We are grateful for the abundant outpouring of support for Colombia as we endeavor to put our 50+ year war to rest. The KIN community has followed along with us on this journey. As the very first KIN Global keynote speaker in 2009, Juan Manuel Santos laid out his vision for constructing a multi-lateral peace process, and seven years later, Colombia created a peace accord. The world celebrated with us.

As many of you know, that accord was struck down in a devastating ‘no’ vote on October 2 by a razor thin margin. No one had expected the no vote to win, not even the opposition. Of course, if you are the leader of the vote to stop the peace accord, you need to have a plan to replace it. In this case, the opposition had no plan. The country fell into a deep state of shock and uncertainty. We had followed Brexit with our own Paxit.

Five days later, the international community raised its voice in support and in a brilliant strategic move, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded President Santos the Nobel Peace Prize. This gave Santos the oxygen to keep the peace process alive.

The people of Colombia joined in and took to the streets in peaceful demonstrations all over the country. Just yesterday, Simon Bolivar Plaza the main square in Bogotá, was covered in white by a local artist. This inspired a spontaneous demonstration for peace as college students used social media to call fellow students, indigenous leaders, farmers and victims to join them in the square. 30,000 showed up. The Colombian people want peace. The question is not if but how.

What we thought was a major defeat has turned into the possibility of a more lasting, inclusive peace. It unleashed a set of constructive events that will lead to a more sustainable peace in Colombia. Politicians who were promoting the ‘no vote’ for political gains are now being called on to make proposals and the Colombian people are holding them accountable to present reasonable, viable proposals instead of the extreme demands of the past.
The peace process is still fragile, but it is clear we are moving ahead. No one wants to move backward. Despite 50+ years of war, Colombia is a stable democracy with a stable economy. We are second in the world in biodiversity with many pristine landscapes. From agro-forestry to eco-tourism, the potential for sustainable development is great. The World Bank has determined that Colombia’s wind potential alone could power the country. Our great task is to build a country that works for all our citizens.

As President Santos described all those years ago at KIN, Colombia continues to innovate by learning lessons from the success and failure of others and then coming up with a solution that is uniquely Colombian.