

Colombian President to ILO: Peace is only possible with social justice

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos told delegates at the ILO's International Labour Conference in Geneva that social justice should be a foundation of lasting peace. He also stressed the key role of decent work.

GENEVA (ILO News) – Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos told the International Labour Conference (ILC) that having achieved peace, Colombia now needs to anchor it in social justice, by creating more jobs, tackling poverty and reducing inequality.

“I come to you today as the President of a country that is starting to build peace and is following a difficult but also hopeful path towards development, prosperity and more justice,” said Santos, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for pursuing a deal to end more than 50 years of conflict with a leftist rebel group.

“Social justice is achieved with more jobs, less poverty and less inequality.”

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos

Paraphrasing the preamble of the constitution of the ILO – which marks its centenary next year – Santos emphasized the need to achieve social justice in order to have lasting peace.

“And social justice is achieved with more jobs, less poverty and less inequality,” he said, adding that “decent work is a pillar” of social justice.

In a welcome speech he delivered in Spanish, ILO Director-General Guy Ryder, pointed out that Colombia is a founding member of the ILO. This, he said, means, “we have travelled together for almost 100 years – 100 years of solidarity.”

“Sadly, for half of this century of shared history, Colombia has been plunged in a tragic conflict,” said Ryder, adding that today, as the country consolidates the peace process, “we all, in this house, wish Colombia a brighter day, a day with peace, a day with social justice.”

“Many challenges still remain, and the ILO is committed to continue working with Colombia to achieve a future with decent work for all, with full respect of international labour norms, and with special attention paid to victims of the violence,” Ryder said.

The ILC, which brings together employer, worker and government representatives from the 187 ILO member states, runs from 28 May to June 8.