

STATEMENT FOR THE PUBLIC OPINION AND THE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNION MOVEMENT

The Colombian National Beverage Industry Workers Union, subsidiary to the Colombian United Workers Central (CUT), and the International Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Beverages and Tobacco Workers Union (UITA) denounce the perfidious murder committed June 21 on the person of our comrade OSCAR DARÍO SOTO POLO, president of our section in the city of Montería, in the presence of his little daughter, whom he used to take to school every day. This criminal action adds to the endless chain of murdered union representatives, something which in Colombia has become a daily practice with the aim of spreading terrorism and destabilizing social organizations and unionism in particular.

Comrade OSCAR SOTO POLO was always recognized by his irrevocable democratic convictions and his commitment to the principles of fairness and justice for the needy, virtues that he applied and taught during his leadership in the union.

This event, that puts our organization and the national union movement in mourning, demands from us the obligation of passionately clamor the National Government for the protection of the free practice of union activity, as recognized by the Colombian State, when it signed the international agreements of the ILO.

With regard to the articles published by some media on the accusations against PANAMCO COLOMBIA S.A. and its subsidiaries –among them, Embotelladora Coca-Cola- of being linked to illegal armed groups in violating the human rights of union representatives, and, taking into account that SINALTRAINBEC has several sections in those bottlers, we want to state that we have not a single indication that this is true, and therefore we ask the National Government and the General Attorney to rapidly open an investigation in order to clarify the reasons for the assassination of comrade Soto, and we also ask the people to cooperate with the justice in finding and arresting the material and intellectual authors of the crime.

We express our gratitude for the national solidarity and the immediate reaction of the Latin American Regional Secretariat of UITA and its affiliated organizations in condemning and rejecting the death of comrade OSCAR SOTO in front of the Colombian government and judicial authorities, and we also ask for the reaction of the international human rights organizations.

PEACE in his grave for this good father, good son, good comrade and martyr of the workers' movement.

**NATIONAL MANAGING BOARD
SINALTRAINBEC**

Bogotá, D.C., June 27, 2001