

DOING SCIENCE WITH COLOMBIA – OPENING REMARKS **NESTOR OSORIO, COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

7 December 2017

Acknowledgments

- Let me start by thanking the Museum of Natural History for hosting us here today. To its Director Sir Michael Dixon and his team working on this event, Ian Barnes and Blanca Huertas, our marvellous Colombian scientist.
- We're equally grateful with Peter Cozens and Patrick Shipp from the UK's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) our partner for this event, but furthermore, our partner to promote and increase bilateral scientific research and innovation between our countries.
- We also had strong support and commitment from Research Councils UK and Universities UK International.
- I would also like to recognize the presence of Cesar Ocampo, the Director of the Colombian Agency for Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS), the Colombian student community in the UK and all the speakers and panel chairs participating in this event.
- Thank you all for coming today and for your interest in doing science with Colombia.

Why science, technology and innovation matters

- In 2013, during my tenure as President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) I had the privilege to coordinate the production of a report on science, technology and innovation (STI) as key drivers to promote sustainable development.

- At the time, the focus was on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Today with the 2030 Agenda, the premise of science, technology and innovation (STI) as critical enablers for moving forward the Sustainable Development Goals is as relevant as ever before.
- In the report, we defined **science** as the creation of new knowledge; **technology** as the application of knowledge and **innovation** as the application of technology.
- The report concluded that:

STI can significantly impact each of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

Specifically, STI drives the dynamic transformation of economies, through productivity growth, which influences economic growth. STI also affects economic growth through the knowledge spill-overs it generates between countries, firms, and industries.

In turn, higher incomes and employment reduce poverty and help people meet their basic needs, including food security, health and education. Over time economic growth fuelled by innovations in science and technology can increase social cohesion, stability, and democratic governance. Advances in education, science, technology, and economic growth in emerging economies can improve the prospects for peace and security.

The Colombia – UK Partnership for peace and prosperity

- Bringing this context to the Colombia – UK bilateral relations, one would have to start by reiterating that our partnership is based upon common values like democracy, human rights and a free market economy. We also share the belief, as the ECOSOC report states, that education, science and technology can play and should play a key role in building more prosperous and equitable societies.

- That is why education, science and technology is one of the priority areas of our Roadmap 2020, a common agenda set a year ago during President Santos' State Visit, that will guide our bilateral cooperation in the coming years.
- The Roadmap identifies 7 priority areas of work:
 1. Support to the construction of peace in Colombia
 2. Fight against organized crime
 3. Justice and rule of law
 4. Good governance and anti-corruption
 5. Increasing bilateral trade and investment
 6. Sustainable development
 - 7. Education, science and technology**

Bilateral Cooperation on Education, Science and Technology

- In all these areas we have achieved significant progress during this year. In terms of education, science and technology we have focused our efforts in two main areas: academic mobility and joint scientific research.

Academic mobility

- The UK is today the second largest destination for Colombian Postgraduate students after the US.
- Currently there are more than 1,150 Colombian students in universities across the UK. Of them 40% have a scholarship from either the UK Government Chevening Programme; Colciencias scholarship by which 183 students are advancing their PhD studies and Colfuturo a Colombian public-private institution.
- The Government of President Santos has set an ambitious goal to quadruple the rate of Colombian PhDs per million people by 2025. In that objective, UK universities are playing and will continue to play a key role not only in hosting more Colombian students but also partnering with Colombian universities to provide improved doctoral programmes for local students.

Joint Scientific Research

- The end of armed conflict and the construction of peace in Colombia is opening new opportunities in a broad range of areas, including scientific research.
- The Government has insisted that peace in Colombia needs to be a “Territorial Peace”, which means that it must happen at the local level, in the territories. We need to take scientific research there, to have a direct impact in the social and economic development of those communities.
- Colombia and the UK can substantially increase and strengthen their research links towards this end.
- Over the past year we have worked in coordination with Universities UK International, to strengthen and expand the dialogue between the Colombian and British academic communities.
- We are encouraged by the interest shown by several UK universities and research centres to work in Colombia and we’re ready to support further contact and dialogue that brings more joint scientific research projects in a wide range of areas.
- In this purpose, the support provided by the UK Government through the Newton Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund will continue to be of great importance.
- Probably one of the best current examples of this cooperation is the Colombia–Bio programme where Colombian and British scientists are partnering to catalogue Colombia’s biodiversity in areas previously unexplored due to the armed conflict. The first round of expeditions in the Boyacá department are already underway, with very promising results.
- Based on this knowledge we expect to build solid bases for the development of a sustainable Biotech industry in Colombia.

CONCLUSION

- As you see, education, science and technology is at the centre of our vision for a peaceful, prosperous and more equitable Colombia, and the UK will continue to be a fundamental partner.
- Thank you all for being here with us today. I am confident we will have a very productive exchange of experiences and ideas to increase our bilateral collaboration not only at the Government level but particularly at the academic community and private sector level.
- Lets keep working together to do more science with Colombia.