

MINUTES OF THE EXPLORATORY MEETING BETWEEN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND
THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY

Venezuela, 25–26 July 2001

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The parties express their gratitude for the kindness of the government of Venezuela for providing them with the opportunity to hold this direct meeting between the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN*)

In line with the methodology previously agreed by the parties, on 25 and 26 of July, they will address issues related to the security of the Meeting Zone, particularly the presence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC*) and the self-defence groups in the zone, the security of municipal seats and the external perimeter, in addition to the composition and operation of the civil police.

The officials of the national government and the representatives of ELN expressed their desire to continue talks to achieve peace. In this respect, it was agreed that the agreements made in Havana (Cuba) in December 2000 must remain the fundamental basis for progress in the process.

The parties expressed their agreement for the need to reduce the risk factors that may jeopardise the security of the Meeting Zone on account of the presence of armed groups other than ELN. They also agreed that the peace process must be built starting from reciprocal trust between the parties and compliance with any commitments they make. Various other aspects were also discussed, with agreement reached on the following:

1. ELN will undertake to maintain and guarantee the security of the Meeting Zone within the framework of the Havana agreements.

2. The national government will continue its fight against self-defence groups as a state policy and not as a result of the development of the dialogue and negotiation process with ELN.
3. A civil police force must be established as part of the implementation of the Havana agreements. All steps required to ensure this institution is operative and efficient will be set out in an annex to the Havana agreements. Aspects covered must include: the requirements and conditions for the selection and training of members, and the corresponding functions within the legal and constitutional frameworks to ensure the full effectiveness of the tasks they are assigned.
4. The work of the Verification Commission was analysed and it was agreed that the operating regulations must provide a detailed specification of the procedure for its verification functions and the procedure for issuing recommendations and making the corresponding evaluations, as agreed by the parties.
5. The need for the civil authorities to continue autonomously and independently carrying out the tasks that legally correspond to them was also noted.