The Role of Biologists in an Evolving Political Climate in Colombia

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Abstract

The Colombian government, under the administration of President Juan Manuel Santos, signed a Peace agreement with Latin America’s largest guerilla group, the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC), ending a fifty-year period of civil conflict and unrest on November 24, 2016. FARC primarily occupied Colombia’s rainforests. The final agreement for the ending of the conflict claims that Peace enables protection of the environment through respect for nature and its biodiversity. However, the new developments, markets, industries, and human settlements that have flourished during Peacetime demonstrate greater negative impacts on Colombia’s forests and biodiversity than the impacts observed during conflict. Moreover, since the Peace agreement was enacted in 2016, public funding for science has also declined. Through an extensive literature review and personal interviews with prominent biologists in Colombia, this paper explores the evolving role of biologists in policy and the greatest threats to science in the last five decades. The intent is to provide recommendations for the role biologists should assume in policy that is environmentally-relevant, given that ten percent of the world’s total biodiversity is at stake.