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First Meeting  
of Media Professionals  
from Colombia and Venezuela

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## **Conclusion**

To analyze and discuss characteristics of coverage

But after the 2010 election campaign in Colombia, in which Juan Manuel Santos won the runoff, relations took a sharp turn. Although Santos' statements during the campaign gave reason to assume that the conflict would continue, the two presidents agreed to a surprising shift in the two countries' foreign policy. Meeting in Santa Marta, Colombia, in August 2010, they took an unexpected step toward reestablishing bilateral relations, with what would later become known as the policy of "the two new good friends." Not unexpectedly, concerns related to the countries' shared 2,050-kilometer border played a key role in the new turn in Colombian-Venezuelan relations.

This first of three "bilateral" meetings of Colombian and Venezuelan journalists was held against this backdrop of renewed cooperation between the two countries. The specific objective was to contribute to mutual understanding, as well as analysis of the media during this cycle of rapprochement and disengagement between the two countries.

## ***II.2. Bilateral relations***

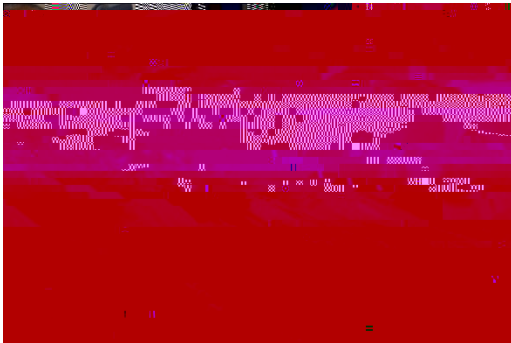
At the opening session of the event, Pavel Rondón, former Venezuelan ambassador to Colombia (2005-2006), gave a keynote address on the characteristics of relations between Venezuela and Colombia in the past ten years. The address was followed by a period of discussion coordinated by Ana María Sanjuán (Venezuela) and Socorro Ramírez (Colombia), and a general discussion among the participants moderated by Venezuelan journalist Vladimir Villegas.



During the discussion, participants agreed that Colombian-Venezuelan relations could be considered "fragile," "unstable" and "vulnerable." As one participant noted, although those relations were at a high point when the meeting was held, no one could be certain that they would continue at that level in the future (although at least one participant expressed optimism that, since the meeting of the two presidents in Santa Marta, when, in his view, the underlying reasons for the distancing were remo

Regardless of the reasons for the fragility (of which there are various), all participants agreed that the great challenge today for binational relations between Colombia and Venezuela is the institutionalization, or reinstitutionalization, of those relations, if one can consider that there was a greater degree of institutionalization in the past.

### *II.3. Coverage of bilateral relations*



The afternoon session focused on discussion of media coverage of the bilateral agenda between Colombia and Venezuela. Considering the predominance of personal relationships over legal and institutional elements in bilateral relations, the discussion on media coverage of bilateral issues focused on what journalists could do within that framework. Although there was general agreement that journalism should play a positive and constructive role in the strengthening and institutionalization of relations, there was a rich discussion about the

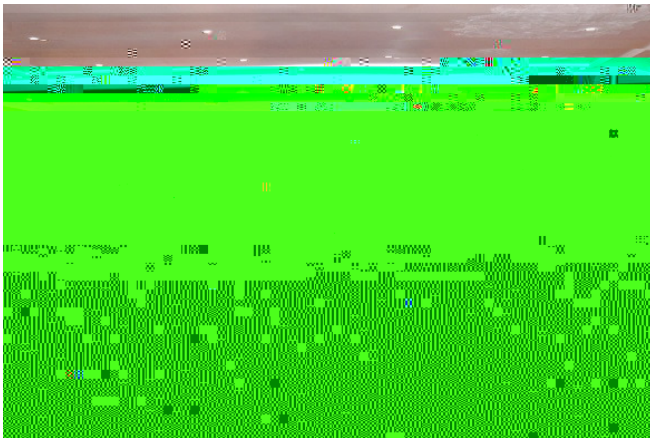
way in which journalism could or should contribute to that task.

In the view of some participants, it is not the role of journalists, to “help strengthen relations,” “contribute to integration,” “support the strengthening of those relations” or

disseminate the official Venezuelan position. In bo

- k) What sources are technically valid for journalists when covering Colombian or Venezuelan affairs?
- l) Can journalists from one side or the other be considered valid sources?

## Appendix



The meeting brought together high-profile managers and editors from the public and private sectors in Colombia and Venezuela to discuss the quality of media coverage of bilateral issues by some of the major media outlets in the two countries. The meeting facilitated both an exchange of views about critical issues related to journalism and mutual understanding of problems and difficulties facing the media in both countries.

Because of the deep polarization in Venezuela, it is very difficult to organize meetings in which both sectors participate. Political and ideological differences between the two groups tend to be seen as irreconcilable, because there is no common ground that can serve as a basis for discussing opposing viewpoints. Professionals who identify with the “Bolivarian” process tend not to meet with professionals who question or oppose that process, and vice versa. The first meeting between Colombian and Venezuelan journalists therefore allowed the exchange of views not only between Colombian and Venezuelan editors and managers, but also between Venezuelan editors and managers of public (governmental) and private (non-governmental) media.

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*Annex A: Meeting agenda*

First Meeting of Journalists  
from Venezuela and Colombia  
Caracas, Venezuela, November 23, 2010

O AM		
	8:30am	Participant registration
	9:00am	<b>Open n</b> Jennifer McCoy Director of the Americas Program, Carter Center
		<b>n od c on o p c p n</b>

Morning  
session



*Annex B: Participant list*

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### ***Annex C: Participant biographies***

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***Eleazar Díaz Rangel.*** Former president of the Venezuelan Association of Journalists, director of the National Union of Media Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Prensa*) and founding president of the Latin American Federation of Journalists (*Federación Latinoamericana de Periodistas*, FELAP). He has also served as director of the daily *Punto* and the magazine *Tribuna*, and director of the School of Social Communication of the Central University of Venezuela (*Universidad Central de Venezuela*, UCV). Currently director of the daily *Ultimas Noticias*, Venezuela's largest-circulation daily.

***Elides Rojas.*** Lawyer and journalist, he has been managing editor of the daily *El Universal* since 1996. Before that, he served as managing editor of the daily *El Nacional* (1979-1990) and managing editor and news and information director of the daily *Economía Hoy* (1972-1978). He has received various awards for his journalistic work in recent years, including the National Journalism Award in the Opinion category in 1999; the National Scientific Journalism Award in 1985; the Societ5.15007()-27007()-270

Buildings and Equipment (*Fundación de Edificaciones y Dotaciones Educativas*, FEDE). Before

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*Ricardo Avila.* Journalist specializing in political current event

**Luz María Sierra.** A journalist specializing in political science, she is currently general editor of the well-known magazine, *Semana*. She formerly served, among other positions, as managing editor, international editor and editor of the legal section of the Bogotá daily *El Tiempo*. In the public sphere, she worked as cabinet chief in her country's Foreign Ministry. She was a member of the Colombia-Ecuador Binational Dialogue Group, a bilateral dialogue initiative promoted by the