



Foreword by
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Lord Hurd of Westwell is a former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

President Juan Manuel Santos is a very welcome and important guest to the United Kingdom. The relationship between Colombia and the United Kingdom is based on a long tradition of partnership and co-operation. FIRST is delighted to publish this official report to mark the Visit of President Santos and we are very grateful to Ambassador HE José Mauricio Rodríguez Múnera and his Embassy staff for all their help and encouragement.

The bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and Colombia is referred to as one of ‘Shared responsibility’. Both countries have coalition governments and therefore enjoy an instinctive empathy – working together across a range of political and policy issues including promoting global economic prosperity.

President Santos has identified five ‘locomotives’ to stimulate economic growth – the extractive industries, agriculture, infrastructure, housing and innovation – introducing legislation to promote pro-market economic policies. His administration continues to pursue free trade agreements with Asian and South American partners and Colombia offers important investment opportunities for the international investor.

The United Kingdom is the largest foreign investor in Colombia after the United States with investments in excess of US\$ 18 billion. UK companies are especially active in the oil and gas, mining, pharmaceutical and insurance sectors and there are a multitude of other opportunities.

Colombia, under the leadership of President Santos, has made a strong commitment to environmental protection and has taken a lead on climate change. The Colombian Government is drawing up

a low carbon development plan, businesses are engaging in a low carbon economy and the press and wider public are supportive of this stance. This approach is very much in tune with the UK Government’s vision of a low carbon economy and this complementarity provides opportunities for both countries – the UK has the sixth largest low carbon sector in the world – now worth over £112 billion and employing over 900,000 people. Colombian companies with environmental expertise, which are looking to succeed in the EU market, also have similar competitive advantages. Sustainable development will be an important topic for discussion during this Visit of President Santos to London.

A component of the ‘Shared Responsibility’ relationship between our two countries is the joint effort to tackle some of the challenges and impediments to inward investment including the social and economic consequences of the drug trade. Earlier this month Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne announced funding to support security projects across Latin America. This will include the provision of training and support in tackling the drugs trade, dismantling crime networks and the seizure of contraband.

The Visit of President Santos will provide many opportunities for private discussions as well as further opportunities to analyse Colombia’s important regional role and to weigh carefully the opportunities to develop the bilateral relationship. We at FIRST are delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to the success of the Visit and the further development of the commercial, cultural, social and political relationship between the two countries. **E**