

## **The Elders call on President Biden to reverse the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism**

**LONDON, 2 February 2021**

The Elders today called on President Biden to take immediate steps to reverse the decision, taken by the former Trump Administration on 11 January, to redesignate Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The Elders expressed concern that the reasons cited by former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for the redesignation included the Cuban Government's refusal to extradite to Colombia members of the National Liberation Army (ELN), who were in Cuba to participate in peace negotiations facilitated by the Cuban and Norwegian Governments.

The ELN negotiators had been given formal assurances of safe return, in line with standard protocols for peace negotiations, which the Cuban Government is right to uphold.

In calling on President Biden to act, The Elders reaffirmed the principle that no state should face negative repercussions for helping to facilitate peace agreements, and urged full respect and recognition for the critical role regularly played by mediating countries in peace processes around the world.

Any actions that undermine these principles risk having a seriously detrimental impact on future peace processes, and may make countries more hesitant to act as facilitators in the future.

**[Juan Manuel Santos](#), Member of The Elders and former President of Colombia, said:** *"I unequivocally reject the decision of the previous US Administration to redesignate Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. President Biden should immediately begin the review process to overturn this. Cuba should be applauded for the crucial role it played in helping to end decades of conflict and facilitating reconciliation in Colombia, not face sanctions for having done so. Countries which facilitate peace processes deserve our thanks and appreciation."*

### **Note to Editors**

The Elders are long-term supporters of the peace process in Colombia, which was led by former President Juan Manuel Santos. Three other members of the group were present at the signing

of the 2016 peace agreement: [Ban Ki-moon](#) in his then-role as Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late [Kofi Annan](#), then Chair of The Elders, and [Ernesto Zedillo](#), former President of Mexico.

ENDS

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### About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Ban Ki-moon](#) (Deputy Chair), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Zeid Raad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#) (Deputy Chair), [Juan Manuel Santos](#), [Mary Robinson](#) (Chair) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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