on its challenging path toward implementing all the provisions of the complex peace agreement.

Very soon you will hand over this arduous task to your democratically elected successor. But today, Mr President, we want to raise our glass in appreciation and deep respect for the way you have changed the trajectory of your country. Let us drink to a peaceful future for all Colombians and the friendship between Germany and Colombia!