

**María Susana Muhamad González, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development**

We invite all African Union countries to come to COP16 in Colombia on the biodiversity convention. We invite the world to make peace with nature. Nature is not our enemy, we are in this battle against nature and this is actually generating a high cost for the future of humanity.

It is time to make peace with nature, which means changing the way we produce and consume, but also respecting human rights and working with all countries for world peace so that conflicts do not distract us from this ticking clock. Against us.

Welcome to Colombia.

**Mauricio Rodríguez, Director of Solidarity Unit, Government of Colombia**

From the Government of the Republic of Colombia, from the Special Administrative Unit of Solidarity Organizations, we wish to send our fraternal greetings to all the people of the governments and organizations that are part of the African Forum of Social and Solidarity Economy. Colombia has committed itself with all its rigor to the development of United Nations Resolution 77,281 of 2023. It does so because our country's experience has been promoted and strengthened by organizations of the solidarity economy, the social, popular and community economy.

For years, our people and communities have fought collectively for access to their rights. In the government of change, we make the demands of thousands of families come true who, through their organizations and cooperatives, have fought for access to land, access to food, protection of water, decent work, protection and the development of the rights of women, young people, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. Our commitment is to materialize these struggles through public policies, through our National Development Plan and the Agenda of Solidarity Associations for Peace, which is the name of the policy that we are developing in this government to encourage people to organize. In the solidarity sector, that these organizations come together to create solidarity associative circuits and that real transformations can be achieved in our territories.

In Colombia we have worked on a profound process of institutional reorganization to give power and voice to solidarity, popular and community economy organizations. It must be taken into account that this is the first popular government in our republican history, the first time that solidarity organizations, popular organizations and social movements share the entire agenda of this government. This implies a permanent and fluid dialogue to build policies, a governance logic that implies a dialogue with them.

In 2023, we will organize 59 regional assemblies to develop with the organizations transformation programs, change programs, productive commitments in the territories in order to promote the commercialization of these products, solidarity industrialization, tourism



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and the productive chain of these organizations in each one of the territories of Colombia. The fluid dialogue we have built is based on these agreements. We consider that the agreement is the means to materialize the collective action of popular organizations with the institutional action of a government.

Today, the social and solidarity economy is at the center of the Colombian government's policies, whether to implement agrarian reform, a debt of more than 100 years, or to develop cities through solidarity industrialization, or again to protect our water sources, because this country has enormous diversity, the third greatest diversity in the world. And of course, for the defense of human rights and the defense of communities. For many years we have suffered the policy of extractivism, the displacement of our populations, the incitement to violence and war.

We find ourselves in a moment where the solidarity economy, the agenda of the national government and these agreements with the solidarity movement allow us to advance in the realization of social justice, environmental justice, economic redistribution and, certainly, the recognition of human rights. of historically forgotten populations. The government of our President Gustavo Petro and our Vice President Francia Márquez has launched a series of mechanisms aimed at increasing the participation of solidarity economy organizations in public management. The first of them, perhaps the most important, are public-popular alliances, where government and organizations come together to develop projects that generate real territorial impact.

That is why we walk hand in hand with organizations, launching energy transition processes, processes to protect our natural, environmental and cultural wealth, and we are launching solidarity industrialization processes thanks to the agricultural diversity of our country. Of course, the agreements also aim to revitalize urban life, as many of them are also in the grip of a deep economic depression. Therefore, the solidarity economy has managed to insert itself into the heart of politics.

Of course, we still have enormous challenges ahead. Credit to cooperative organizations must be increased, which implies implementing policies that benefit more people and generate true financial democratization. We also need to remove the barriers that organizations face so that they can increase their ability to transition into industry, national and international marketing.

Colombia is a country with a primary economy and a low level of industry. The challenge is to place the solidarity economy at the center of these processes of industrialization and democratic inclusion in cooperative banking, finance and credit for the popular economy. This is one of the great commitments of the national government headed by President Gustavo Petro.

In addition, we are working to integrate the solidarity economy into our educational systems. For many years, cooperative education was excluded from school and university curricula.



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Today we are ensuring that this training in cooperation, in mutual aid, returns to the classrooms, that we can create cooperatives with the children of our schools and that these children, from a very young age, are integrated into the solidarity economy model. because cooperation is the future of social justice and economic justice in the world.

And of course, we must be prepared for the generational change. We also work with populations who have experienced war, violence and victimization. These populations have organized and continue to organize to strengthen their collective capacity for territorial entrepreneurship, to develop economic processes that allow them to dignify the life of their communities.

This is a central commitment of this government. Of course, the resources we have are limited, but we have inter-institutional work of the entire national government, coordinated directly from the Presidency of the Republic, to allow each of the government areas to get involved in the development of the social economy. and supportive. . In Colombia we have 6 million people linked to the social and solidarity economy, but with this government and this commitment to increase rural productive cooperatives, the work of marketing and organization of popular economies in the cities, the work of young people in the schools and of course the strengthening of all territorial productive chains, we believe that at the end of our government we will be able to reach 12 million people linked to organizations of the social, solidarity and popular economy.

This is a decisive challenge, that of putting in place greater installed capacity, stronger organizations and a solid policy so that the solidarity economy can fulfill the role that the United Nations has given it and that governments give it in terms of improving conditions. of life. of its populations in all corners of the world. Solidarity unit. Building united territories.



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