

Keys for the Peace Process to take root: “Listen to the wisemen of the tribe.”

Undoubtedly, the handing over of their arms by rebels of the FARC to comply with the agreements reached in the Peace Process is a crucial point to give credibility to that which had been negotiated, opening a huge perspective, especially in the peripheral regions of this country which traditionally directs its attention to activities that have to do with its center, its Andean region, which has so often been contested without echo among its centralist rulers.

New expectations are therefore emerging in marginal areas where the insurgents for years have imposed their control by force, places where the presence of the Colombian government has been so precarious.

We know well that peace is a collective concept that is not achieved automatically by just putting aside the weapons. The conflicts would persist in the regions where deficiencies of the central government have been a constant historically. If there is no intervention in rebuilding the social fabric, generating well-being, applying justice, respecting the local customs and cultures and paying attention to the counsel of those who are wise, peace will not be a realization.

Many of these regions are located in the area of influence of the University of the Llanos: such as, the regions of the Orinoco and the Amazon.

“La Orinoquia,” that precisely designates the name of this institution’s journal, is the region of our reality and context, made up of exuberant regions, rich in biodiversity, extensive plains that are irrigated by hundreds of waterways that run from the mountain ranges to the great Orinoco River.

It consists of regions that contain cultural, biological and scenic treasures yet to be understood and described. Regions that are only now beginning to be visited and studied systematically by scientists from the most diverse disciplines, who are taking advantage of the opportunity opened up by the peace agreements.

The very first question we raise, concerns the role of science and technology relevant to consolidating human development that is sustainable, and beyond that, the education and culture needed to ensure a stable and lasting peace throughout this country, including the historically marginalized states.

There are many difficulties, such as the social and political complexity of the present moment, the environmental reality of these regions, the situation of peasant and indigenous rural communities aggravated by the presence of illegal crops, illegal mining, deforestation, illegal wildlife trafficking, and contamination by new production systems, such as those related to agro-fuels.

It’s necessary to safeguard strategic natural resources and indigenous territories together with the expectation of acquisition and redistribution of land for new producers. It all implies careful planning of productive enterprises, of human settlements, and processes of eradication, or substitution of illicit crops.

To establish, according to ancestral communities and traditional inhabitants, which are the appropriate uses of territorial resources, ordering development in harmony with landscapes which are beautiful and fragile, are challenges in which, in addition to the law or authorities, will need appropriate intervention with common sense added to science, and knowledge to creatively, and careful anticipation of the consequences of the actions to be undertaken. Being realistic, and not pessimistic, gray clouds are evident in order to acclimatize peace in our territories. Let us look at some of them in a concrete way:

During the post conflict period there could be an increase in the destruction of forests.

Without the implementation of ZIDERES (Zones of Interest of Rural, Economic and Social Development) as well as by the agroindustrial sector, in which it would be possible to extract forest reserve areas without the intervention of local authorities, or by the National Environmental System.

We know from official data of the Ideam (2017) that deforestation in the country went from 124,035 hectares in 2015 to 178,597 hectares in 2016, that is, it was an increase of 44%. This is worrisome because the national goal for 2020 is to reduce the yearly total of deforested land to 50,000 hectares, and there are only three years left to reach this goal. The location

of most of the deforested areas is key; 60% corresponds to the Amazon region and 30% of the total to six municipalities: San Vicente del Caguán, Riosucio (Chocó), Cartagena del Chairá, Ungá, La Uribe and Tibú. That is to say, the zones that suffered most severely from the combination of effects of the conflict: armed confrontation, accelerated increase of illicit crops, and in some cases, the expansion of legal and illegal mining. In relation to our Orinoquia, it made up for 5% of the deforestation of Colombia.

The deforested areas increased from 9,132 hectares in 2015, to 9,398 in 2016, with the northeastern part of Guaviare being the most affected area. In the areas of road development and expansion of the agricultural frontier, southern Meta in the municipality of La Uribe, was where the greatest expansion of agricultural frontier and road development took place. This road development also endangers the La Macarena National Park, the Picachos National Park and the Tinigua National Park. Adding to this problem is the recent concern that the forestation of the plains with foreign species and agronomic packages of the green revolution may be affecting the environment of the native savannas and surrounding rivers.

Increase in the extraction of hydrobiological resources

It is estimated that, with the abandonment of arms, and the reduction of control of areas by the insurgents, there will be an increase in the extraction of hydrobiological resources, such as, fish, turtles, birds and other varieties of wildgame by local fishermen, settlers, and poachers, in regional rivers to which access was restricted before due to insecurity.

Cutbacks in the General Budget of the Nation for 2018

The cases of budget cutbacks in the environmental sector and the national science and technology system (S & T) are very concerning. Entities in the environmental sector, such as, the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (Ideam), Natural National Parks and the Humboldt Institute, will all suffer cuts that will leave the sector with 60% less of the budget allocated to them in 2017.

Concerning S & T, it had previously been planned to be increased to 2 percent of GDP (by 2004), but in 2018 it will be very much less: only about 0.2 of GDP, there will only be about 222 billion pesos (which will be 41.6% less than in the present year), generating a precarious panorama for the implementation of projects proposed in the framework of the post conflict as those related to truth and reparation, agricultural development, among others. In addition to those outlined in a second axis related to green growth, they would promote research that would contribute to the sustainable development of the country with a focus on biodiversity, bioeconomics and cultural and ethnic heritage.

Another axis that will remain with insecure support has to do with adding value to renewable and non-renewable natural resources, seeking to improve competitiveness and infrastructure in strategic areas, such as, innovation in new materials, nanotechnology, ICT, and the development of sustainable and environmentally friendly products. In addition to those outlined in a second axis related to green growth, they would promote research that would contribute to the sustainable development of the country with a focus on biodiversity, bioeconomics and cultural and ethnic heritage. Another axis that will remain with insecure support has to do with adding value to renewable and non-renewable natural resources, seeking to improve competitiveness and infrastructure in strategic areas such as innovation in new materials, nanotechnology, ICT and development of Sustainable and environmentally friendly products.

In a future issue of this journal, I will address other aspects of the question on science and technology relevant to acclimate peace with a regional approach. For now, I would just like to recall that it was 23 years since July 21, 1994, on which ten of the country's most brilliant minds handed President César Gaviria a document with which they sought to make history: the 'Joint Report' of the denominated *Mission of Sages. " It was a master document on the role of science, technology and, above all, education, to achieve harmonious development through the appropriate use of the natural, cultural and social resources available in our country. It was a report that caused enthusiasm. Microphones, video cameras and applause abounded. The newspaper, "El Tiempo" called the ten wisemen: "the true Colombia Selection". Rejoicing, the men and the president, delivered speeches of which we all were waiting to see the outcome. At the end, the Nobel prize winner, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, read his legendary proclamation 'For a country within the reach of children.' A few months ago, I read a statement made by my illustrious professor of biophysics of the nervous system, Dr. Rodolfo Llinas, who stated: "If we were to meet together again, we would present the same report," as the historian Marco Palacios would say after the first 20 years of that event, which was three years ago. Palacios also was on that all-star team. Unfortunately, we did not know how to listen to the advice of that selection of Colombians, or any wise elder of any tribe ...

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