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## COLOMBIA | CSW Welcomes Ceasefire

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomed the announcement June 23 of a ceasefire and an end to hostilities between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The agreement also sets in place a plan for the demobilization of members of the FARC, the country's largest illegal armed group. Previous agreements made as part of the ongoing peace process include provisions that those responsible for human rights violations fully confess to those acts in order to benefit from the possibility of reduced sentences.

Last week in Washington D.C., CSW hosted representatives from partner organizations in Colombia; the Colombian Council of Evangelical Churches (CEDECOL); Justapaz, an NGO linked to the Mennonite Church; and Corsoc, a regional NGO in the north of the country linked to the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC). The delegation met with U.S. Congressional offices and the State Department to express their support for the ongoing peace process with the FARC and to encourage pressure on the Government of Colombia to also put in place policies to address other actors in the internal armed conflict, including leftist guerrilla group the National Liberation Army (ELN) and far right neo-paramilitary groups and criminal bands.

Churches and faith-based organizations affiliated with the Inter-Ecclesial Dialogue for Peace (DiPaz), including CSW's partner organizations, will hold simultaneous liturgical celebrations across the country.

All actors in the armed conflict have been responsible for major human rights violations, including violations of religious freedom. This includes hundreds of church leaders who were the victims of targeted assassination since 2000. It is hoped that the truth and reconciliation process that has been built into the peace agreement will bring clarity to thousands of open cases of murder and forced disappearance.

CSW's partner organizations have overseen a national project, supported by CSW, documenting human rights violations affecting communities of faith. It is hoped that this documentation will contribute to the investigations carried out as part of the truth process.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We welcome the news of a bilateral ceasefire agreement between the FARC and the government which includes a plan for the demobilization of FARC guerrillas. This represents an important step forward in bringing an end to a conflict that has left millions of victims over more than half a century of conflict. We support the call of our partners to the Government of Colombia to also pursue effective policies to address the other actors in the conflict, including the ELN and neo-paramilitary groups, both of which are responsible for ongoing human rights violations, including violations of freedom of religion or belief."