

# Ghana welcomes collaboration with Colombia

## • In peacekeeping

By Kate Baaba Hudson, ACCRA

**T**HE government of Ghana welcomes the initiative to enhance collaboration between Colombia and Ghana in the area of peacekeeping.

This comes with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Institute of Geostategic Studies and Political Affairs of the Military University of Nueva Granada of Colombia and the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), which will enable the two countries to contribute more to promoting global peace and security.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney-General, Mrs Marietta Brew Appiah-Oppong, gave the assurance when she led a Ghanaian delegation to the National Day celebration of the Republic of Colombia at the W. E. B. Du-Bois Centre in Accra.

She recalled an important milestone in the bilateral relations between Ghana and Colombia, which was heralded by the visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Madam Patti Londono, to Ghana to participate in the first-ever political consultations between Ghana and Colombia in October last year.

The A-G said that provided a platform for the two countries to sign a number of agreements, as well as to identify new areas for cooperation in the future.

### Bridging the linguistics gap

Mrs Appiah-Oppong further commended the Government of Colombia for efforts geared towards not only enhancing the bilateral relations between the two countries, but also aimed at bridging the cultural and linguistics gap between their people.

One such successful initiative has been the teaching of Colombian Spanish language to diplomats and public servants, which began two years ago, she recalled.

She said participants who had acquired training under this

programme could boast a level of ability to communicate in the Spanish language and thus positioned to take advantage of what the Spanish world had to offer them and Ghana as a whole, she stressed.

She, therefore, commended the participating teachers, namely Mr Jean Paul, Madam Estella Agudello and Madam Janneth Akorez, for their selflessness and dedication to duty in imparting knowledge to their compatriots.

### Dr Patarroyo

The Justice Minister also acknowledged the tremendous efforts of a renowned Colombian scientist, Dr Manuel Elkin Patarroyo, who is conducting research into an anti-malaria vaccine.

She said Ghana was pleased to have him in the country in March this year to seek partnership with various research institutions in the country for that purpose.

"It is the desire of the Government of Ghana to sustain this partnership, in view of the menace malaria causes to the health of the people of Ghana, particularly pregnant women and children, who continue to suffer

relatively more fatalities," she added.

### Colombian Ambassador

In her address, the Colombian Ambassador to Ghana, Madam Claudia Turbay Quintero, observed that the three years of ongoing cooperation between the Colombian and Ghana governments, had allowed them to be witnesses of a rich and growing political agenda, institutional relations and South-South Cooperation, in various areas of mutual interest.

Thanks to that, she said they had had the opportunity to perform specific activities in the fields of health, culture, sports, and the promotion of trade and investment.

In the framework of South-South cooperation, she stressed that they had focused on programmes in areas including immigration, environment, best practices in public administration, as this was the means by which they could support one another to achieve development goals



• Mrs Marietta Brew Appiah-Oppong (left), the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, delivering her address. The lady with her is Madam Claudia Turbay Quintero, Colombian Ambassador to Ghana

and ambitions towards the accomplishment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Also, we are covering different topics such as education, cultural diplomacy, decentralisation, best practices in the public sector, security, anti-narcotics and drug trafficking agreements, social interventions and business missions, which allowed one-on-one meetings between Colombians and West African citizens.

### Multi-cultural country

The Colombian Ambassador observed that Colombia was a pluri-ethnic and multi-cultural country where races and nationalities had melted to form their identity and their national spirit, and that fact precisely was what made their country part of the African diaspora.

"You know that approximately 10 per cent of our 51 million inhabitants is afro descendant. This holds a special significance. Being here today at Du-Bois Centre, we are expressing our common feeling of Pan Africanism. We are celebrating our Independence Day here for the second consecutive time, together with you", she stated.

### Integration and shared vision

"In these three years, we have witnessed that together we have been able to accomplish our main objective which was to find opportunities to work together, supporting our development, integration and our shared vision of a better future for our nations," she stated.

"We arrived here with the aim of deepening the relationship between Colombia and Ghana, and also from Ghana with the rest of the countries of the West African sub-region, together with Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea.

It is very satisfactory for me, knowing that already, I have been able to present my Letters of Credence in nine countries, and conscious of the fact that the opportunities to do so for other countries will soon present themselves," she observed.

She said what was important about that was that, they had already started working with many of them, even if she had not yet had the opportunity to officially present Letters of Credence

and that she was expressing through their actions the commitment of Colombia to trace a common path with all of us.

### Celebrating the day

Mrs Quintero said she was honoured and delighted to welcome all to the centre, to celebrate together an important historical event for Colombia.

She said the day was in commemoration of their 206th year of independence and they were reinforcing their democratic values and vocation for peace.

"As you may be aware, on Thursday June 23, 2016, Colombia signed a historic peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), putting an end to a 60-year long war. This is a signal of Colombia's commitment to peace building, conflict resolution and post conflict stability," she announced.

Colombia also hosted one of the most important Colombian contemporary authors, Roberto Burgos Cantor, during a visit to Ghana last April, when he had the honour of being a special guest during the Hispanic Week at the University of Ghana, Legon, where he engaged a master's class and answered questions from participating students and teachers in relation to the Hispanic literature, she said.

Currently, she said, the embassy was hosting two notable Colombians, one of whom is Ms Patricia Lara, a Colombian writer and journalist, who is the author of several remarkable written works, among them, 'a Blue Blood Thread', 'Women in War', and her latest one 'Your Father's Footprint'.

She said the other is Ms María Gómez, a noted young poet, who had already been awarded internationally for her poetry.

Miss Gomez gave a wonderful recitation of a poem at the function which received a very warm and loud applause.

The Ghanaian students learning Spanish also entertained the guests with a song in Spanish.

Writer's Email:

kate.hudson@graphic.com.gh