



# Security Council

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## United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2487 \(2019\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The report covers the period from 27 December 2019 to 26 March 2020.

#### II. Major contextual developments

2. Efforts by newly inaugurated regional and local administrations to incorporate peace implementation into their governing agendas were a key feature of the reporting period. On 1 January 2020, all 32 new governors, of whom two are women, over 1,100 new mayors, of whom 131 are women, and departmental assemblies and municipal councils took office throughout Colombia, following the October 2019 departmental and local elections, the first since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Governors and mayors have begun the process of crafting their departmental and local development plans, which will guide their priorities for the next four years. The Government has been working with them to encourage local and regional ownership of peace-related programmes. In several regions, former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) have been taking part in these participatory processes for the formulation of regional and local development plans. Through visits by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia to departmental capitals and conflict-affected regions, and the permanent efforts of the Mission's offices in the field, the Mission has also engaged proactively with the new authorities and offered its support on matters related to reintegration and security guarantees.

3. In February 2020, the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation hosted a meeting, attended by over 170 mayors and 21 governors, to discuss the Government's implementation of programmes derived from the peace agreement. During an assembly convened by the National Federation of Departments, all 32 governors welcomed the Government's proposal to create a peace office within each departmental government, responsible for coordinating and leading peace-related policy in the territories. On 20 February, the Mayor of Bogotá, who is the first woman elected to the position, co-organized a meeting with civil society movements that brought together governors and mayors from different regions to launch the National Network of Local Authorities for Peace, in support of the implementation of the peace agreement.



4. On 12 February, the Government and the National Strike Committee, constituted during the protests of November 2019, met for the seventh time but did not reach an agreement on the way forward regarding the list of demands made by the Committee on matters including guarantees for the exercise of the right to social protest, social, political, economic and human rights, anti-corruption efforts and peace, as well as the implementation of previous agreements signed with social movements. Some protests continued to take place during the reporting period. The Committee had called for protests on 25 March, but they were suspended owing to the COVID-19 outbreak.

5. The national conversation launched in November 2019 by President Duque in response to the protests has continued, with a focus on six issues: inclusive growth, transparency and the efforts to combat corruption, education, the “Peace with Legality” government strategy, the environment and young people. The Mission was invited to participate in all four meetings on “Peace with Legality”, during which various actors voiced their concerns and made proposals on topics related to the implementation of the peace agreement, including the reintegration of former combatants, security guarantees for social leaders and communities, comprehensive rural reform, transitional justice and victims.

6. On 30 January 2020, Francisco Barbosa, who was serving as Presidential Counsellor for Human Rights, was appointed Attorney General. He defined his priorities as strengthening investigations into attacks against social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants; fighting criminal structures, drug trafficking and corruption; and enhancing the territorial presence of the Office of the Attorney General. He also provided assurances that he would respect the autonomy of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and on 3 February he met with its President, Patricia Linares, who presented him with a proposal for joint work. On 17 February, Martha Mancera, the Director of the Special Investigation Unit, which is in charge of investigating attacks against social leaders and former FARC-EP combatants, was designated Deputy Attorney General.

7. In March, the Government of Colombia intensified preventive measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including declaring a state of emergency, closing the borders and ordering a countrywide quarantine from 24 March to 13 April. President Duque also announced that the Government would allocate additional resources for the public health system and social welfare programmes. As at 22 March, the Ministry of Health had confirmed 277 cases of COVID-19 across the country, with two deaths. On 17 March, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation stated that the Government would be taking the necessary measures to ensure that the implementation of peace-related programmes could continue, despite the challenges resulting from the outbreak.

#### **Resolution of disputes regarding the implementation of the peace agreement**

8. Despite the areas of practical cooperation referred to in the present report, during the reporting period the parties continued to publicly voice strong differences regarding compliance by the other with its obligations under the peace agreement. Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) has been especially critical of the adequacy of measures to protect former combatants and the scope of the Government’s “Peace with Legality” strategy, which it considers to be a narrow interpretation of the peace agreement; the Government has defended its efforts and emphasized that the implementation of the peace agreement is a long-term process, and has in turn raised questions about the commitment of FARC in some areas. While the parties aired such differences in public and at times sharply, the primary body established to allow for high-level dialogue and the resolution of differences between the parties, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, met only once during the reporting period.

The Mission, along with the guarantor countries that serve as observers to the Commission, continued to encourage greater use of that forum.

9. On 12 February, the Government issued a decree establishing 31 July 2020 as the deadline for FARC to hand over all assets included in the inventory that was submitted in August 2017 by the former FARC-EP to the Government. The FARC party has expressed its disagreement with the decree, arguing that the former FARC-EP lost its capacity to keep custody of those assets after the laying down of weapons, that third parties have taken ownership of some of the assets, and that the Government has failed to take effective and timely custody of the assets. Nevertheless, since the issuance of the decree, FARC and the Special Assets Administration have been meeting and have established a schedule for complying with their obligations related to the handover of the assets. At the request of the parties, the Mission participated in a site visit to examine the situation of several properties in a rural area of Bogotá district included in the inventory.

### **Comprehensive rural reform**

10. Regarding the development programmes with a territorial focus for 170 conflict-affected municipalities, one of several components of the comprehensive rural reform set out in section 1 of the peace agreement, the Government reports that 862 infrastructure works have been completed and delivered, 323 are being carried out and 7 are in the planning stages. The Government has made available various funding sources for the development programmes, including royalties from the exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals and the “works for taxes” programme involving the private sector. Notably, 162 municipalities and 15 departments have adopted legal measures to include the development programmes in their territorial planning instruments. Communities that participated in the formulation of the development programmes have voiced their expectation that they will be directly involved in their implementation. In February, President Duque visited El Paujil (Caquetá Department) to monitor progress in the implementation of works related to the development programme covering the 16 municipalities in that Department.

11. In January, the Government presented the road map for stabilization for the Catatumbo region, a pilot for a long-term strategy provided for in the National Development Plan that aims to coordinate the actions of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the development programmes. The Government has committed to producing road maps for the remaining development programmes by the end of 2020.

### **Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition**

12. The seven cases launched by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continue to advance. The tribunal reports having received testimonies from 291 former FARC-EP members, 232 members of the public security forces and 7 non-combatant State agents and third parties.

13. Approximately 265,000 victims have been accredited in all seven cases. Victims are participating increasingly in the proceedings of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and have insisted that all individuals appearing before the Special Jurisdiction contribute fully to the truth and acknowledge their respective responsibilities. In February, victims of case 003, on extrajudicial killings presented as casualties of combat by State agents (known as “false positives”), requested that a former army general be excluded from the tribunal’s jurisdiction for failing to acknowledge his responsibility in the context of the case. In March, the Special Jurisdiction reported that it had received 272 individual and group observations from victims of case 001 on kidnappings by the former FARC-EP, including their concerns that the version

presented by the former FARC-EP fell short of victims' expectations for truth and acknowledgement of their suffering.

14. On 17 February, in the framework of case 003, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace handed over the body of an individual who had been missing for 18 years to his family. Another 54 bodies of potential victims were found by the Special Jurisdiction as part of a series of exhumation proceedings in Dabeiba (Antioquia Department), in coordination with the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing and the Colombian Institute for Forensic Medicine, which were prompted by the testimony of a member of the military. To date, 1,860 members of the public security forces have received judicial benefits from the Special Jurisdiction and the ordinary justice system in exchange for their contribution to the truth.

15. The Special Jurisdiction has continued reviewing 941 petitions by non-combatant State agents and civilian third parties to come under its jurisdiction, of which it has accepted 13 and rejected 258, considering that their crimes were not related to the armed conflict. In February, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling reaffirming the Special Jurisdiction's competence over non-combatant State agents and civilian third parties over crimes committed during the conflict, beyond financing or collaborating with organized armed groups.

16. FARC has raised concerns that the Independent System for Advice and Defence lacks the necessary staffing and resources. The System was provided for in the peace agreement to ensure the rights of victims and due process for all those appearing before the Special Jurisdiction.

17. In February, five national organizations representing women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people requested the Special Jurisdiction to open a case on sexual violence committed during the conflict.

18. The Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing has to date identified 599 persons (including 15 women) deemed missing who were not in any other database, and has received information from 80 individuals belonging to the public security forces and the former FARC-EP on the possible locations of 34 missing persons (including 8 women).

19. To date, the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition has held 11,700 collective and individual interviews, including with victims, former combatants and other actors. In February, the Commission held its first private interview with FARC party leaders to hear their version of key issues, including their responsibility in the conflict. In March, the Commission held the first in a series of 64 planned "spaces for listening" events, to hear testimonies from participants from all sectors of society regarding events related to the conflict. The event was focused on violence against former combatants since the signing of the peace agreement.

### **Substitution of illicit crops**

20. Communities across Colombia continue to be affected by the violence stemming from illegal economic activities. Thousands of families have placed their hopes in the effective implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, established under section 4 of the peace agreement, and are committed to transitioning towards legal productive activities. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), of the 60,087 ha of coca registered by 99,097 families participating in the Programme, an estimated 41,370 ha have been eradicated since August 2017. UNODC also reports that 96 per cent of families are complying with their voluntary eradication commitments. A total of 46,611 families have received their full year of interim payments, 61,183 families have received technical assistance and 58,846 families have received support for food security projects.

21. In March, in Vichada Department, the first 251 families completed their participation in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, and received machinery and tools to support their transition to cacao production. To maintain these results, it is essential to achieve progress in alternative productive projects that will allow families to move away from coca cultivation.

#### **Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional**

22. Between 14 and 17 February, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) carried out a national “armed strike”, during which civilians were told not to leave their homes or workplaces and to avoid any means of transportation. During the strike, incidents of violence were reported in several departments, including attacks on the public security forces, resulting in the death of one soldier. While the scope of the strike was concentrated in the traditional areas of operation of ELN (including the Departments of Norte de Santander and Arauca), other departments saw a spike in the group’s activities, including Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Cesar, La Guajira and Magdalena. The strike was widely rejected by Colombian society. Civil society organizations, along with the Catholic Church, renewed calls for dialogue between the Government and ELN. The Government condemned the actions of ELN and reiterated its conditions for resuming talks, namely the cessation of all criminal activities and the release of kidnapped persons.

### **III. Mission tasks**

#### **A. Reintegration**

##### **Transition and consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration**

23. In January, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization reconvened the tripartite working group on the transition and consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration, to follow up on the process initiated after the expiration of the legal status of the territorial areas in August 2019. The working group agreed on a calendar of joint visits to hold dialogues with residents of former territorial areas, surrounding communities and local authorities regarding, among other issues, ongoing efforts to identify and purchase plots of land, provide access to housing, and formally include those areas in municipal administrative and planning arrangements. A strategy regarding the consolidation of the territorial areas is being prepared by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and has yet to be considered by the National Reintegration Council. The inclusion of clear timelines and adequate resources should help to allay concerns among residents of the former territorial areas, whose participation in this process is fundamental.

24. Four joint visits took place during the reporting period, including to Ituango (Antioquia Department) and Buenos Aires (Cauca Department), where security concerns have led some residents of the former territorial areas to request a transfer to a different location. During the visits, former combatants expressed concerns about delays in access to land. Further visits have been postponed owing to the COVID-19 outbreak.

25. The Government, in particular the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the National Land Agency, is continuing to work to overcome the legal, technical and administrative obstacles delaying the purchase of plots of land for former territorial areas. No plots have been allocated to date.

### **Collective reintegration outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration**

26. A total of 9,412 former combatants currently reside outside former territorial areas, where providing them with the full scope of the benefits established in the peace agreement remains a key challenge, as noted in previous reports. Most of these new reintegration areas where collective processes are taking place still have limited access to land, housing, education, productive opportunities, health care and security.

27. So far, 22 out of 49 approved collective productive projects benefit former combatants outside former territorial areas. Support for collective reintegration in these new areas, from both the Government and FARC, is key to ensuring that former combatants outside the former territorial areas continue participating actively in the reintegration process.

### **Economic and social reintegration**

28. On 27 December 2019, the Government adopted a resolution establishing the reintegration road map, which was agreed between the parties and sets out the long-term framework for the socioeconomic reintegration process. Maintaining a spirit of dialogue and joint efforts will be key to implementing and raising awareness of the road map. In the coming months, medium- to long-term reintegration plans, both individual and collective, will be jointly defined by the parties through a participatory process.

29. The National Reintegration Council met only once during the reporting period and approved two new collective productive projects, benefiting 26 former combatants. This brings the number of approved collective projects to 49, benefiting 2,156 former combatants (including 695 women). Additionally, funding was disbursed for 19 projects, bringing the number of projects that have received funds to 43, benefiting 2,148 former combatants (including 607 women). The number of individual projects approved and for which funds were disbursed increased from 705 to 1,225, benefiting 1,440 former combatants (including 301 women). Approximately 27 per cent of accredited former combatants have received economic support for productive projects through these mechanisms.

30. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and FARC have agreed to include, as part of productive projects, criteria for their sustainability, including access to land and markets, technical assistance and strengthening productive organizations. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are providing technical assistance to 40 collective projects. Approximately one third of individual projects have received technical assistance through various mechanisms, including 233 projects supported by iNNpulsa, a government entity that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation.

31. Partnerships with the private sector and other public entities have been instrumental to ensuring support for productive projects. In February, the Inter-institutional Working Group on Tourism facilitated the participation of nine projects led by former combatants and community members in the National Tourism Fair. The Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, with support from UNDP and the Mission, continue to engage with the private sector, including restaurant and supermarket chains, and business associations to purchase former combatants' products.

32. Over two thirds of productive projects are still being carried out on rented land, and there has been no progress in granting land for this purpose.

33. Former combatants have legally constituted 139 cooperatives and other productive organizations; 18 are led by women and 9 are exclusively composed of women. These economic organizations are a key factor in the sustainability of collective productive projects. Many of them require technical assistance and support, including on legal, administrative and marketing matters. To date, only one third have received technical assistance.

34. The Technical Working Group on Gender of the National Reintegration Council has continued to issue gender-related recommendations for productive projects, but the lack of resources and dedicated technical capacity at the local level remains a challenge. Similarly, while the High-level Forum on Gender and the Technical Working Group on Gender have made efforts to advance the gender actions of the national reintegration policy (CONPES 3931), insufficient resources have hindered the implementation of the actions.

35. Efforts to provide housing for former combatants are ongoing and are closely tied to access to land. On 31 December 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture issued two resolutions granting subsidies for rural housing to 501 former combatants living in former territorial areas, but those subsidies will only materialize once land is purchased for those areas. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has adopted the guidelines allowing former combatants to use the one-time economic support for productive projects stipulated in the peace agreement for housing projects.

36. The Technical Working Group on Health of the National Reintegration Council – composed of FARC, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the Ministry of Health and the Mission – is meeting regularly to coordinate prevention measures in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak. On 18 March, the authorities and FARC issued a joint statement to raise awareness of prevention measures, including advising former combatants to remain inside the former territorial areas and other collective reintegration areas. Importantly, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has stated that the outbreak will not affect the monthly allowance for former combatants.

37. Some 98 per cent of former combatants have been enrolled in the national health system. The Government, FARC and the Mission have all been monitoring the implementation of temporary health services in the former territorial areas. The Technical Working Group on Health is conducting a survey to identify people's needs and the obstacles to accessing health care outside the former territorial areas. Former combatants with disabilities, the elderly and those with chronic illnesses continue to face difficulties accessing specialized services. Female former combatants remain concerned about the limited provision of reproductive health-care services and preventive care.

38. Currently, 5,224 former combatants (25 per cent of whom are women) are enrolled in educational programmes, from the primary level to high school. Former combatants are also increasingly looking for opportunities in higher education. A total of 1,768 former combatants (29 per cent of whom are women) have accessed vocational training through the National Training Service and measures have been taken to link vocational training with formal employment. The enrolment of women in educational and training programmes continues to be affected by the limited provision of childcare and the lack of targeted support for accessing employment.

### **Role of communities and departmental and local actors**

39. Ensuring that communities benefit from the reintegration process is essential to promoting local development and reconciliation. Some progress has been made with regard to the inclusion of a community-based approach in the reintegration process, as stipulated in the peace agreement. The Working Group on Community Reintegration of the National Reintegration Council has developed a joint strategy for the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and FARC aimed at strengthening the social

fabric and preventing stigmatization. With this goal in mind, the Agency is implementing 62 initiatives to bring together communities and former combatants. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is also working alongside the Agency for Territorial Renewal to integrate its community-based reintegration strategy in the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus.

40. Local authorities and communities have expressed the view that the establishment of former territorial areas in conflict-affected areas has brought productive projects, improved security and enhanced the presence of the State. In places where the transfer of former territorial areas is being considered, the same authorities and communities are concerned about the negative effect that could have on security and the provision of basic services.

41. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is actively engaging with the new local authorities to promote the inclusion of reintegration policies in local development plans. Departmental and local authorities have an increasingly important role to play in the reintegration process, particularly following the transition of the former territorial areas.

### **Political reintegration**

42. The 12 former combatants and FARC party candidates elected in the 2019 local elections, including those endorsed by other parties or coalitions, took office in January 2020. Moreover, seven former combatants, including four women, have been appointed to positions in local and departmental administrations.

43. In accordance with the Statute of the Opposition, which was approved by Congress as part of the implementation of section 2 of the peace agreement, the three municipal council members elected under the FARC party announced their stance vis-à-vis the new mayors: one as pro-government (Dabeiba, Antioquia Department), one as independent (Palmar, Santander Department) and one in opposition (Icononzo, Tolima Department). As provided for by the Statute, parties that declare themselves to be in opposition or independent are entitled to special rights and guarantees.

## **B. Security guarantees**

### **Security guarantees for former FARC-EP members**

44. During the reporting period, the Mission verified 16 killings of former FARC-EP members (including one woman), bringing the total to 190 (including three women) since the signing of the peace agreement. The Mission has also verified 39 attempted killings (including three women) and 13 disappearances since the signing of the peace agreement. The Mission is closely following up on the investigations by the Office of the Attorney General and the Special Investigation Unit into the failed attack of January 2020 against the President of the FARC party, Rodrigo Londoño, and into the violent deaths of two former combatants who the authorities have linked to the attack.

45. According to the Office of the Attorney General, the majority of attacks against former combatants continue to be linked to illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. Approximately 73 per cent of killings of former combatants have occurred in rural areas characterized by a limited State presence, poverty, illicit economies and the proliferation of criminal organizations. Attacks continue to be concentrated in the Departments of Cauca (36), Nariño (25), Antioquia (22), Caquetá (20), Norte de Santander (16), Meta (13), Putumayo (13) and Valle del Cauca (12), which also have the highest number of early warnings issued by the Office of the Ombudsman. In these areas, former combatants also face a heightened risk of recruitment by illegal armed groups.

46. Only two of the killings took place in former territorial areas, which demonstrates the importance of extending protection measures to former combatants living outside those areas, including in new areas of collective reintegration. The Tripartite Protection and Security Mechanism is expanding its visits to areas outside the former territorial areas to raise awareness among local authorities about the security needs of former combatants, including those living outside the former territorial areas.

47. The Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation continues to coordinate the implementation of the measures announced in June 2019 to strengthen protection for former combatants and support the entities responsible for investigating attacks against them. The Inter-institutional Coordination Mechanism for Security and Protection, led by the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, held four meetings at the regional level, including in the areas of heaviest violence against former FARC-EP members. FARC has complained that the party's representatives to the Technical Committee on Security and Protection, which was established by the peace agreement, were not invited to those meetings.

48. In February, former combatants in the former territorial area in Ituango (Antioquia Department), the municipality with the most attacks against former combatants (the Mission was able to confirm 11 killings, 2 attempted killings and 1 disappearance), demanded to be relocated following a further deterioration in the security situation. In response, on 19 February the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation chaired a meeting in Ituango of the Inter-institutional Coordination Mechanism for Security and Protection. The Government and former combatants agreed on the need to relocate the territorial area, and the Government is currently considering a number of possible plots of land. Four days after the meeting, a massive displacement of 872 persons took place from rural communities in Ituango to its urban centre. Former combatants in the former territorial area in Buenos Aires (Cauca Department) have also asked to be relocated owing to the security situation in that municipality.

49. During the reporting period, 78 new bodyguards, including 22 women, joined the Specialized Subdirectorate for Security and Protection of the National Protection Unit, bringing the total up to 1,200, the number set out in Decree No. 299 (2017). They include 1,193 bodyguards assigned for protection schemes for former FARC-EP members. That figure includes 767 former combatants, of whom 146 are women. There are a total of 164 women bodyguards. Nonetheless, according to the Subdirectorate, a further 183 bodyguards are needed for 45 newly approved and 54 incomplete protection schemes. Women former combatants continue to report that their requests for the use of collective protection schemes are not adequately prioritized, resulting in increased risks for them.

50. Over 400 requests for protection schemes are currently pending, owing to staffing shortages in the Subdirectorate, which is affecting the security guarantees of former FARC-EP members. Three former combatants were killed while waiting for the implementation of protection measures and seven more were killed while their protection measures were under evaluation by the Subdirectorate.

51. The Special Investigation Unit made progress on investigations into several killings of former FARC-EP members. As a result of the Unit's investigations, a judge ordered the precautionary detention of a colonel and three soldiers of the Colombian army for the April 2019 homicide of a former combatant, Dimar Torres. With regard to the October 2019 homicide of a former FARC-EP commander, Alexander Parra, inside the former territorial area in Mesetas (Meta Department), six people have been arrested, including a former combatant. The Unit's efforts have led to a total of 24

convictions (3 during the reporting period) and 16 cases at the trial stage (3 more during the reporting period), out of 214 investigated attacks against former combatants, including 175 homicides, 26 attempted homicides and 13 disappearances.

52. In February, the Office of the Attorney-General and the police arrested José Alberto Arrigui, also known as “Contador”, the leader of the illegal armed group “Guerrillas Unidas del Pacífico”, which has a presence in Nariño Department. He is accused of various crimes against social leaders and former combatants, including ordering the homicide of a former FARC-EP member in December 2018. Efforts to identify and prosecute the intellectual authors of such attacks are essential to fighting impunity.

53. The public security forces have an important role to play in supporting the work of the Unit, including by guaranteeing its immediate access to crime scenes and by accelerating arrests of suspects, both material and intellectual. They also have an important role to play within the Integrated Information Centre, which was established as part of the measures announced by the Government in June 2019 and is led by the Ministry of Defence. The Centre is tasked with supporting the Unit’s investigations into attacks against former combatants.

54. In February, the Office of the Inspector General issued a directive ordering State institutions to coordinate protection measures to prevent risks for former FARC-EP combatants. That same month, the Senate Peace Commission created a high-level mechanism to follow up on attacks and monitor prevention measures.

55. Despite its important role, the joint working group on the investigation of attacks against former FARC-EP members, which is composed of the Office of the Attorney General, FARC and the Mission, was not convened during the reporting period.

#### **Security guarantees for communities, human rights defenders and social leaders**

56. Rural communities continue to bear the brunt of the violence resulting from the actions of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and confrontations among them and with the public security forces. Communities in Chocó and Cauca Departments continue to suffer as a result of the actions of these groups, particularly over control of illicit economies. The situation in rural areas of Antioquia Department, including the municipality of Ituango (see paragraphs 24 and 48), where multiple killings, massacres and massive displacements have been linked to disputes among illegal armed groups, is of grave concern. In the Catatumbo region of Norte de Santander Department, illegal armed groups continue to victimize long-suffering communities. On 20 January, the Mayor of Tumaco (Nariño Department) declared a state of humanitarian and social emergency in the municipality after activities by illegal armed groups resulted in a series of forced displacements of several communities that drove more than 3,000 people, mainly of Afro-Colombian origin, from rural areas to the municipal urban centre. In Putumayo Department, two leaders of crop substitution programmes, including one woman, were killed during the reporting period.

57. The Office of the Ombudsman issued 20 early warnings of numerous risks to civilian populations, including forced displacements, confinements, attacks against human rights defenders and recruitment by illegal armed groups. Six of those early warnings were of imminent character, for municipalities in the Departments of Cesar, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Nariño and Córdoba. Several of the early warnings included risks of sexual violence and forced recruitment.

58. In its latest annual report, released on 26 February, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) highlighted the persistence

of high levels of violence against human rights defenders and social leaders in 2019, including 108 verified homicides (including 15 women and 2 members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community). Between 1 January and 24 March 2020, OHCHR received 56 complaints regarding killings of social leaders and human rights defenders, 6 of which have been verified, including the killing of two women.

59. Section 3.4 of the peace agreement sets out a series of mechanisms to address the protection needs of communities, leaders and human rights defenders and calls for the development of a public policy on the dismantling of the criminal organizations behind most of the violence. One of these, the National Commission on Security Guarantees, met on 9 January, under the chairmanship of President Duque, with the objective of advancing the development of such a policy, which is the Commission's principal mandate. Achieving meaningful progress, taking into account the inputs of civil society representatives, is imperative to tackling violence in the territories. On 23 January, a technical session was held to analyse the proposals of civil society and establish a road map for the elaboration of the policy.

60. The peace agreement provided for the establishment of a comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories, which includes such measures as a special protocol for the protection of rural communities affected by the conflict, support for human rights reporting by organizations in the territories, and a programme of "community peace and coexistence promoters" to support peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms at the local level. Decree No. 660 of April 2018 created and regulates the comprehensive security and protection programme. Substantial progress in operationalizing the programme would have a positive impact on the dire security situation of communities in rural areas of the country.

61. On 12 February, the Ministry of the Interior launched the action plan of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, following joint work between the Government and civil society representatives. The plan has three main areas of action: prevention, protection and non-repetition. Adequate resources will be required to ensure the Programme's full implementation. Since the launch, the National Protection Unit has made progress in implementing a protocol to strengthen risk assessments for women leaders and human rights defenders.

62. On 3 March, at a "Round table for Life" event in Puerto Asís (Putumayo Department), a road map for the effective protection of social leaders, with a departmental focus, was launched as a joint initiative of civil society, departmental governors and the Inspector General. The road map promotes the adoption by departmental governments of measures to protect leaders, in line with the peace agreement. The measures include prioritizing the implementation of Decree No. 660 on the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories; coordination with the National Commission on Security Guarantees; and facilitating regional spaces for dialogue, to feed into the formulation of the public policy on the dismantling of criminal organizations and their support networks.

### **C. Legal guarantees**

63. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, FARC and the Mission have continued to meet regularly and in a tripartite manner to address the remaining challenges regarding the accreditation of former FARC-EP members. The Government confirmed that 269 former FARC-EP members were accredited, bringing the total number of accredited former combatants to 13,104 (10,129 men and 2,975

women). Furthermore, 66 of the recently accredited individuals were notified by the Government, bringing the total number of notified individuals to 12,891.

64. There are still individuals on the list submitted by FARC to the Government on 15 August 2017 who are awaiting definition of their situation. The Government initiated the evaluation of 417 individuals on the list. In addition, the cases of approximately 190 individuals who passed an initial screening (165 of whom are in prison) remain under review by the Government. The Government has announced that it will open a dialogue with FARC under a mechanism within the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement to review those cases. While this mechanism was specifically agreed upon in the peace agreement, it is the first time the parties are officially making use of it.

65. It is concerning that there are still 150 accredited individuals who remain in prison and whose legal situation is pending definition by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

## **D. Cross-cutting issues**

### **Gender**

66. Some progress has been made in the implementation of the peace agreement's gender provisions related to reintegration and security guarantees. Women former combatants play a key role in promoting reconciliation efforts and community-based reintegration. The FARC National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversity continued to implement a series of activities to promote women's participation and collaboration with women's organizations around the implementation of local development plans in the Departments of Córdoba, La Guajira and Cauca. Promoting the leadership roles and organizational capacity of women former combatants, and their effective inclusion in decision-making processes, remains a challenge.

67. On 20 February, the mandate of the Special Forum on Gender was renewed by the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement; notably, it was agreed to permanently include women former FARC-EP combatants as observers in the Forum. The Special Forum has noted the importance of maintaining high-level dialogue with the Government and has observed that it needs adequate resources in order to continue monitoring the gender aspects of the peace agreement.

68. In January, women who participated as candidates in the October 2019 local elections from various parties, including FARC, exchanged experiences and received leadership training during a multiparty political dialogue co-organized by the non-governmental organization Electoral Observation Mission, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

69. Women former combatants and members of local communities participated in events throughout the country to commemorate International Women's Day, including more than 15 organized with support from the United Nations system.

### **Ethnic affairs**

70. Tailored support for former combatants from ethnic communities remains limited. There are two specific collective productive projects approved by the National Reintegration Council: one in Cauca Department that benefits indigenous former combatants and one in Chocó Department that benefits Afro-Colombian former combatants. The few other initiatives and productive projects that exist are

mostly the result of the efforts of former combatants themselves, with support from traditional authorities and communities.

71. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities continue to be affected by pervasive violence, including attacks, mass displacements, confinement and recruitment of children, in several departments, in particular Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Antioquia.

72. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace collectively accredited 11,762 indigenous people from 69 communities in the Departments of Chocó and Antioquia and more than 100,000 victims from 31 indigenous communities in Cauca Department, as part of its cases focused on violence in those departments.

### **Children**

73. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has continued to implement the “A different path of life” programme for 123 young adults formerly associated with FARC-EP when they were children (70 women and 53 men). The Mission and the Agency are following up on a case of domestic violence against a female member of the programme; a specific protocol for such situations may be required. There has been no progress regarding the 218 young people identified by FARC in October 2018 who could be included in the programme.

74. The situation of more than 2,200 children of former combatants remains of concern. Approximately 900 of those children live in former territorial areas. For those living outside the former territorial areas, their situation is even more precarious. Recently, the Mission has observed some progress with the creation of child-friendly spaces in four former territorial areas (two in Guaviare Department and one each in Tolima and Cesar Departments).

75. Recent cases of recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups have been reported in the Departments of Chocó, Norte de Santander, Guaviare, Nariño and Putumayo, continuing a grave trend highlighted in my report on children and armed conflict in Colombia.<sup>1</sup> Children are also being affected by forced displacement, sexual violence, the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance, and the interruption of education services owing to the actions of illegal armed groups and clashes between armed actors, particularly in the Departments of Antioquia, Chocó, Meta and Tolima.

### **Youth and peace and security**

76. In February, the Working Group on Youth of the National Reintegration Council met to discuss a reintegration strategy tailored to young former combatants that focused on their specific needs and their role as peacebuilders. Participants noted the risks facing young former combatants in terms of stigmatization and recruitment efforts by illegal armed groups, and the importance of including them in productive projects and decision-making spaces. According to the National Reintegration Registry, young people aged between 18 and 28 represent around 20 per cent of former combatants in the process of reintegration (864 women and 1,669 men). Of those, 602 belong to ethnic minorities and 134 have disabilities.

77. Three sessions of the national conversation, with a focus on young people, were held. At the sessions, young leaders presented proposals on issues including peace-related matters.

<sup>1</sup> S/2019/1017.

### **Coordination with the United Nations country team**

78. The United Nations country team continues to deliver programmes that support the implementation of the peace agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, protection of human rights defenders and community leaders, and the gender and ethnic bodies and priorities provided for in the peace agreement.

79. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, which in 2019 invested US\$ 29 million to support peace-related programming, has defined its priorities for the coming months as supporting reconciliation and reintegration, preventing the stigmatization of former combatants and supporting the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus.

80. On 19 March, the Government of Colombia and the United Nations system signed a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2020–2023, focusing on peace and stabilization, support for the country’s efforts to address the influx of migrants and refugees, and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

81. Also in March, the Government and UNDP signed an agreement through which the Mine Action Service will monitor the activities of a humanitarian demining organization, Humanicemos DH, that currently employs 87 former FARC-EP combatants, including 15 women. The agreement will allow Humanicemos DH to begin demining operations, becoming the third largest civilian humanitarian demining organization in the country.

## **IV. Mission structures**

### **A. Mission support**

82. In the light of the evolving geography of the reintegration process and the need to verify security guarantees for communities, the Mission will close its camps in Charras (Guaviare Department) and Filipinas (Arauca Department) by 31 March and is beginning preparations to move its office in Valle del Cauca Department from Buenaventura to Cali.

83. As at 29 February 2020, women represented 49 per cent of civilian personnel, 58 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 36 per cent of international observers.

84. With regard to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Mission has made multifaceted efforts in line with guidance from Headquarters and host country measures, and in close coordination with the United Nations country team, covering such critical areas as business continuity and contingency planning, supply chains, the acquisition and requisition of additional medical supplies, and specialist support. The Mission has established a task force and started implementing alternative work arrangements in all its offices. All non-essential travel has been cancelled or postponed, and travel within the mission area is limited based on criticality.

### **B. Safety and security**

85. The Department of Safety and Security closely monitored the security impact of the ELN “armed strike”, as well as the actions of illegal armed groups in Catatumbo. No effects were reported on United Nations staff or premises. The residual risk level after the implementation of the security risk management measures remains medium to low.

## C. Conduct and discipline

86. The Mission has continued to conduct training activities aimed at preventing misconduct, discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment and abuse of authority). The Mission has established two fact-finding panels to investigate two cases of alleged misconduct ; a further two cases have been closed due to insufficient evidence. A new allegation referred to the Mission is under investigation. As at 23 March, no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse had been reported during the reporting period.

## V. Observations

87. I warmly welcome the multiple expressions of support for and commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement issued by the recently inaugurated mayors and governors from the various political parties and regions across Colombia. The steps they are taking to include elements of the peace agreement in their four-year development plans, including working with the Government to implement the development programmes with a territorial focus, are encouraging. The recent launch of the road map for the effective protection of social leaders from the departments is a welcome sign that governors are committed to tackling violence against communities, social leaders and human rights defenders. I hope that all governors will move forward with the Government's proposal for all departmental administrations to have a peace office, and I urge mayors to adopt similar measures and have dedicated staff and resources for peace implementation. Mayors and governors, as well as municipal councils and departmental assemblies, have a fundamental role to play in peacebuilding. They can continue to rely on the United Nations system as a partner.

88. Looking at the year ahead, there are several key issues that should be prioritized in the agenda for comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. Foremost among these is taking all necessary measures to put a stop to the tragic killings of social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants. No efforts must be spared in granting protection and security to those facing specific risks as a result of their roles in the promotion of human rights, the implementation of the peace agreement and the defence of their communities' interests, and to those who laid down their weapons and remain committed to the peace process. The peace agreement provided for the establishment of several mechanisms to ensure protection and security for those individuals and their communities. Although those organs exist, they must be strengthened to be able to fulfil their mandates effectively and have a real impact on the reduction of violence.

89. I reiterate my call for the National Commission on Security Guarantees to be convened on a regular basis and to make progress in the adoption of a public policy to dismantle criminal organizations effectively, taking into account the proposals made by civil society organizations. The Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, established in the peace agreement, is another mechanism whose reconvening could help to coordinate improved protection measures for members of all political parties. The National Protection Unit urgently requires resources and personnel to be able to fully staff all close protection schemes and respond to over 400 pending requests. While I welcome the progress made by the Special Investigation Unit in its investigations into attacks against former combatants and social leaders, I urge all relevant actors to fully support the Unit's critical work to bring the perpetrators of such attacks, including intellectual authors, to justice.

90. A second priority should be strengthening the foundations for the longer-term reintegration process and ensuring that the benefits of reintegration reach all former combatants. With the early stages now complete, the focus must shift towards ensuring the sustainability and comprehensive nature of that process. To ensure that the transition of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration can be successfully completed, it is essential that the views and interests of former combatants and surrounding communities be fully taken into account. The cooperation of local authorities will be key to incorporate the former territorial areas into municipal administrative and planning arrangements. The longstanding issue of access to land, both for the former territorial areas and for productive projects, is a fundamental building block for former combatants and their families to develop their life projects alongside local communities. The reintegration road map aims to establish a framework for the long-term reintegration process; I encourage the parties to continue to work jointly, in a spirit of constructive dialogue, during its implementation.

91. With over two-thirds of former combatants living outside the former territorial areas, it is imperative that all actors – including FARC, the Government, local authorities and the international community – adapt to that reality and fully take into account the concerns and circumstances of that population in their plans and actions. Those men and women and their families are struggling to access basic services and pursue economic opportunities in areas with limited institutional presence, and are more exposed to attacks and to the threat of recruitment by illegal armed actors. The reintegration process will only succeed if every single former combatant who remains committed to the peace process receives opportunities, protection and security, regardless of where he or she lives.

92. The long-term success of the peace agreement will ultimately be determined by how much communities that suffered from decades of violence can enjoy the benefits of peace. A third priority for 2020 should therefore be to ensure that communities, especially victims, are at the centre of all peacebuilding efforts. That includes fulfilling the actions set out in section 3.4 of the peace agreement on security guarantees for communities, and operationalizing the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories. Continued progress in the comprehensive rural reform, including the development programmes with a territorial focus, will also be essential, as will the effective coordination of the development programmes with other programmes. Adequate measures should be taken to support communities around former territorial areas that are relocated to other regions. Should former territorial areas be relocated owing to security reasons, I trust that this will not result in a reduction of the State's presence, but rather in its strengthening, in order to ensure the protection of the communities in those areas. The sustained and integrated presence of State institutions is necessary and remains the most effective means of ensuring peace and stability in the territories.

93. Throughout those three priority areas, it is essential to pay special attention to the specific needs of women, children, ethnic communities and young people. I urge FARC leaders at all levels to redouble their efforts to increase the participation of women former combatants in decision-making spaces. Female social leaders and human rights defenders continue to face threats that inhibit their leadership. The launch of the action plan of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders is a welcome step and I look forward to its prompt and full implementation. Greater technical and financial resources continue to be required, particularly at the regional and local levels. Former combatants from ethnic communities and indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders are also under grave threat and require specific protection measures. Increased attention should be paid to providing early childhood education, services and childcare spaces for the thousands

of children of former combatants. Lastly, I encourage all actors to listen to the voices of young people, whose creativity, energy and commitment to peace is a source of inspiration.

94. The voices of victims must also continue to be at the centre of the peace process. Colombian society and especially victims have placed tremendous hope and expectations on the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition to bring about healing, truth, justice and reconciliation. I reiterate my support for the three components of the System – the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing and the Truth Commission – as they try to meet those expectations. I call upon all actors to contribute fully to their work, including by being forthcoming with their contributions to truth and empathetic in their acknowledgement of the suffering of victims.

95. The COVID-19 outbreak will pose many challenges for Colombia over the coming months. I welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring continued implementation of peace-related programmes in this challenging context. I also welcome the swift and collaborative manner in which FARC and the Government have taken preventive actions for the former territorial areas in the framework of the National Reintegration Council's Technical Working Group on Health.

96. I am confident that, despite the challenging circumstances, 2020 can bring encouraging developments for Colombia through the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. The increased participation of many actors, including the private sector, young people, victims, religious leaders and local and departmental authorities, is one of many signs that the Colombian people are committed to building peace together and to sowing and nurturing seeds of reconciliation. They can be assured of the full support of the United Nations.

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