



# FRANCISCO SANTOS CALDERON

Vice President of Colombia



**República de Colombia**

Francisco Santos Calderón (1961) was elected Vice President of Colombia on the same national ballot as Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Vélez in May 2002. They both were re-elected for a second period in May 2006. As Vice President, Mr. Santos is the head of the Presidential Programs for Human Rights, Transparency and Fight of Corruption, Action Against Landmines and Youth.

He also leads the Shared Responsibility Initiative, an international campaign to create awareness about the social and environmental damages caused by the cultivation of coca and production of cocaine in Colombia.

In 1990, Mr. Santos was kidnapped by Pablo Escobar, the leader of the Medellín drug cartel. Along with ten other journalists, he was held for nearly eight months in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to extort a promise from then President César Gaviria that the Colombian Government would not extradite drug traffickers to the United States.

Once released, the Vice President spent a year at Harvard University as a Nieman Fellow. In 1992, he returned to Bogotá and founded País Libre (Free Nation), an organization to assist the victims of kidnapping and their families.

Through País Libre, Mr. Santos also promoted civil society resistance, protests and marches against kidnapping and terrorism, culminating in the massive 1999 march involving millions of Colombians rallying under the banner "No Más!" (No More!)

Francisco Santos worked then as editor of El Tiempo, Colombia's largest daily newspaper. There he wrote a weekly column in which he often spoke out against kidnappings and massacres and called for civil society to take a more active role in finding peaceful solutions to the problems facing Colombia.

In March 2000, Mr. Santos left Colombia after receiving multiple death threats by the guerilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). He moved to Madrid, Spain where he was a journalist for two years for the daily newspaper, El País.

In the late 1980s, Mr. Santos taught journalism and U.S.-Latin American relations at various Colombian universities, including Universidad Central, Universidad Javeriana and Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano.

Vice President Santos received the Paul Harris Medal, Rotary International's highest award. He studied journalism and Latin American studies at the University of Kansas and the University of Texas at Austin.