

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH H.E. ALVARO URIBE

SUBJECT: URIBE WILL DISCUSS "COLOMBIA, A SUCCESS STORY"

MODERATOR: SYLVIA SMITH, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**MS. SMITH:** (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon. My name is Sylvia Smith. I'm the Washington editor of the Ft. Wayne *Journal Gazette* and president of the National Press Club.

We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists. And on behalf of our 3,500 members worldwide, I'd like to welcome you and our guests in the audience today. I'd also like to welcome those who are watching on C-Span or listening on XM Satellite Radio.

We're celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and have rededicated ourselves to a commitment to the future of journalism through informative programming, journalistic education, and fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club or to blog about today's event, please visit our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org).

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterward, I'll ask as many questions from the audience as time permits. So please hold your applause during the speech so we have as much time as possible for questions.

I'd like to explain that if you do hear applause, it may be from guests and members of the general public, not necessarily from the working press.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly as their names are called. From you're right Rodrigo Valderrama, an independent opinion editorial writer; Myron Belkind, chairman of the International Correspondents' Committee and a lecturer at George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs; Rudy Arredondo, publisher of *National Hispanic Political Reporter*; Jaime Bermudez, the minister of foreign affairs and a guest of our speaker; Mauricio Benavides of Imagen de Washington; Carolina Barco, the ambassador to The United States from Colombia, and guest of our speaker. (Applause.)

Angela Greiling Keane of Bloomberg News and chairwoman of the National Press Club Speakers Committee. And we'll skip over the speaker just a moment. Emi Kolawole, a staff writer for FactCheck.org, and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's luncheon. Thank you so much Emi. Amar Bakshi, a reporter and filmmaker for WashingtonPost.com; Karina Flores Hurley, a broadcast journalist and editor in chief of the Self Reliance Foundation; and Francisco Aguirre, publisher of *Diario Las Americas*. Welcome everyone. (Applause.)

Our guest this afternoon is responsible for what independent news organizations and analysts agree has been a significant reform in a country once terrorized by rebel violence. *The Los Angeles Times'* editorial page wrote that Colombian President Alvaro Uribe is possibly the most popular elected leader in the world.

Uribe has spent the last six years (Applause.) steering his country toward economic and national security improvements in the face of both personal tragedy and continuing threats against his life. He is in Washington to try to nudge Congress toward adoption of a Free Trade Agreements and will meet Saturday with President Bush and the chairman of the Ways and Means committee.

But the Colombian Free Trade Agreement is unlikely to see a vote before Congress leaves to campaign for reelection at the end of next week. Ways and Means chairman Charlie Rangel left open the floor for a post-election vote if Bush calls Congress back for a lame duck session.

Reducing trade restrictions is a top priority of the Uribe government, but it is not the only difficulty facing the South American country. A former paramilitary fighter testified that the head of Colombia's army collaborated with death squads. The U.S. government includes Colombia among the 20 countries identified as major drug producers or transit countries.

Poverty has dropped but is still a substantial percentage — 45% in 2006. Nevertheless, under Uribe's leadership, Colombia has seen a decline in rebel violence, as well as a net increase in GDP. Uribe first served in elect office in 1984 as the mayor of the city of Medellín. He then left Colombia for England to study at Oxford. Uribe returned home to a wave of dissatisfaction with the then President, and brought the promise of increased economic prosperity, a stronger national security based on his own existing record of enforcement.

Since becoming President in 2002, Uribe has made it his goal to reduce, if not eliminate, the influence of rebel groups in Colombia. Our State Department says kidnappings have declined by 83%, homicides by 40%, and terrorist attacks by 76% during the Uribe administration. And most recently, his government successfully negotiated the celebrated release of 15 hostages, including his former political rival, Ingrid Betancourt.

But now, Colombia is preparing for transition as Uribe's second term of office nears its end. He may be presented with the opportunity to serve an unprecedented third term if their constitution is amended to allow for it. There's much to talk about. And I hope you will help me welcome to the National Press Club podium, the President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe. (Applause.)

**ALVARO URIBE:** [Spanish] Senorita Sylvia Smith, president of the National Press Club, Senora Ambassador(?) Carolina Barco [Spanish] distinguished members of the National Press Club, distinguished guests, members of the media, my colleagues in the government of Colombia, ladies, gentlemen, journalists representing many members of the media, thank you.

This is a great opportunity for me to speak about Colombia and to take your comments, your questions, and to try to give the most unbiased answers. It's a great honor to come to this place of freedoms, the Press Club of this Capitol.

We are trying to work in Colombia for one specific word — confidence. If you compare Colombia to this chart, we have written one word at the top of the chart — confidence to live in Colombia, to start in Colombia, to find high quality jobs in Colombia, to start in Colombia, to enjoy the life in Colombia. And we support confidence in looking for three pillars — security with democracy with freedoms, investment with social responsibility. These two pillars create a framework for the third one, equally important, social cohesion.

And social cohesion operates as the validator of security and as a validator of investment. Why democratic security? Because in the past, in Latin America, many people confuse security with dictators, with suppression of freedoms, with elimination of pluralism, with the abolition of dissent. Ours is a policy of security,

but with freedoms, with democracy, with pluralism. Ours is a policy that relies on the universal democratic values.

We need power and strength to defeat terrorists groups. We need to ... (inaudible) that our country's a sovereign country, and that our people have the right to recover law and order, but power and sovereignty have to be submitted to universal democratic values. In the ... (inaudible) it is the right time for Colombia to reaffirm in this occasion, from my person as President of the country that we exert(?) power to defeat terrorist groups, that we claim that our country is a sovereign country, but that for us, democratic values are the values under which we have to subordinate power and sovereignty.

For us, security is to be credible. This is the only way for a country based on opinion to make security a sustainable value, a sustainable policy. And credibility and security depends on effectiveness and transparency. And transparency is equal to human rights. We could speak about many results, and we could speak about the lack of results.

My predecessor, you, Madame Sylvia Smith have read an editorial column for *The Los Angeles Times*. And you have read some result. But we recognize that in addition to the good results, we need to overcome many problems we still face in our country.

Let me speak about some intangibles. Today, the vast majority of Colombians have recovered confident in our system of law and order. Some years ago, they did not trust in the state to find for protection. Now they resort to the state. Our institutional armed forces have recovered the monopoly to combat criminals. And our justice administration that is totally independent from the Executive Branch have recovered its monopoly to provide justice in our country.

The vast majority of Colombians, especially in the areas of the periphery, still fear to give testimony. Today, they are ready to give testimony. We have many more cases of assassination, but we didn't see the victims. Today, they appear to claim for the right, to prepare for reparation because they have lost that fear. And now they show up for the right.

Before our administration, Colombia had years when 50 journalists were killed. Last year we had one case of one friend of the administration who was killed in accordance with the justice administration because someone wanted to rob him. This year, we have not had one single case of assassination of journalist.

But what I want to highlight is that in all the regions of the country, journalists feel much more protected by our system of freedoms. They feel now without coercion from the terrorist groups. Terrorist groups had co-opted many

democratic institutions in Colombia, because in the 60's of the last century, Marxist guerillas, before having converted into terrorist groups brought to Colombia the idea of the combination of all forms of a struggle.

They assassinated and they penetrated the labor movement, portions of the media, political institutions. And they taught this strategy to the paramilitaries. Today, we can say that Colombia no longer has paramilitaries, because the state had recovered the monopoly to fight criminals. And we can say that journalists feel much more freer in our country.

We are working to improving Colombia, the environment for investors. We need our country to prosper. Prosperity is necessary support for social cohesion. Otherwise, in the name of social cohesion, it is possible to deliver the demagogic speeches, but it is impossible to harvest good results.

My country had an investment rate of 12% in the last years it has had 21%, 24%, 27.5%. This year, even in the middle of the economic difficulties, the ... (inaudible) to all the economists in the world, we have kept with this rate of investment. Foreign direct investment has passed from \$700 million at top \$2 million, with up and downs in a no constant(?) way of getting in our country to what we see now, a constant rate of falling direct investment, a permanent flow.

Some years ago, we had over \$10 billion, the year after, over \$6.5, last year, \$9.028. And this year, the Minister of Trade, who of course is much more optimistic than me, and because he's much more younger (Laughter.) this morning, when I saw him, I asked him, "... (inaudible), what is your prediction about foreign direct investment this year?" And his answer was very optimistic. "Minister, what is the number you have written?"

\_\_\_: It's \$12 billion, Mr. President.

It's his number. I don't know yet. (Applause.) Fifty-six percent goes to looking for oil, to produce coal to these sectors, and 44% to several different sectors of our economy. ... (inaudible) for us to make Colombia very attractive country for investors. First, Colombia is not hostile regarding private investors, domestic and international. Colombia needs and recognizes the need to have private investors. We require from investors social responsibility with three meanings – transparency in the relationships with the state in contracts, in conflict resolution, in taxation. Second, solidarity with the communities, especially in very sensitive issues such as environmental cases – we cannot allow the coal corporations to extract coal without fulfilling all the environmental standards ... (inaudible) in the labor relationships, in the relation between workers and employers. We reject social class hatred. We reject untamed capitalism. We want fraternity.

This is the only path to get a country with social cohesive. We have improved our macroeconomic indicators. We have reduced our deficit. The burden of indebtedness, however, we need much more. We still have deficit. We still have 27% of public indebtedness as a percentage to the GDP.

We have restructured 411 state agencies. We do not dismantle the state, but we don't allow the state to create monopolies, to kill the creativity of private initiative. For instance, in the middle of this ideological controversy in South America and Latin America, we have restructured a state corporation employer. First, we introduced the labor reform, second, the pension reform. With these two reforms, we expanded in that time ... (inaudible) feasibility(?). And finally, we have capitalized this corporation with private investors by 10.5%. Almost half a million Colombians came to put their money into this corporation, and this corporation has passed from investing \$700 million dollars per year to have a capacity now where there is to invest more than \$4 billion dollars per year.

We are not in any state of complacency. We have determination to continue reforming the state until the last day of our administration. We live in a permanent dialogue with our people. We believe in the equilibrium between participatory democracy and representative democracy. We live in what we call the communitarian state. In accordance to that concept, every day we recognize effectively the right to the people to intervene in the decision the government is going to make in the execution of their decisions and in the supervision of their execution. The more the people participate, the more the transparency in the state, the more the confidence.

And in this permanent dialogue, many times I have to say no. And people get upset with me. But finally they say, "I differ from him. I disagree with him. But we can trust in him." We prefer trust than agreement. For any democracy, trust is much more important than agreement. If we have trust, we can have democratic disagreements. We consider it is very important to go deeper in the minds, in the hearts, and in the soul of Colombians with democratic values.

We are working intense(?) incentives to promote investments in our country. Now we have approved 36 special economic sums(?). And we have enacted a new law, now producing the better(?) results. And this law allows the government to sign pacts on a stable root with investors lasting for 20 years. And we are looking for free trade agreements. We have signed a free trade agreement with Chile, with Peru. For Peru to go beyond the ... (inaudible) of the Indian community, agreement with three Central American countries. We have close negotiations with Canada. We have a negotiation with the European Union. The minister is negotiating with China on agreement of bilateral protection of investors, the same with India.

And we are, with constancy, looking for the approval of the Free Trade Agreement here in The United States. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this year, The United States will export to Colombia, roughly speaking, \$10 billion dollars. And Colombia will export to The United States \$14 billion. At first glance, you see a surplus for The United States. But at the moment you subtract oil, immediately there is a change. The surplus is for The United States, even with coal included in our export.

Therefore, from the economic standpoint, the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia is a fair one. From the political standpoint, some comments. Many people in my country and many people in South America ask me, "Mr. President, how can you explain that Colombia has been the best ally of The United States and Colombia has not been approved in its efforts to get the Free Trade Agreement?" My only answer is, "I insist. My only ... (inaudible) to you is to have been ... (inaudible). I insist." (Applause.)

And other people ask me, "Mr. President, don't worry. Colombia has the unilateral preferences. And it isn't ... (inaudible) seems that The United State will extend the preferences." My answer is, "We need preferences. And at this moment, we need the extension of the preferences. However, people do not invest on the preferences, because people see preferences as a very precarious possibility to get in early market. People ask, 'Can I invest in one country without permanent access to the market of The United States?'" And other people ask me, "Mr. President, your country has improved, but you need much more results." I accept.

At that time we say about our good results, "We, too, recognize what is needed." But one question: how can we make better results with or without the Free Trade Agreement? The Free Trade Agreement gives us the possibility to have much more investments in our country. And definitely investment are the real alternative to illicit drugs. And illicit drugs are the nutrition of terrorists. Therefore, with the tool of the Free Trade Agreement, we could make Colombia much more attractive to investors. And investment in social responsibilities equal to creation of high quality jobs.

Of course we need a bipartisan approach in The United States towards Colombia. We have ... (inaudible) a bipartisan approach. President Bush, the father, ... (inaudible) Colombia. Under the presidency of President Barco, the father of our ambassador, under unilateral presences have been renewed many times under different political approaches, in the executive and in the Congress as well in The United States. President Clinton, and my predecessor, President Pastrana, began plan(?) Colombia. And we have had a continuity of planned Colombia under the leadership of President Bush. Therefore, the bipartisan

approach is very important for our country. Ready for your questions, distinguished friends. (Applause).

**MS. SMITH:** Thank you very much. We've got lots of questions here. The first one is, besides, "I insist," what is your message to President Bush tomorrow about the Free Trade Agreement?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** I will insist and express gratitude because President Bush is making great efforts. And I will say to him in a very friendly way, "President, make more efforts." (Laughter.) "Make more efforts, President."

**MS. SMITH:** Will you ask him to call a lame duck session of Congress to deal with this?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** I don't have the power to advise the president of the United States. I have to ask the government, your government, your Congress, everyone in this country, please, the sooner we get the approval, the sooner we are going to get much more investment in Colombia. And the investment, the growth investment, is the best alternative to illegal drugs. And never forget illegal drugs are the nutrition of terrorists in our country. The sooner the better. (Applause.)

**MS. SMITH:** A number of the people who have in Congress, who have supported Plan Colombia and the other anti-drug initiatives are also the same people who are opposing the Free Trade Agreement. So, obviously, that argument hasn't played with them. Is there a way that you can quantify that argument, that more investment reduces drugs? How does more investment affect the farmers who are growing the cocoa plants?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** For instance, in some regions of the country, we have seen a great reduction of cocoa plantations and a growing replacement by legal crops. Three weeks ago I visited one region between Bogotá and Cartagena. It's name is Sorda(?) Boliva, South Bolivia. Six years ago in the region we have only violence and cocoa plantations. Now violence has been reduced. Cocoa plantations is in the way to be eliminated. And now they have 13,000 hectares of ...(inaudible) owned by peasants, by small farmers. In other regions of the country, you see growing trends for organic coffee, again, owned by small farmers.

We have 66,000 families who were engaged in illegal drugs and now they are forest ranger families. They receive a payment of \$2,000 dollars from our government yearly. And they have two duties, to keep the area with collective action, free from drugs and to supervise the recovery of the rain forest. They are under the vigilance of the United Nations. Therefore, the more the possibility for



legal investment, the less the difficulty for any government to defeat illicit drugs. (Applause.)

**MS. SMITH:** Senator Lugar said this morning that if the Free Trade Agreement isn't passed, he'd recommend renewal of the Andean trade deal, which provides, as you know, duty free treatment for nearly all exports from Colombia. But what you're saying is that year-to-year extension doesn't give investors the reliability that they need to invest in your country. Is that correct?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Yes, because investors need certainty. And they say, unilateral preferences—we need unilateral preferences in Colombia, even at the moment the Free Trade be approved as we hope. Because, you know, there is a time, an interval between the approval and the promulgation. Therefore, we need the unilateral preferences. But to increase investment we need the agreement. Because investors say, with unilateral preferences, we are not certain about the possibility to get in the market of the United States permanent.

We...(inaudible) for instance, are very precarious. To invest, to put our money, we need to have that certainty that we are going to have access to the market of the United States for good.

**MS. SMITH:** What industries do you see as having the most potential for growth if afforded more foreign investment?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** There are many. The minister of trade has a program. Its name is innovation. He is working for Colombians to develop new products and to add value to the basic products we have produced. When I ask him about the new products, the new services he said to me, "Biofuels, pharmaceutical industry, the cosmetic industry, the production of software, and others"-- Ministro(?)?

\_\_: BPO, business process outsourcing, beauty care products, health services, for instance, people who go overseas to have health issues taken care of, very large in the service field and also to improve upon what we already have, will(?) involve(?) more and better of the same. (Applause.)

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** With value added. There is some opposition in the world to biofuels. Colombia has disadvantages. Fifty-one percent of our territory is still in rain forest. Our decision is to protect that rain forest, our main contribution to the anti-warming world strategy. Therefore, we have the decision to keep the jungle undestructed. But we have 42, 43 million hectares of Savannahs. And we only have five million hectares of agriculture. Therefore, we have a very big land where we can stand agriculture for food security and we can

stand the production of sources for biofuels, without affecting food security and without destroying the jungles.

**MS. SMITH:** The questioner says, “How is the credit market affecting the ability of the Colombian government and businesses to borrow money?”

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** This is a difficult moment. This year we have suffered first, appreciation of our own money. It hurt exports. Three weeks ago we began seeing the reverse. We want not appreciation. We want not depreciation. We want a stable, competitive exchange rate. We have suffered inflation. Our basic inflation is now on check at 3.9. But our inflation inputs(?) have been very high. Our total inflation could be between 7, 7.5, 6.5. We have suffered a great inflation in inputs for the agriculture sector.

In the financial sector I have two points to make. First, internally our financial sector is in much better shape, because we have introduced during our administration regulations to control implicit risk. With deregulations Colombia has passed from 39% of protection against bad loans to 112. In the international market, Colombia has a great ...(inaudible) because Colombia has never defaulted. Therefore, for this year we have not to go to the international financial market. Another year we have to go. And we hope international market react as it must do with reciprocity with one country that has never, that has never denied, neglect its debts. [Spanish phrase – sotto voce] Has never defaulted. (Applause.)

**MS. SMITH:** Given the global economic turmoil, is it irresponsible for the Colombian central bank to maintain the over night rate at 10% for another month?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Central bank is independent in Colombia. I recognize many positive actions. First, the central bank make, at the right time the decision to increase inter-rates. With this decision the central bank call our attention for Colombia not to get in what we call the danger of any high pressed(?) positions to lend. And the second result bank got with the decision was to prevent the country from getting in any dangerous spiral of long-term inflation. My concern is regarding the months to come. I have the fear that with a permanent high interest rate it could be possible that our economy destroy jobs. And in a country with a high level of poverty that Colombia still has, we cannot destroy jobs.

**MS. SMITH:** So does it go too far, as this questioner wants to know to describe that as irresponsible of the central bank?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Debate with this kind of words. And I debate with them in Colombia. Here I speak only about the positive aspects. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

**MS. SMITH:** We will let you off that one. The questioner says, “Can you please discuss significance of Russia’s interest in providing aid to Bolivia to replace the money the Bush administration cut off after putting Bolivia on the drug black list?”

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** I didn’t know about this Russian decision. I didn’t know about the presence of Russian in Venezuela. But we have good relationship with Russia. Therefore, what we need is to—the world needs to know first that we have a loyal alliance with the United States, that we are our good brothers of the Latin American countries, that we are a friendly country to our, all the democracies all over the world. We have had a good tradition of good relations with Russia. We have many internal problems. We have to solve our internal problems. The help of the United States is very important. And the help of other countries that in the future come up to help us would be very, very important.

Colombia had never been a warrior in the international arena. Our policy on democratic security is a necessary policy to defeat the challenge of terrorism against our democratic values. But Colombia has not, won’t be, a hostile country against other countries.

**MS. SMITH:** Has the Bush administration enlisted your support in any kind of dealings with your neighbor, neighboring president Hugo Chavez?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** I cannot understand the question. (Laughter.) (Applause.) Presidents have the right to not understand some questions. I have to be very prudent. I have to be very prudent. We have many, many-- I remember the Bible said, “I cannot(?) with(?) St. Peter. How can I deal with San Paulos(?)?” We have to face our internal problems. As prudent as we are with our neighbors, as loyal as we are with our allies, and this country is a great ally of Colombia. (Applause.)

**MS. SMITH:** In March the US government human rights report said things have improved in Colombia but, quote, serious problems remain. What are they and how are you addressing that?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** The very problem in human rights has an open discussion in Colombia. NGOs were taking away from many countries in the region and NGOs are being taken away from countries in the region(?). Colombia

do not close the doors. One merit of our policy on democratic security is our openness for domestic and international debate, our openness to allow the international vigilance.

I discuss sometimes with NGOs and sometimes they are right, sometimes they are wrong. And we argue with reasons. And we don't tolerate abuses on human rights. But we cannot tolerate abuses in reports. We support the justice administration and we argue with ...(inaudible) speeches. And finally, we respect every opinion. Ours is a system of democratic values. The only risk, NGOs ruining Colombia is to discuss with the president.

**MS. SMITH:** The questioner says, about a fifth of the Colombian parliament, many from parties aligned with you have either been jailed or are under investigation for alleged ties to paramilitary groups. How do you cope with that?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Good question. First, I was elected without congress majority. My opponents used to say, "You cannot elect Uribe because Uribe won't have governance. He is without congress' support." And once I was elected, I created a coalition for the well being of my country. All the laws we have approved are laws for the well being of Colombia. I challenge someone who could say that we have used majority in congress to approve any negative law for the superior interest of our country.

All the laws approved during our administration have laws for the superior interest of our country. There are many people of congress in jail or under investigation for crimes committed before my administration, for crimes committed before my administration. Don't forget, in Colombia, the law and order has been replaced by the power of terrorist groups. In some regions of the country the effective power was exerted by guerillas, in other regions of the country by paramilitaries, and in many regions of the country by both.

Our government has advanced a lot in dismantling paramilitaries and their interference into our democratic institutions. In the past Colombia never investigated the links. And Colombia has not yet investigated the links between guerillas and politics. Guerillas brought to Colombia the idea of combining different part of a struggle. Marxist guerillas in the sixties, in the seventies—I watched university students. And guerillas thought it's a paramilitary reaction how to do the same. For Colombia to have real peace we need to clarify these links but every link. And we need the clarification of links between guerillas and the universe of politics. With truth, with reparation, with compassion Colombia will heal the wounds.

**MS. SMITH:** You talked about the importance of democratic values, how does the Colombian constitution insure free press?

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** Totally, the problem to insure free press in Colombia has not been a constitutional problem. I have to be honest, my predecessors have been totally committed with free press in Colombia. The problem has been a problem because of the power of terrorist groups. The free press was limited in Colombia, not because of the government but because of the power of terrorist groups. When I say that my government is in the right way to the goal freedom to the press because we are defeating terrorist groups.

**MS. SMITH:** We're almost out of time. But before I ask the last question, there are a couple of things I want to remind our members about. First, Monday our speaker is T. Boone Pickens, chairman of BP Capital Management. And on September 29<sup>th</sup>, we have Michelle Rhee, Chancellor of the District of Colombia Schools. And I would like to give our speaker a presentation of the famous National Press Club mug. (Applause.) And a few gifts of our centennial. (Applause.)

And now the last question is, will you seek a third term? (Laughter.)

**PRESIDENT URIBE:** I don't seek third term for me. I pick many terms for democratic security, for the confidence for investors to prosper in our country as necessary pillars for our country to create social cohesion. I remember two governments that made all the efforts to convert Colombia into a safe country and they couldn't. My generation has not lived one single day of complete peace. As a father in the expectation of becoming a grandfather, I want peace and joys and happiness for the new generations of Colombians. That I want that reelection, not my reelection but the reelection of democratic security policy.

In Colombia no government has been ...(inaudible) against private investors. What makes the difference is that our government has had the strong determination to create in Colombia a framework for our country to be attractive to investment. Investment and security are the key words, the key actions to create in Colombia social cohesion. But I want several leaders in Colombia with their fundamental ideas. We need what I call active continuation not passive continuation. Active continuation is the continuity of the fundamentals with the judgments. In a country such as Colombia with many problems, we need daily adjustments. And continuation is the continuation of fundamental policies with adjustments, not the perpetuations of the president. (Applause.)

Thank you very much. It has been a great honor to come to this floor of freedoms.

**MS. SMITH:** I'd like to thank you for coming today, President Uribe. I'd like to thank our guests. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members, Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's event.

A video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club Broadcast Center. Many of our events are aired on XM Satellite Radio and are available for free download on iTunes. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes by going to [archives@Press.org](mailto:archives@Press.org).

Thank you very much. We are adjourned. (Gavel sounds.)

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