



Remarks With Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaime Bermudez at Signing Ceremony

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC
September 18, 2008

[View Video](#)

SECRETARY RICE: I would like to welcome my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Colombia. Colombia, of course, is a very good friend of the United States. We have many, many ways of expressing that friendship, including the friendship between our peoples. I've been very pleased to have the opportunity to visit Colombia on a number of occasions.

And of course, as we sign this important agreement today, we are cognizant of the broader context for U.S.-Colombian relations, including our desire to see the U.S. Congress vote on the very important and historic free trade agreement between Colombia and the United States. This is an agreement that will benefit both sides, will benefit the American economy, it will benefit the kinds of Colombian workers that I met who are coming out of dark times of civil conflict. And in that regard, the work that President Uribe and his government have done to return democratic stability to Colombia is truly remarkable and, indeed, inspiring.

But today, we are signing an important agreement between the United States and Colombia, an agreement that allows us to move forward on collaboration on energy by working together on biofuels. Cooperation in this area is a priority for the United States as we create advanced technologies to meet our global needs. And in order to do so, of course, we must rally our creativity and our entrepreneurship.

This agreement is yet one more way in which we and Colombia are partnering for our future. The United States has been a proud partner in Colombia's success and we look forward to continuing to work side by side with the Government of Colombia and with its people.

Welcome.

FOREIGN MINISTER BERMUDEZ: Thank you very much, Dr. Rice, Madame Secretary. Well, we are so grateful to the American people because we as Colombians have found (inaudible) and continued support for the Colombian people as well. We are so grateful to the Bush Administration and the current government for their support as well, not only regarding all these issues that concern us both, for example, drug activities, Plan Colombia and so on, but also because they've been extremely supportive regarding the possibilities about trade, investment, and so on and so forth.

And in particular, what we need now is to get the free trade agreement done and approved by Congress, because I think it's good for the United States and it's good also for Colombia. But not only that, you might be aware of the idea that the more legal economy we have, the less illegal activity we have. Every inch that we reach for investment and trade is an inch that we take away from drug activities and terrorism. That's very important for us. So we are so grateful to the government, Madame Secretary, for what you've done and what we can do about Colombia and our legal activities, our economy, our investment, our jobs and so on.

We are very delighted to sign today this agreement, this memorandum of understanding regarding renewal in clean energy. That's very important, because we have a very wide agenda. So we are very much interested in working hand-to-hand with the United States regarding all these several issues that really help Americans and really help Colombians and really help the entire region. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, we will now commence with the signing. The United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Foreign Minister of Colombia Jaime Bermudez are signing today the memorandum of understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Colombia to advance cooperation on renewable and clean energy.

(The memorandum of understanding was signed.) (Applause.)

This concludes our program. Thank you for joining us today.

2008/743

Released on September 18, 2008

[↑](#) BACK TO TOP

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.