

*Speech to His Majesty Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua King of the Kingdom of Thailand by H.E Ana Maria Prieto Abad, on the occasion of the presentation of Letters of Credentials*

I have the honour to present to Your Majesty the Letter of Credence by which Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia has appointed me as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Colombia to the Kingdom of Thailand.

It is my privilege to convey the highest esteem and best wishes for His Majesty good health and wellbeing from the President and the people of Colombia, and the hopes for the continued welfare and prosperity of the people of Thailand.

2019 marks four decades of diplomatic relations and an enduring friendship between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Republic of Colombia. The friendship and the generosity of the Government of Thailand as well as that of the Thai society, have been unconditional since the reopening of the Colombian Diplomatic representation in Bangkok in 2013.

Though in opposite corners of the world, Thailand and Colombia share many traits.

We share a commitment to ideals and values, such as democracy, respect for the rule of law and human rights and humanitarianism.

We are, both, fervent believers of multilateralism and as such we share views on the aforementioned issues and others like the fight against terrorism, drugs and crime, disarmament and the efforts to combat climate change.

This includes an ongoing anti-corruption effort, which is a top priority for the Government of Thailand. In the same direction, and in the framework of the United Nations, the Government of Colombia has promoted and secured a high level meeting on this issue. Later in the year, in October, a meeting will take place in Colombia, with participants of all UN member states and other stakeholders, in order to fast track the implementation of United Nations Convention against Corruption but most importantly to discuss the adoption of an international mechanism, as we consider that we have to go further as corruption continues to plague society on all continents. We are sure we can count with Thailand as our partners in this endeavor.

Well known for the friendliness of its people, Thailand is truly the land of smiles and friendliness. And as for Colombians, we share this welcoming spirit, evidenced by the rapidly increasing numbers of foreign tourists. We are people of boundless enthusiasm and full of joy and optimism.

Indeed, despite of this geographical distance, Thai society has embraced Colombian culture through its music, dance and gastronomy. Thais are learning Spanish with Colombian teachers and, in the way, are becoming familiar with our literature and our cinema. Both countries value and preserve their culture to foster a sense of people's belonging and, most importantly, as a bridge between connecting our two nations.

An additional result of this cultural proximity is the significant increase in visitors. In effect, between 2013 and 2018 approximately 54,000 Colombians traveled to Thailand and, likewise, 1700 Thais visited Colombia.

Last but not least, we share Thailand significantly and well-known dedication to peace and non-violence, which makes us partners on this up most important goal.

On the subject of peace, the Government of President Duque is committed with building an preserving peace in Colombia with truth, justice, reparation for the victims and assurance of no repetition, all of this in the framework of what has been called Peace with Legality, a roadmap for the consolidation of a lasting peace for Colombia.

It must be self-evident for Thai people that in building and preserving peace, a strict adherence to rules, orders, regulations and laws in general, is a precondition.

Our relationship has grown from strength to strength and today encompasses a wide range of areas.

The benefits for Thailand are evident in Colombia's growing presence in the country, in the increase of interactions at the level of government officials, commerce, agreements signed and negotiated, cultural activities, cooperation and assistance to our nationals living and going thru Thailand.

A dedication to an open economy on both parts should reinforce our partnership and constitute a solid foundation for our close bond and further cooperation. Steady growth of trade and investment should underscore the confidence and interest that Colombia has in Thailand in order to achieve mutually beneficial gains to our economies and to our peoples

During recent years, Thailand has been positioned as the third most active trading partner of Colombia in Southeast Asia. At a regional level, the strong commercial presence of the Pacific Alliance in the region evidences the potential areas of a solid cooperation, reaffirmed by the commitment to forge stronger relations between the two regions.

Furthermore, the support of Thailand for the inclusion of Colombia to APEC, will be highly beneficial for the presence of the Pacific Alliance as a key partner, in line with our shared priorities such as digital society and sustainable growth.

Your Majesty, it is truly a great honour and privilege for me to serve as Colombian Ambassador to this great nation, the Kingdom of Thailand.

At the United Nations, in my former capacity as a DPR of our Mission in Geneva, I had the opportunity to work with Thai diplomats, with whom we regularly found common ground regarding several issues. It was a very rewarding experience to work with such skilled and highly professional colleagues and I take this as a guarantee of success of the work that lies ahead of me.

As an Ambassador of Colombia to Thailand, Your Majesty, I will invest all my energy and hard work to further develop the closer relations and cooperation already existing between our two great nations for a better future for our peoples.