

**ADDRESS AT THE 2002 INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT
SUMMIT Dublin, June 7, 2002**

This is a very special moment, full of grandeur and worthy of a memorable story. This is why I would like to begin my intervention today with a tale by the Argentinian author Jorge Bucay. This story has moved me intensely. It is a story about "Sadness and Fury":

"Once upon a time there was an enchanted kingdom where there was a magical pond. Sadness and Fury went together to the pond to take a swim. They both undressed and got into the water, naked.

Fury was in a hurry (as she always is). She felt the urge to leave the place at once, without knowing why, and so she took her bath in a rush and went swiftly out of the water. But Fury is blind, or at least she is not able to tell exactly how reality is like, and so she put on eagerly the first clothes she found at the side of the pond. The clothes happened to be those of Sadness, and thus Fury went away just like that, dressed as Sadness.

Meanwhile Sadness went on taking her bath in an extremely calm fashion and with incredible ease, until she finally decided,

very slowly, to get out of the water. When she reached the shore she found out that her clothes were not there anymore. But as it is well known, Sadness cannot stand to be naked so she put on the only clothes at hand; the garments of Fury.

Some say that since that happened we sometimes run into Fury – which looks duly blind, cruel, terrible and angry – but if we take enough time to watch things closely we find that Fury is nothing but a disguise and right, behind her garments, there is just Sadness hiding out”.

What a beautiful story this is, and how compelling is the paradox it reveals! Maybe it moves me so much because I find here a reflection of an idea that has always driven my quest for peace and my unshakeable faith in dialogue as the most adequate means to reach it.

I believe in peace and in dialogue, my friends, because I am certain that behind all the madness, the cruelty and the insensitivity displayed by violent people through their atrocities, there is always sadness lurking.

I firmly believe in the essentially positive nature of human beings. After all, we were created from divine essence, and this is why I

understand – it is my deepest belief – that behind every person that takes sides against society there is pain, resentment, frustration and – many times – an unnamed fear.

“God fights the Devil, and their battlefield is man’s heart”, said Dostoievski. I have always thought that it is in our hands to help God beat the Devil in the conflict waged within every human being; to help the sadness disguised as fury to find out the motives of her pain and nullify them; to help the eyes and the minds blinded by hate to become compassionate and wise.

Fourteen years ago, in 1988, when I ran for mayor of Bogota, Colombia’s capital and my home town, some men broke very violently into my campaign’s headquarters and pushed me out in the midst of a rain of slaps and menaces. Blindfolded and locked in the trunk of a car I faced fear and uncertainty, and then I had to face for another seven endless days the humiliation of kidnapping, when one’s life is at the mercy of strangers that are ready to perform any atrocity.

The group that organized my kidnapping used to identify themselves as “the extraditables”. They operated under the orders of Pablo Escobar, the famous druglord, who had his reasons to go after me. My position as a journalist had always

been very strong against the drug traffic. I had been awarded the journalism prize “King of Spain” for a special report I made for television about the route of the drugs, from their production in Peru and Bolivia, through their processing in Colombia, to their distribution and consumption in the United States and Europe. “The Route of the Gods” was the title I gave to that report that gained me the heinous attention of the mafia.

But my story comes to this: the men who watched over me during my captivity until the moment I was liberated through a courageous and effective operation by the army, were all young lads from the lowest levels of society, poor and violent at once, almost unaware of the immense pain they were causing me and my family. They were proceeding out of fear from their patron more than out of their own will. It is very likely that behind their masks of hatred, sadness and fear were lurking.

Ten years after, in 1998, I had the supreme honour of being elected President of the Republic of Colombia, through the highest number of votes in the history of my country. It was not an easy task. My nation was facing – and is still facing – a problem of huge complexity: In the midst of the honest and tough working life led by more than 40 million of Colombians, two illegal armed rival groups were growing and pervading every corner like

an oil spill across the territory. Their membership does not even reach 0.1 per cent of Colombian population; but they have on their side the destabilizing power of violence.

There are the guerrilla's – mainly represented by the FARC and the ELN – and there are also the illegal self defense groups. The worse thing is that both sides share a common denominator: they thrive mainly on the money produced by the drug traffic as well as by kidnapping and extortion. More than a fight for power, they are waging a war for the control of territories they can use to conduct their illegal activities.

It is a very old conflict whose origins go back further than five decades in the past, but that has been degrading day by day with the help of drug money and the use of terrorism against civilians. This is why I have always said to the world: In Colombia there is no civil war. What we have is a war waged by a few against civil society!

As soon as I won the elections, my first aim, in front of my conscience and in front of my fellow Colombians, was to do everything possible, and even go beyond what was possible, to reach peace through dialog and political negotiation.

I have always believed this is the only way to do it. Gandhi was right when he said : “There are no roads to peace, peace is the way“. And he was right because we have to ask ourselves: How can we pretend to reach peace in a country over the corpses of the dead and the misery of the maimed? How can we build true peace over foundations of hate, resentment and humiliation? Dear friends, I do not believe in the peace of the victors and the vanquished. I do believe, nonetheless, in a peace built through dialog, because only the peace born of a peaceful instrument is destined to survive.

With these ideal riveted to my heart I confronted all the risks that were to be overcome in order to pursue this objective which is the greatest aspiration of my people. As President elected, but before I was inaugurated, I met the chief commander of the FARC, a man known by his *nom de guerre* Manuel Marulanda or “ Tirofijo” in a remote place in the mountains of Colombia. I did it without being given any assurance, putting at risk my life and my freedom, but being convinced that it was necessary to talk face to face in order to set the right perspectives to open the road towards peace.

Four years have elapsed since then. I met another two times the leader of the guerrillas – I was already President by then – but

unfortunately, the objective was not reached. It was a profound, daring and sincere attempt. It was supported by the International Community as well as by the whole country. In this process we invested a lot in order to build-up confidence but we got back only actions of death and destruction.

I must say with sorrow that the warlords did not listen to the clamour of the people; they did not meet the offers made to incorporate them to the peaceful life of the nation; they still prefer the ways of the weapons to the ways of democracy.

The dress of fury is still today more powerful than the reality of sadness and the belligerent minority is still set to committing heinous acts of terrorism against their own people. It's absurd. It's painful; but I do not let down my beliefs. It is very likely that I won't be able to see it during my term as President; but I know that some day, maybe soon, these men and women who opted for violence will get rid of their disguise and they will plunge in the waters of the magic pond where they mixed up their clothes. They will then become again that same thing we all are: human beings intent on evolving, loving and being loved.

That is why I believe in dialog, dear friends. This is the credo of my whole life and my indestructible belief. I have epitomized it symbolically today through the story about “Sadness and Fury”.

My absolute faith in the human being and in the ways of peace as the sole alternative to set the foundations of a commonwealth is the biggest treasure I can share with you today.

Thank you very much