

# A strategic partnership

By H.E. NÉSTOR OSORIO

AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



H.E. NÉSTOR OSORIO holds Doctorates in Law from Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá and Administrative Law from Université de Droit d'Économie et des Sciences Sociales in Paris. Over the course of his career he has been Permanent Delegate of Colombia to the International Coffee Organisation (ICO) (1978-94), Permanent Representative to the WTO in Geneva (1994-99), Executive Director of the ICO (2002-10) and Ambassador to the UN in New York, where he represented Colombia for two years in the Security Council. He was appointed Ambassador to the UK in February 2014.

The year 2016 has been yet another significant one in Colombia's recent history, during which the Government, led by President Juan Manuel Santos, has made positive and unprecedented strides towards peace, prosperity and equality for all Colombians. Precisely in recognition of his "resolute efforts" to bring peace to Colombia, President Santos was awarded the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize. It is in this context that he will pay a State Visit to the United Kingdom at the invitation of Her Majesty The Queen.

This visit, the first by a Colombian President, is a historic opportunity to advance in the consolidation of the longstanding strategic partnership that exists between the United Kingdom and Colombia. From cooperation on security, to the protection of the environment and the support for education exchange opportunities, the broad and diverse bilateral cooperation agenda has resulted in tangible benefits for the citizens of both nations.

In recognition of the substantial achievements of our strong and productive bilateral relationship, as well as the peace and post-conflict agenda, Colombia and the United Kingdom are focused on implementing a roadmap, based on our common goals and visions for the future of both nations. Together we will build on the progress made over the last few years in three main areas: security, prosperity and sustainable development.

After half a century of armed conflict, Colombia is moving closer to achieving peace and continues to build a more secure, stable and prosperous environment. The United Kingdom has been a firm partner in our efforts to secure this peace and has expressed its ongoing support for the implementation of the Government of Colombia's post-conflict plans in a variety of policy areas, including security, law enforcement, justice, de-mining, health and infrastructure, amongst others.

Colombia and the United Kingdom have been active partners on security cooperation for decades. The end of armed conflict in Colombia will allow us to focus our joint efforts even more effectively towards tackling transnational organised crime and strengthen the rule of law. To that purpose, we will work to increase collaboration on criminal investigation capabilities and initiatives to reinforce

Colombia's criminal policy. Both countries will continue to exercise their regional and international leadership for security and stability.

Economic prosperity and social development are fundamental pillars of both the United Kingdom and Colombia. We have long worked together on these matters and will continue to identify opportunities to further boost bilateral trade, and to encourage investment, as well as increasing and promoting tourism between both countries. Similarly, our two countries are committed to combating corruption and promoting good governance equally at home and abroad.

One of the main challenges for the deepening of our bilateral economic integration is the need to strengthen the development of human capital in Colombia by securing access to the technical and professional skills demanded by the global economy. Thus, Colombia and the United Kingdom will strengthen their cooperation to broaden educational exchange, promote innovation and support scientific research and production. With the support of both Governments, Colombian students and researchers will continue to contribute to the important and thriving international academic community in the United Kingdom.

As one of the world's most biodiverse countries, and thus also, one of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, Colombia affords the utmost importance to the protection and conservation of the environment and rare ecosystems. Colombia and the United Kingdom have been steadfast partners in this pressing global matter and will continue to work together to meet their carbon emission reduction targets and promote sustainable economic models. In another example of both countries collaborating in the global arena, Colombia and the United Kingdom will maintain our international leadership to further mobilise efforts towards complete global commitment to sustainable development.

With this ambitious Roadmap, Colombia and the United Kingdom have set the course for the future of our excellent and fruitful bilateral relationship. This State Visit recognises the long and ever-friendly ties that exist between both countries and provides an excellent opportunity to further consolidate our strategic partnership as well as launch innovative actions and policies for the long-term benefit of the citizens of Colombia and the United Kingdom. **F**