

GSUM Radar

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Colombia

Home stretch in Havana



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Old challenges, new tensions



BRICS Policy Center Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS



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Two important themes of the Colombian peace process were at the center of the political debate in the last weeks: (I) The endorsement by the Constitutional Court to conduct a plebiscite that will be the final popular word on the matter of the final peace deals, which officially unleashed the "Yes" and "No" campaigns; and (II) the release, in Havana, of the results of the work done by the Gender Sub-Commission in the last months. Attention was also brought to the preparation of the **U.N's verification mission**, and the confirmation that **Pope Francis will visit the country** in the next year, on a date that is yet to be defined.

On July 18, two days away from the opening of the legislative year, the Constitutional Court decided by unanimity that the law project approved by the government to institute the **plebiscite approving the final deals** is allowed by the Colombian Constitution. Besides the points already foreseen by the law on the matter of the political campaign for the plebiscite, the Court determined that in this campaign, **promotion of political parties, political movements or running for elective offices will all be prohibited**. In an official speech, President Juan Manuel Santos celebrated the decision and declared that he considers this to be **"the most important vote that each one of us will have to take in our lives"**. With the decision, the vote started to take significant space in the media and in the political discussions about the peace process. Although there's not an exact date yet for the **convocation of the plebiscite**, on August 3, President Santos affirmed that it may happen before the final signature of the deals, which will only take place after the tenth FARC conference.

After manifesting the **will to participate** in the home stretch of the dialogs with the FARC if all the parts reopened the discussion on the points about political participation and justice, former president Álvaro Uribe announced, on August 3, his option to integrate the "no" campaign - up until this moment, it was still on hold if he would defend the "no" or the abstaining. The also former president, Andrés Pastrana, sided with the opposition, calling the peace process a **"coup d'état"** and recommending the members of the Conservative Party to unite with the "no" campaign. The "yes" campaign, on the other hand, will be led by other former president, **Cesar Gaviria**, that despite not leading the individual initiatives of the parties, will be serving as the general coordinator and traveling within the country to gather votes - to approve the deals, the government will need 4.5 million votes (13% of the Colombian electorate).

Although a research conducted by the "Corporación Reconciliación Colombia" and by the "National Center of Consultation" indicates that **82% of the population considers themselves reconciled** with the rest of the Colombian society towards the construction of peace with the FARC, a research of vote intent for the plebiscite, ordered by the **El Tiempo** newspaper and by the W Radio à Datexco, shows the "no" to be ahead, with 35.9% versus 27% of the "yes". This last research also shows, however, that there is a high number of undecided voters (29.1% of the interviewees).

On July 24, through the **Joint Statement #82**, the delegations stressed the revision of the deals by the Gender Sub-Commission, arguing that **"the inclusion of gender focusing in a peace process like this has no priors in the world and it intends primarily to create the conditions for women and people with diverse sexual identity to have access to equal conditions to the benefit of living in a country without armed conflict"**. The measures recommended by the Sub-Comission and adopted by the delegations were split in eight main areas: (I) Access to property in the field; (II) guarantees of economic, social and cultural rights; (III) promoting the participation of women and the representativeness of their presence in decision making; (IV) prevention and protection measures; (V) access to the truth and to justice, and measures against the impunity of violence towards women and LGBTI individuals; (VI) acknowledgment, dissemination and end of the stigmatization of the political work of women; (VII) strengthening of activities and organizations of women and LGBTI movements; and (VIII) creation of information systems that disaggregate gender data.

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❖ Fundación Ideas para la Paz

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❖ Fundación Paz y Reconciliación

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❖ Las 2 Orillas

Los acuerdos de paz para 'dummies'. (02/08/16): <http://goo.gl/0oAeM4>

❖ La Silla Vacía

Democracia: ¿Ocaso o Transformación?, por Humberto de La Calle.
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Declarations

❖ **FARC-EP**

FARC-EP, en marcha hacia la igualdad de género y la plena reivindicación de los derechos de la mujer. (24/07/16): <http://goo.gl/5MqK1q>

❖ **Colombian Presidency**

Alocución del Presidente Juan Manuel Santos tras aprobación del plebiscito para refrendar acuerdos de paz. (18/07/16): <http://goo.gl/oUBH9u>

❖ **Dialogue Table**

Joint Statement #82. (24/07/16): <https://goo.gl/nh2D6V>

❖ **UN Women**

Joint Statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Zainab Hawa Bangura on the historic commitment by the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP at the Havana Peace Talks Table. (26/07/16): <http://goo.gl/OTkdz8>

Colombia & Venezuela

Back to Dialogue

On July 18, Colombian chancellor, María Ángela Holguín, declared that, by a common agreement between both countries, there will be no more temporary openings in the border between Colombia and Venezuela, assuring that both are working to speed up the permanent reopening. The Governor of Táchira, José Vielma Mora, recently affirmed that "the opening is imminent".

Over 100 people from Venezuela arrive daily at the Colombian city of Barranquilla. According to the municipal attorney, "since the beginning of July, there is an average of 25 Venezuelan families presenting themselves daily at the attorney's office to ask for help". On August 4, Holguín will recommence the discussion on the border in a meeting at Caracas, with the Venezuelan chancellor Delcy Rodríguez.

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Venezuela

Old challenges, new tensions

The Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) received credit amounting to 482 million dollars from the Latin-American Reserve Fund of the Andean Community (CAN). The board of directors of the Fund affirmed that "such concession seeks only to contribute to the regional economic stability". This loan can be understood, in light of the recent news of contraction of the GDP (gross domestic product) of the countries in the region, especially Venezuela. According to the chief of the IMF's Western Hemisphere Department, "Latin America's scenario is highly determined by economies such as Venezuela, with an expectation of a 10% contraction of the GDP".

This economic scenario of instability was complemented by the continuous shortage of products. The lack of provisions already reached Venezuela's public health system and caused an increase of child malnourishment cases. In this context, on July 22, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expressed its concern with the scenario of food and medicine shortage and demanded the Venezuelan government to "adopt urgent measures of public policies focusing on the Human Rights that considers the special necessities of the population, especially groups and collectives in a situation of vulnerability".

The need for products and goods reached a point in which the government of Venezuela decided to establish, through a decree issued on the 22 of July, 2016 "a mandatory, transitory and strategic work regime for all working entities in the country, public, private, socially owned and mixed, that contribute to the productive impulse of the agriculture and food sector and establishing mechanisms of temporal insertion of workers". This decision was received with criticism, Amnesty International through a note, affirmed that the new decree "establishes that any employed individual in Venezuela can

be forced to work in agricultural tasks as a way to fight against the food crisis in the country, which is the same as forced labor".

The human rights situation in the country is also delicate. According to a declaration from **Human Rights Watch** on July 27, "since May 2016, more than 20 persons were arrested by security forces in the country under the accusation of planning, aiding or participating in violent actions against the government". Regarding the arrests, the most shocking are the testimonies of the arrested individuals, affirming to the Venezuelan court, that they suffered physical abuses, such as torture with electric shocks and beatings.

The **Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia (OVV)** affirmed that Venezuela reports the lowest score in terms of security worldwide. **The Global Law and Order Report** is an annual worldwide assessment from Gallup organization that aims to classify 133 countries in terms of citizens trust in the local politics, perception of security and incidence of robberies. On this year's report, Venezuela had its lowest score ever, and also the worst evaluation of the last decade.

Last week was also marked by the issue of which country would preside the Common Market of the South (Mercosur). On July 29, **the Uruguayan government announced the end of its *Pro Tempore* presidency of the organization**. However, on the note given to the press there was no information on which country would replace Uruguay. Venezuela, then, **was quick to take the responsibility of presiding the organization**. Through a letter sent to the countries of the organization, the Venezuelan Foreign Office informed all the member states that their country would take over the Mercosur's presidency for the next six months, since they follow an alphabetic order. However, the announcement was not well received by the other State-members. In a letter, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry affirmed that **"the Brazilian government understands that the Presidential spot of the Mercosur is empty, once that there was no consensual agreement in the decision of whom would gain the presidency of the next semester"**. The Brazilian position was backed by the governments of Argentina and Paraguay, which in turn caused Venezuela to react, affirming the existence **"of a triple alliance" that would aim to "make difficult what was rightfully theirs"**.

The domestic situation of Venezuela also finds itself in a critical moment. On August 2, **the Venezuela opposition handed to the National Electoral Council a total of 1.85 million signatures** asking for a recall referendum against President Nicolás Maduro. Now, the opposition wishes to initiate **the second step** of this process, which consists in gathering a number of signatures superior to 20% of the number of voters in the country,

which results in approximately 4 million signatures asking for a referendum that recalls the current president's mandate.

In the midst of this political situation, on July 21, the Secretary-General of the South-American Nations (UNASUR), **Ernesto Samper**, announced that both the opposition and the Venezuelan government accepted the presence of the Vatican for an eventual dialog between them. **The Vatican is the fourth interlocutor** of a group formed by Martín Torrijos (former president of Panama), Jose Zapatero (former president of Spain) and Leonel Fernandez (former president of the Dominican Republic).

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❖ **Human Rights Watch**

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❖ **Observatório Venezuelano de Violência**

Venezuela tiene la peor puntuación del mundo en seguridad. (28/07/16): <http://goo.gl/9p9O9U>

❖ **Amnesty International**

Venezuela: Nuevo régimen equivale a trabajo forzado. (28/07/16): <https://goo.gl/XeA9xD>

Declarations

❖ **Organization of American States (OAS)**

CIDH llama al Estado venezolano a adoptar medidas integrales frente al desabastecimiento en Venezuela. (22/07/16): <http://goo.gl/ZazX4a>

❖ **Supreme Court of Justice**

Gaceta numero 40950. (22/07/16): <http://goo.gl/4PTX2C>

❖ **Ministry of Foreign Affairs Uruguay**

Finalización de la Presidencia Pro Tempore uruguaya del MERCOSUR. (29/07/16): <http://goo.gl/ZDOd0P>

About the Radar

The GSUM Radar is a bi-weekly platform monitoring ongoing conflicts in Latin America.



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