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## STATEMENT REGARDING MIGUEL ÁNGEL BELTRÁN OF ASPU, COLOMBIA

Education International's 10th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference declares its solidarity with Colombian Professor Miguel Ángel Beltrán, demands an end to all prosecutions against him, and calls on the Colombian authorities to guarantee the protection of his rights.

Professor Beltrán was finally acquitted by the Supreme Court of Justice of Colombia in 2016, after being imprisoned on the basis of fraudulent evidence for three years being accused of belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and after his dismissal from the National University of Colombia. During this time, Education International and its affiliate ASPU, the Trade Union of University Professors of Colombia, have carried out a number of campaigns calling for his release. We have also filed formal complaints about what we believe is a case of ideological persecution, a violation of the right to academic freedom and the freedom to do research and critical thinking. The campaign "Silence is not an alternative, critical thinking is not terrorism" has been critical for the release of Beltrán.

Mr Beltrán was invited as a panellist at the 10th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference in Accra, Ghana of 14 to 16 November 2016. However, his arrival in Accra was delayed due to his unjustified detention by the immigration authorities of both Colombia and Panama. The authorities in Panama detained Mr Beltrán and left him incommunicado for 28 hours at the International Airport of Panama where he was to join his first connecting flight. He was then returned to Bogotá, which obliged Education International to change his route so he did not have to travel through Panama on his journey to Ghana; this entailed strict international monitoring by Education International affiliates. In our view, this situation calls for a strong complaint against the immigration authorities, the police and other legal bodies to prevent our colleague's freedom being limited by the arbitrary action of civil servants who are, apparently, unaware of his rights.

These events have generated much concern in the academic community of Education International, both among professors of higher education and researchers, about the various mechanisms employed to curtail academic freedoms, freedom of thought and the freedom to do research.

Finally, all of the Professors and Researchers attending the 10th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference of Education International in Accra, Ghana of 14 to 16 November 2016 support this request to the Colombian authorities, and specifically to the National University of Colombia, to effectively restore to Professor Miguel Ángel Beltrán all of his rights and particularly for him to be reinstated to his academic post.