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The Pope receives the president of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, and former president, Senator Álvaro Uribe Vélez

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the president of the Republic of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States.

The discussions took place in an atmosphere of great cordiality, confirming the existing good relations between the Holy See and Colombia. Appreciation was expressed for the Pope's support during the peace process, along with the hope that such peace be stable and lasting. In this regard, the parties highlighted the importance of encounter and unity between the Colombian political parties and the commitment of FARC-EP, while the local Church will be able to offer her contribution in favour of national reconciliation and education in forgiveness and harmony. Some issues relating to regional current affairs were then addressed.

The Holy Father went on to meet His Excellency Senator Álvaro Uribe Vélez, first in private audience and then together with President Santos. The Pope spoke about the "culture of encounter" and emphasised the importance of sincere dialogue between all members of Colombian society at this historical moment.