

GSUM Radar

nº 17 | From August 5 to 18, 2016



Colombia

From Havana to Bogota



Colombia & Venezuela

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Old challenges, new tensions



BRICS Policy Center Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS



GSUM

Global South Unit for Mediation

Colombia From Havana to Bogota

In the last weeks, the Colombian peace process made further advancements in Havana and remained a topic of intense debate in Bogota. The movement for popular approval and implementation of the deals gained impulse in Colombia, in a way that the High Commissioner for Peace, Sergio Jaramillo, recently declared that "[the peace process has arrived at Colombia](#)". Virginia Bouvier (USIP) similarly affirmed that "[it can be seen how the desk work in Havana will soon assume a secondary role to the domestic discussions in Colombia](#)". In the Cuban capital, the delegations agreed to further detail the commitments to the maintenance of the truce; advanced in the elaboration of the statute for political opposition; and released the criteria for choosing members of special justice for peace. In Colombia, besides the polarized proceeding of the debate around the plebiscite, there were a series of technical visits to the guerilla's future zones of concentration.

On August 5, the delegations released, through the [Joint Statement #83, protocols and annexes](#) to the deal about the end of the conflict announced on June 23 ([See Radar n.14](#)). The documents describe in detail how the mission for monitoring and verifying the ceasefire will happen, and determine 36 commitments to guarantee the implementation of deals and the respect to the rights and freedoms of the civil population involved. Although the preparations for the UN's verifying mission are in an advanced stage, its work will only begin [30 days after the signature of the final deals](#).

A few days later, on August 9, the table [announced](#) the nomination of [two academics](#), Sergio de Zubiría and Pablo Julio Cruz, to the Commission in charge of elaborating the statute of the political opposition. Zubiría is a historian and at the University of Los Andes and a previous member of [the Historic Commission on the Conflict and its Victims](#) called by the table in August 2014, and Cruz is a specialist in constitutional law and former Dean of Law in the Autonomous University of Colombia. The creation of this commission was a commitment made by the parts in the occasion of the closure of the deal about political participation, made in November 2013. According to the "[El Tiempo](#)" journal, there are already drafts of the statutory law, that shall be examined by the Congress in a "fast track" regime after an eventual approval of the deals by popular vote.

In the end, the negotiators were also successful in stipulating the [selection criteria](#) for the magistrates that will compose the Tribunal of Peace, which was one of the doubts on the deal about justice and the victims. On August 12, then, an invitation for [Pope Francis](#)

and the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, to integrate the committee to select magistrates, became public. In case they accept it, they will be accompanied on this task by the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court, by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and by the Permanent Commission of the University System of the State. Besides the agents of selection, the negotiations table also defined the pre-requisites to be filled by potential judges.

While in Havana the walk towards the final deals continues, Colombia is divided between the preparations for the implementation and the heated choice between the "yes" and the "no" on the final deals. Between August 9 and 14, technical visits to the future concentration zones of the FARC provided an up close configuration of these territories for the UN's mission of verification and monitoring. The visits had the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and were integrated by members of the government; the FARC; the Police; the Armed Forces; international observers of the UN mission; delegates of the guaranteeing countries; and local mayors and governors.

The polarization that the Colombian society has been going through, on the other hand, is emulated by the positions taken by former presidents engaged in the campaign: while Cesar Gaviria and Belisario Betancur positioned themselves in favor of President Juan Manuel Santos and the peace process, Álvaro Uribe and Andrés Pastrana continued to defend the decline of the deals by the population. The recently released research on vote intention presented inconsistent results. The "Colombia Opina", released by the "Semana", shows the "no" ahead with 50% of the vote intentions, versus 39% of the "yes", with 11% of indecision. A research from "Datexco" ordered by "El Tiempo", on the other hand, points a recovery from the "yes" in relation with previous researches, that would now accumulate 33.7% of the votes, while the "no" would have 32.4% of the vote intentions. Specialists attribute the rejection of the deals by the population to it being chained to the image of President Santos, whose administration has a 76% disapproval rate. Juanita León, da SillaVacía, believes that Santos is the "ballast" of the "yes" campaign, arguing at the same time, that "the leadership style that Santos has can be particularly counterproductive in a campaign for a plebiscite".

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❖ La Silla Vacía

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❖ Human Rights Watch

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❖ **Presidencia de Colombia**

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Colombia & Venezuela

Gradual reopening and dialog

The last two weeks were outstanding for the relations between Venezuela and Colombia. At the ending of the Colombia-Venezuela Bi-national Meeting, on August 11, **presidents Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia and Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela, announced the gradual reopening of the land border between both countries** starting on August 13. In the beginning, the opening will happen in five points of pedestrian crossing and the movement will be allowed between 6am and 9pm. This event marks the reopening of the border after its closure on August 19, 2015, due to paramilitary threats, as claimed by the Venezuelan president.

In his speech during the Meeting, Santos affirmed that "in a gradual way, the opening will be initiated with the liberation of the border for people. For that, a document of border facilitation will be expedited, this document will be expedited so that the inhabitants of the border can easily move around, but there is also control of who goes in and out".

According to the organization "Migración Colombia", **in the first hours of the opening of the border only, over 28.000 people crossed the space that divides both countries.** This movement is largely due to the purchase of products that are hard to get, or do not exist, in Venezuela, one of the consequences of the current situation of shortage of goods.

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❖ Presidency of Colombia

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❖ Migración Colombia

Más de 28 mil personas se movieron entre Colombia y Venezuela en las primeras horas de reapertura de la frontera, informó Migración Colombia. (13/08/2016): <http://goo.gl/RzMyvy>

Venezuela

Old challenges, new tensions

A theme that gained relevance over the last weeks is the impasse regarding the presidency of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). After Uruguay stepped down from the office of *pro tempore* president of the organization on July 29, Venezuela steadily took responsibility in presiding the organ. However, the governments of Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina were against such positioning. On August 13, in a note, Itamaraty affirmed that Venezuela failed in "fulfilling the commitments made when it signed the Protocol of Adhesion in 2006", and in this way, would be incapable of presiding the MERCOSUR. In an interview, acting chancellor, José Serra, said that "the Venezuelan government entered the MERCOSUR through a coup". On top of this delicate situation, was added a declaration of support to Brazil by one of the leaders of the Venezuelan opposition, Marina Machado, and the report of an attempt of the acting Brazilian President of buying Uruguayan support on the issue of the MERCOSUR.

On other matters on Venezuela's foreign affairs, on August 16 the Venezuelan government filled a request of annulment for a decision made by the World Bank. In April, the institution determined that Venezuela had to pay 98 million dollars to the Vestey Group enterprise. This payment is due to the nationalization which occurred in 2005, of some of the company's farms, located in Venezuela. The country has also tried to show itself active in the international forums. On August 8, Venezuela was confirmed as the host of the 17a Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement also tried to organize a meeting between the OPEC members to discuss ways to stabilize the price of petroleum.

Another issue of international scope was **the conviction of 10 people for trafficking approximately two kilos of cocaine to Paris**. The substance would be transported into a commercial flight of Air France flight airlines. All of them received a sentence of over 22 years of reclusion.

Who also had their sentence confirmed this week was Leopoldo Lopez, leader of the opposition in Venezuela. Under arrest for over 30 months in a military prison, Lopez had his appeal before the Venezuelan Court denied. This way, his sentence of almost **14 years in a closed regime** for setting off violence during the last protests against the current government remains valid. Several political actors negatively received such decision. **The USA and the UN**, for example, requested the immediate release of Leopoldo. The **International Amnesty** concluded that ratifying the sentence against Lopez is a "new stain in the tragic history of human rights in the country".

On August 11 it was also released a document where 15 country members of the Organization of the American States (OAS), among them Brazil, the USA and Mexico, **asking for Venezuela to speed up the conduction of the recall referendum of the mandate of current president, Nicolás Maduro**. The group of 15 countries asked the Venezuelan authorities to maintain "the exercise the constitutional rights of the Venezuelan people and that the remaining steps for the conduction of the presidential recall referendum proceed without delay in a clear and concrete way, and, that way, contributes to a quick and effective resolution of the current political, economic and social difficulties of the country".

The **International Crisis Group (ICC)** organization released, on August 5, a report about the current civil and military relations in Venezuela. The text was produced in light of the appointment of one more military for the Maduro government. This time, **Néstor Torres, General of the Bolivarian Guard**, was nominated as Minister of Interior. In a general way, the report depicts the current political scenario of the **Venezuelan armed forces** inserted in a context of a crescent strength gain and strong presence in the public spheres of the state's control.

The last two weeks were also marked by **news of Venezuelan immigrants**. Due to the currently conflicted context of Venezuela, citizens are trying to leave the country heading to the USA. Sociologist Tomás Páez affirmed that the two million citizens that left since the beginning of the "chavismo" is what is called immigration of despair. Together with this situation, the number of asylum seekers at the USA also increased, currently the number of solicitants is over 10,221, an increase of 168% when compared to the 3,810 requests last year.

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About the Radar

The GSUM Radar is a platform for biweekly monitoring of the present conflicts in Latin America.

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