

**RESPONSE BY JUAN MANUEL SANTOS AT THE PRESENTATION OF AN
HONORARY DEGREE BY THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

London, July 22nd, 2019

Dear Director Dame Minouche Shafik;
Professor Gareth Jones;
Dear graduands and friends,

Today I am living the prolongation of a dream that began almost half a century ago.

In the early seventies, after completing my undergraduate degree at the University of Kansas, my greatest dream was to pursue a master's degree at the London School of Economics.

One of the happiest days of my life was when I received the letter accepting me. It was a dream come true.

I did not imagine then that, twenty years later, I was going to be awarded the status of Distinguished Alumnus.

And much less, much less, I imagined that one day I was going to receive an Honorary Doctorate Degree from this institution so close to my heart.

My presence today in this event is the living proof that dreams not only come true but can exceed our wildest imagination.

The importance of this School in the history of the world is widely recognized.

The LSE played a vital role in the development of the Welfare State.

In these classrooms, scholars began to talk about the State's commitment to protect and care for the poorest and neediest in society.

In other words, here the State found its heart.

In my personal experience as a political leader, I must give credit to two eminent LSE professors. Amartya Sen, who taught me how to measure and fight poverty in a different way, which allowed my government to cut extreme poverty by half and reduce the Gini coefficient more than any country in Latin America.

And Sir Anthony Giddens, who inspired me to put his Third Way theory into practice in Colombia, with very good results. I even wrote a book about it with the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

I am grateful to this School for such a legacy.

Today, when leaders of many countries take up extreme positions, right or left, we need to redefine the middle path, that third way that takes the best of the market and the best of the State to build more prosperous and inclusive societies.

Today we need supportive and just governments. We need to get rid of reactionary nationalisms and proletarian populisms. We must abolish speeches and doctrines of racial, religious, economic or any other type of supremacy.

We need leaders who, instead of saying "my country first," say "humanity first."

We need to understand that, beyond differences and nuances, human beings are ONE.

We need to realize that the destiny of all humanity depends on our commitment to care for the Earth, our common home, threatened by climate change. Because nuclear war is just a possibility, but environmental disaster is a certainty if we don't take drastic action now.

Half a century ago, my dream was to study in this prestigious academic institution.

Today, dear friends, upon receiving this honour, my dream is that all of us, human beings, may rediscover a new path of moderation, peace, tolerance, compassion, and inclusion.

Let us all understand that Oneness is much more than a concept...

It is the most profound reality of our existence!

Thank you.