



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 11, 2011

CONTACT: [Julia Lawless](#), [Antonia Ferrier](#)
(202) 224-4515

HATCH STATEMENT AT FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING EXAMINING THE U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today delivered the following opening statement at a committee hearing examining the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement:

Today's hearing provides us with a great opportunity to talk about the many benefits of our free trade agreement with Colombia. Before turning to our witnesses, I think it is important to put our agreement with Colombia in context.

In the 1990's Colombia was on the verge of becoming a failed state as drug trafficking fueled urban and rural violence. Well-armed insurgents and paramilitary groups battled over territorial control. Unemployment, corruption and kidnapping were widespread.

Today, Colombia is reawakening. Violence is down, employment is up, and the economy is growing. Institutional reforms are creating a stronger and more vibrant democracy. Land reform and reparations for victims of violence are being undertaken in an unprecedented effort to heal the wounds of the past. Years of bipartisan cooperation through Plan Colombia and through programs such as the Andean Trade Preference Act helped make this transformation possible.

But our work is not done. Colombia continues to face challenges. Through approval of our pending trade agreement with Colombia we can help meet those challenges and take another step toward achieving our shared goal of a strong, prosperous and democratic Colombia.

We will hear a lot today about the *Labor Action Plan* recently concluded between President Obama and President Santos. This is a good development which has helped bring us to where we are today, even though it is not part of our trade agreement.

But let's be clear. Our trade goes far beyond the action plan. It transforms a one-way preferential trade relationship into a two-way street — giving U.S. exporters fair access to a

large and growing consumer market. The agreement will affect the lives of workers across the United States in a positive way. A good example of the agreement's effect can be found in my home state of Utah where workers at AC Med, a Salt Lake City company that exports hospital beds to Colombia, will see tariffs of twenty percent eliminated immediately upon implementation of this agreement. The agreement also will provide better access for U.S. service providers, telecommunication companies, and agricultural exporters. So, while the action plan is important, let's not lose sight of the far more significant economic benefits of the agreement.

The agreement will also benefit Colombia, providing predictability and certainty to many Colombian businesses that export flowers and other products to the United States, as well as encourage partnerships and investments between Colombian and American businesses. Once implemented, the agreement will sustain economic growth, help create jobs and provide the opportunity to lift millions of Colombians out of poverty.

Nor can we lose sight of the agreement's geopolitical significance. Colombia sits between Venezuela and Ecuador—two countries which seek to distance themselves and others from the United States as they pursue radical models of economic development not based on free market principles. We ignore this political reality at our peril.

Colombia is also at the forefront in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. The drug trade directly impacts the lives of many American and Colombian citizens on a daily basis. Only by working together can we stop the tide of illegal drugs. In this critical battle, we cannot afford to turn our back on such a strong friend and ally by rejecting our trade agreement.

This summer, I will do all I can to ensure that the Congress approves our trade agreement with Colombia. In doing so, we will boost U.S. exports by obtaining improved access to the growing Colombian market. We will also be standing by a true friend and ally and helping millions of Colombian workers, as well as U.S. workers, live better lives.

Despite facing many challenges, I believe Colombia is well on its way to being one of the most prosperous, stable and democratic countries in our hemisphere. By approving this agreement, we can all be proud to play a small part in that success.

###