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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 [2435 \(2018\)](#), 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 September to 26 December 2019.

II. Major developments

2. On 24 November, Colombians commemorated the third anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. In a statement on 29 November, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, Emilio Archila, recounted the progress made in the Government's "Peace with legality" strategy and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. On the occasion of the anniversary, an act of reconciliation was carried out at the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Agua Bonita (Caquetá Department) between former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the process of reintegration and victims of the conflict. In a statement commemorating the anniversary, the Mission called upon Colombians to persevere in all efforts necessary to consolidate a sustainable peace and acknowledged the commitment to peace of both signatory parties to the agreement.

3. The anniversary occurred in the middle of widespread social mobilizations that began on 21 November with a national strike backed by various sectors, including student movements, unions and indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations, making a broad array of demands, including the withdrawal of proposed tax reforms, opposition to possible modifications to the pension system, the implementation of previous agreements with student groups, the protection of social leaders and former FARC-EP combatants and the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. The demonstrations have been mostly peaceful, although there have been some incidents of vandalism, violence and confrontation between protestors and public security forces. One death was reported in Bogotá and two in Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca Department). In a statement through my spokesperson on 23 November, I



acknowledged the largely peaceful spirit that had characterized the marches, welcomed the stated willingness of the Government to engage in dialogue and called upon all actors to refrain from violence, exercise maximum restraint and engage peacefully.

4. In response to these mobilizations, which have continued in various parts of the country, on 26 November, the President of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez, launched a national conversation with different sectors around six themes: inclusive growth, transparency and the efforts to combat corruption, education, “peace with legality”, the environment, and institutional strengthening, which was later changed to youth. The Government has stated that these conversations will continue until 15 March 2020. On 29 November, my Special Representative for Colombia and Head of Mission participated in the first meeting held within the framework of the national conversation on “peace with legality”, chaired by President Duque. He noted that the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement was one of the demands of the mobilization and acknowledged the Government’s efforts in that regard, and noted the significant challenges that still remained in the consolidation of peace in Colombia.

5. On 28 November, the national committee established as part of the strike, members of Congress from various political parties, and civil society platforms promoting the peace process jointly issued a letter requesting the Government to create a round-table national dialogue separate from the national conversation, which would involve direct dialogue with each sector to address its specific concerns. It was proposed in the letter that the second item of the agenda for the round table be the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement and the possibility of restarting dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

6. The elections on 27 October were the first local and departmental elections since the signing of the peace agreement and the first in which the political party Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) and former FARC-EP members participated. There were incidents of violence and stigmatization during the campaign; however, less incidents were recorded on election day compared with previous elections (5 homicides were reported on the election day in comparison with 28 in the 2015 local elections). Voter turnout exceeded 61 per cent, as 13.1 per cent more polling stations were installed than in 2015, including in places where it was previously difficult owing to security problems associated with the conflict. These developments were widely praised as a testament to the positive effects of the peace process for democracy in Colombia.

7. On 16 October, Congress approved the general national budget for 2020. The bill presented by the Government included an annex on peace-related investments. In December, Congress approved a constitutional reform authorizing the use of resources from future royalties from hydrocarbon exploitation for investments in conflict-affected municipalities. However, opposition parties and civil society actors continue to consider that financing for the implementation of the peace agreement is still inadequate.

8. Members of Congress continued to play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. Members of the peace commissions of both chambers have visited communities affected by violence and former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Congress has also held hearings on the implementation of specific parts of the agreement.

9. During the reporting period, two proposed reforms related to the transitional justice aspects of the peace agreement were not approved by Congress, amid concerns by lawmakers from different parties that the reforms could have an impact on the legal security of persons covered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. President

Duque has stated that any reforms proposed by his Government will not have retroactive effect.

10. Congress has made progress in discussing a bill to extend for 10 additional years the Victims and Land Restitution Act (Act No. 1448 of 2011), due to expire in 2021. Victims' organizations asked for this extension so that victims' rights, including comprehensive reparations, could continue to be fulfilled. The Constitutional Court has ruled that, if no measures are taken to extend the law, it will be automatically extended until 2030. President Duque has stated that his Government supports extending the law.

11. During the reporting period, the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence, established under section 2 of the peace agreement, submitted to the Government its input on the development of a national public policy on peace, reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization, which was prepared through a nationwide participatory process with the territorial councils for peace, reconciliation and coexistence.

12. On 6 November, the Minister of Defence, Guillermo Botero, resigned following the presentation of a motion of no-confidence in Congress and controversy over an air strike in late August against the camp of a FARC-EP dissident group in Caquetá Department that claimed the lives of several recruited children. President Duque named the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, as the new Minister of Defence, and Claudia Blum de Barberi as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Resolution of disputes regarding the implementation of the peace agreement

13. The Government and members of the ruling party have continued to charge that FARC has not fully complied with some of its obligations under the peace agreement, including handing over the entirety of its assets – which are to be used for reparation to victims – and disclosing the location of mines and minefields, and have also claimed that it has not fully contributed to the overall truth-seeking efforts. On 12 December, ruling party legislators officially requested clarification from the high courts, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and other State institutions regarding which entities are responsible for holding the FARC-EP accountable for the alleged lack of compliance. The FARC party has continued to state that it has complied with its obligations and reiterated claims that the Government has not fulfilled many of its own commitments. The FARC party cites, among others, insufficient measures to protect the security of former combatants, lack of respect for the implementation architecture established under the agreement and failure to implement the agreement comprehensively. The Government, meanwhile, has denied these claims and repeatedly stated its commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement through its “Peace with legality” strategy.

14. During the reporting period, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the principal mechanism established under the agreement to resolve such controversies and overcome implementation challenges, met only twice.

Comprehensive rural reform

15. One of the elements of the comprehensive rural reform set out in section 1 of the peace agreement is the establishment of the development programmes with a territorial focus for conflict-affected municipalities. The Government reports that, of the 1,207 works planned so far, 780 have been implemented, 315 are being carried out and 112 are pending. These projects have benefited communities in 76 municipalities. The Government has been expanding financing strategies to enhance the coverage of the programmes, including through projects approved with resources

from royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation and through the “Obras por impuestos” (works for taxes) mechanism involving the private sector. A total of 140 of the 170 municipalities in which such programmes are being implemented, and nine departments, have adopted legal measures to include the programmes in their departmental and local planning instruments. Civil society organizations have urged that the participatory nature of the design of the programmes, in which more than 220,000 members of local communities were involved, continue during their implementation.

16. The Government, through the Territorial Renewal Agency, has been working on a framework plan to strengthen inter-institutional coordination and promote a more comprehensive implementation of the development programmes. On 1 November, Cabinet ministers, accompanied by representatives of the international community and local authorities, visited the 16 areas in which the programmes are being carried out to inaugurate projects and to discuss their implementation with local actors.

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

17. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continued to make progress on its seven cases. Regarding case 001, on kidnappings by the former FARC-EP, the Special Jurisdiction has held six territorial hearings across the country, including in four former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in which former combatants have participated and contributed to the truth, including acknowledging responsibility for representative cases. Concerning case 003, on extrajudicial killings presented as casualties of combat (known as “false positives”), 156 members of the armed forces have voluntarily provided testimonies and, for the first time, a group of victims’ relatives made observations regarding these testimonies in a public hearing. Regarding case 004, on the situation in the Urabá region, the Special Jurisdiction ordered precautionary measures to protect the safety of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the region to guarantee their participation in the case. Case 007, on the recruitment and use of children, includes 8,839 individual cases of children recruited by the former FARC-EP, and 37 former FARC-EP commanders have been identified to appear before the Special Jurisdiction.

18. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has accredited more than 60,000 victims to date, including the first collective accreditations of ethnic communities as victims. The Special Jurisdiction continues to review on a case-by-case basis the 657 requests presented by State officials and third parties to the conflict to voluntarily come under its jurisdiction. Meanwhile, the Special Jurisdiction also continues to conduct hearings with former State officials and third parties, including a former senator. Some persons participating in the proceedings, including victims, have reported threats against them. In November, 23 lawyers defending former FARC-EP combatants before the Special Jurisdiction received threats.

19. To date, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has excluded six former FARC-EP commanders from its jurisdiction, including three during the reporting period: Luciano Marín Arango, alias “Iván Márquez”, José Manuel Sierra Sabogal, alias “Zarco Aldinever”, and Henry Castellanos Garzón, alias “Romaña”. All are part of the group that announced its return to arms in August 2019.

20. During the reporting period, the Truth Commission organized two visits of victims who had participated in the Havana peace talks to engage in reconciliation initiatives with former combatants in former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The Commission continued to hold “dialogues for non-repetition” in different regions of the country to discuss risks facing social leaders, as well as an event in Medellín on the impacts of the conflict on children and adolescents. Together with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Commission held the first hearings abroad

with victims living in exile. So far, the Commission has conducted more than 7,500 collective and individual interviews.

21. The Unit for the Search for Persons deemed missing in the context of and due to the armed conflict completed 8 of the 12 regional forums for individuals and organizations to contribute to the development of its national search plan. On 2 December, the Unit held the first national forum to compile and consolidate the contributions from the regional forums.

22. The Comprehensive System continues to receive reports from State authorities, the public security forces and social and victims' organizations. Upon request by victims' organizations, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace extended the deadline for submission of reports to March 2021.

Substitution of illicit crops

23. Illicit economies continue to be one of the main drivers of violence. The National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops was established under section 4 of the peace agreement to support rural families and communities in transitioning from the cultivation of illicit crops towards other economic activities. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), of the 60,082 ha of coca registered by 99,097 families participating in the Programme, an estimated 40,506 ha have been eradicated voluntarily since August 2017. A total of 38,525 families have received their full year of interim payments, 60,842 families have received technical assistance and 34,492 families have received support for food security projects.

24. Individuals and social organizations participating in the Programme continue to be the target of threats, attacks and killings. The Government is advancing initiatives aimed at characterizing the specific risks faced by individuals who are actively and visibly involved in the Programme, in order to implement prevention measures.

25. UNODC also reports that 95 per cent of families are complying with their voluntary eradication commitments. Some families participating in the Programme have expressed concerns over delays in the implementation of alternative productive projects and investments in local development, which are critical to supporting their transition away from illicit economies.

Ejército de Liberación Nacional

26. Confrontations between ELN and other illegal armed groups and the public security forces continue to affect communities, especially in Chocó, Norte de Santander, Arauca and Nariño Departments. Communities and civil society organizations in areas with ELN presence have called for the resumption of dialogue with the group. The Catholic Church continues to call for renewed dialogue efforts and for ELN to release kidnapped persons. The Government has reiterated its conditions for resuming negotiations, namely the cessation of all criminal activities and the release of kidnapped persons.

III. Mission tasks

A. Reintegration

Political reintegration

27. In October, the FARC party and former combatants participated in their first local and departmental elections. Over 300 candidates were endorsed by FARC and

by coalitions including FARC, 67 per cent of whom were not former combatants. Some former combatants also ran with other parties. A total of 12 candidates were elected for different offices, including 3 for mayor. Two of the candidates elected as mayors were former FARC-EP members endorsed by other parties, while the other, who was not a former FARC-EP member, ran under a coalition that included FARC. Women former combatants participated actively (38 per cent of candidates), despite challenges in access to resources and protection schemes. Two of the elected candidates were women.

28. Despite the stigmatization against them, funding limitations and security issues during the campaign, the FARC party and former combatants participated actively in the elections, including exercising their right to vote. Timely collaboration among electoral and government authorities was instrumental in overcoming obstacles, including regarding former combatants' ability to vote in their current places of residence.

29. In December, the Steering Committee of the Chamber of Representatives declared temporarily vacant the congressional seat of former FARC-EP commander Seuxis Hernández Solarte, alias "Jesús Santrich", following the Supreme Court's decision to formally open criminal proceedings on drug-trafficking charges and order his pretrial detention. In accordance with the Constitution, the FARC party has temporarily lost this seat in the lower house while the investigation is being conducted.

Evolving geography of reintegration

30. In November, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization reported that 9,225 former combatants (representing 70 per cent of those who have been accredited) are residing outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, roughly a quarter of whom are residing in urban contexts and three quarters in semi-rural and rural settings. These former combatants face challenges in terms of access to basic services and security, among others. Notably, 19 of the 47 approved collective projects benefit former combatants outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

31. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization continues its efforts to find permanent solutions for land, housing and services for all former territorial areas for training and reintegration, whether they are being relocated or staying in their current locations. The positive results of the initial phase of visits by the Government, FARC and the Mission to the former territorial areas were acknowledged by both parties, who committed to jointly follow up on decisions taken during the visits and to extend the visits to all other such areas. However, no joint visits were carried out during the reporting period.

32. Land for the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration remains a critical need. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has requested the National Land Agency to purchase land plots for nine former territorial areas, and the Colombia in Peace Fund has allocated around \$6.1 million for that purpose.

Economic and social reintegration

33. The National Reintegration Council met twice during the reporting period and approved 12 new collective productive projects, bringing the number of approved projects to 47, benefiting 2,454 former combatants (including 688 women) and 83 members of local communities. A total of 24 of these approved projects have received funds, benefiting 1,530 former combatants (including 450 women). As for individual projects, the number of initiatives approved and disbursed is now 705, benefiting 827 former combatants (including 178 women). In total, 18 per cent of accredited former

combatants have received financial support for productive projects through these mechanisms.

34. Of the 47 collective projects approved, 77 per cent are being carried out on rented land, which affects their sustainability and highlights the need to make meaningful progress in the allocation of land for productive projects.

35. In an encouraging development, the Gender Technical Working Group of the National Reintegration Council has restarted its activities. The Working Group continues to raise awareness of the guidelines for the inclusion of gender-related actions in economic reintegration and to strengthen support for the reintegration of female former combatants.

36. In November, a group of companies led by Proantioquia, the largest business sector association in Antioquia Department, announced that it would provide 270 ha to develop a productive project for 185 former combatants, with the participation of the local community. This initiative illustrates the important role the private sector can play in supporting reintegration and peacebuilding more broadly.

37. An entity of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade known as “iNNpulsa” has established a partnership with the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization to provide technical assistance for 500 individual and 40 collective projects.

38. The dedicated efforts of former combatants in productive initiatives continue to show positive results. In October, the coffee produced by former combatants and nearby communities in Cauca Department was awarded a prestigious international prize. During the reporting period, former combatants from across the country presented their products in three major national product fairs.

39. In December, the National Reintegration Council approved the extension of health-care services in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and surrounding communities for 2020. To date, 98 per cent of former combatants are affiliated with the national health-care system, although former combatants still report challenges in gaining access to health care. To strengthen local capacities regarding health, including sexual and reproductive health, the Government launched the second phase of the “Health for peace” project, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund and the Pan American Health Organization.

40. Guidelines on economic support for housing projects for former combatants are still pending approval by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. Efforts are under way by the Agency to resolve pending issues for the collective housing project for 350 former combatants in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Pandores and Tierra Grata.

41. The number of former combatants pursuing academic studies increased from 2,461 in January to 5,059 in October. The Ministry of Education recently announced an additional 3,300 slots for former combatants and community members in the education programme entitled “Arando la educación”. In addition, 3,475 former combatants are currently enrolled in vocational training activities, mainly through the National Training Service, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the Colombian Red Cross. However, in some remote areas, such as Chocó Department, former combatants still face challenges in gaining access to educational opportunities.

42. Progress has been made in reaching consensus between FARC and the Government on the reintegration road map. Its formal adoption, which remains pending, will help to provide more clarity on matters, including education, health, the sustainability of economic reintegration, housing, community-based reintegration and psychosocial assistance.

Role of local actors and communities

43. Since the elections in October, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and other actors have undertaken efforts to promote the inclusion of reintegration policies into the programmes of the incoming regional and local authorities.

44. Reintegration activities that benefit local communities are key to both the sustainability of such communities and to the fostering of long-term reconciliation. While some initiatives are under way, their scope remains limited.

B. Security guarantees

45. Violence against communities and killings of social leaders, human rights defenders and former FARC-EP combatants continues. Violence remains concentrated in the rural areas of Cauca, Nariño, Antioquia, Caquetá and Norte de Santander Departments, where there is a convergence of weak State presence, illegal economies and poverty. The Office of the Attorney-General reports that the vast majority of these killings can be attributed to illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and their support networks.

Security guarantees for former FARC-EP members

46. During the reporting period, the Mission verified 20 homicides of former FARC-EP members, making 2019 the most violent year for former combatants since the signing of the peace agreement, with 77 killings to date, compared with 65 in 2018 and 31 in 2017. The total number of killings has now reached 173, in addition to 14 disappearances and 29 attempted homicides.

47. Of particular concern was the killing of Alexander Parra Uribe, known as “Rodolfo Fierro”, a respected leader in the former territorial area for training and reintegration of La Guajira in the Mesetas municipality (Meta Department). His wife, also a former combatant, was a candidate for the FARC party in the local elections and his homicide occurred two days before election day. This was the first killing to occur inside the protection perimeter in a former territorial area for training and reintegration, which accentuated the perception of insecurity of former FARC-EP members. The Government called for investigations and announced enhanced security measures in the former territorial area and for the victim’s family.

48. Although the Ministry of Defence has repeatedly stated that it will ensure continued security around former territorial areas for training and reintegration, a clear regulation to normalize the deployment of security forces in these areas would help assuage concerns of former combatants in the former territorial areas. It is also important to extend security measures to new settlements, where the situation of former combatants is even more precarious.

49. Several threats and incidents of stigmatization against FARC candidates were reported during the campaign. No security incidents were reported against FARC candidates or former combatants on election day. The Tripartite Protection and Security Mechanism helped to coordinate and monitor protection measures at the national, regional and local levels to guarantee the security and right to vote of the FARC candidates and former combatants. A total of 78 protection measures were implemented for FARC candidates through the electoral protection road map of the Ministry of the Interior.

50. The Government has established an inter-institutional mechanism coordinated by the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation to monitor security for former combatants and to follow up on the implementation of

the measures announced by the Government in June to strengthen protection for former combatants and investigations into attacks against them. The Government reports progress in 15 of these measures, including the deployment of additional investigators and police officers in the territories to strengthen the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General and the Elite Corps of the National Police and the implementation of mechanisms to follow up on early warnings of the Office of the Ombudsman, paying special attention to risks for former FARC-EP members.

51. Cooperation between the local community and the Office of the Attorney General was instrumental in bringing to justice a non-commissioned officer of the Colombian armed forces who was found guilty of the murder of former FARC-EP member Dimar Torres, killed in April in Norte de Santander. The case was halted for two months owing to a conflict of jurisdiction between the military and ordinary justice systems, which was finally resolved in favour of the latter. The judicial prosecution of the other persons linked to the killing has yet to advance. The Office of the Attorney General continues to investigate a case involving members of the public security forces in an attack in Arauca Department in March 2018 against family members of two former combatants.

52. Regarding the killings of former FARC-EP members, the Special Investigation Unit reports 21 convictions and 13 cases at the trial stage. The Unit also reports that 80 per cent of the attacks are linked to illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. Challenges remain regarding the dismantling of the structures behind these killings, as only 9 of the 67 arrested suspects are the intellectual authors.

53. The joint working group on the investigation of attacks against former FARC-EP members, which includes FARC, the Special Investigation Unit and the Mission, is reinforcing its coordination mechanisms, including regional tools to strengthen access for former combatants to the justice system and to improve risk analysis on potential threats.

54. The Specialized Subdirectorate for Security and Protection of the National Protection Unit, which provides protection measures for former FARC-EP members, continues to face budgetary and capacity shortfalls. In a positive development, a new training programme for 77 bodyguards is being implemented to cover incomplete protection schemes and to meet the full requirement of 1,200 bodyguards set out in the peace agreement. It is important that discussions on the restructuring of the National Protection Unit include the Subdirectorate and FARC.

55. As at 24 November, 233 individual and collective protection schemes had been put in place, benefiting 250 men and 74 women. Enhanced gender-sensitive measures and an equitable access to protection measures are fundamental to addressing the specific risks facing women former combatants.

Security guarantees for communities, human rights defenders and social leaders

56. Communities, human rights defenders, social leaders and persons involved in the implementation of the peace agreement, especially in rural areas, continue to be targets of violence and intimidation by illegal armed groups, criminal organizations, drug cartels and other actors.

57. Since the signing of the peace agreement, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified 303 killings of human rights defenders and social leaders, 86 of which (including 12 women) occurred in 2019. The Office of the Attorney General and the Elite Corps of the National Police are leading investigations and have reported progress in 39 per cent of the 86 cases.

58. In addition to investigations into those responsible for these killings, section 3.4 of the peace agreement includes a call for the development of a public policy on the dismantling of criminal organizations and their support networks. The body charged with developing this public policy, the National Commission on Security Guarantees, did not meet during the reporting period and has met only twice in 2019.

59. In December, the Government presented guidelines for the comprehensive public policy on guaranteeing and respecting the work of defending human rights. In November, human rights platforms and civil society organizations suspended their participation in discussions over the policy, citing differences with the Government's approach. Among other demands, the platforms were urging President Duque to reconvene the National Commission on Security Guarantees and to implement Decree No. 660 of 2018, on the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories, the establishment of which is part of section 3.4 of the peace agreement.

60. The presence of illegal armed groups in ethnic territories continues to have devastating consequences for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, in particular in Chocó and Cauca Departments, including recruitment, forced recruitment of children, homicides, displacement, confinement, and attacks and threats against ethnic authorities and leaders. The institutional response has been limited despite repeated early warnings from the Office of the Ombudsman.

61. The widespread violence in northern Cauca Department has not been contained. Two massacres occurred in less than 36 hours in October, including an ambush that claimed the lives of Cristina Bautista, a Nasa community leader, and four others, including members of the indigenous guard. In October, the Government announced the deployment of 2,500 members of the public security forces to Cauca. Local communities expressed concerns that strengthened military operations might increase risks for civilians. The Government also launched a social investment plan for the Department and included Cauca in the strategy known as "Zonas futuro", as one of the strategic zones of comprehensive intervention.

62. The deteriorating situation in Chocó Department is cause for alarm. Chocó is one of the poorest departments in Colombia and a strategic corridor for illicit economies and trafficking. In early December, the Office of the Ombudsman confirmed the displacement of 3,200 members of 17 ethnic communities of the Alto Baudó municipality and the confinement of eight Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, as a result of clashes among illegal armed groups, including ELN and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia. Communities, social leaders and civil society organizations have voiced their concern that more widespread violence is imminent.

63. During the reporting period, the Office of the Ombudsman issued 11 early warnings covering areas in Norte de Santander, Chocó, La Guajira, Putumayo, Meta, Magdalena, Cundinamarca, Tolima, Cauca, Nariño and Bogotá. Six of these were of imminent character, requiring urgent State response. The Mission has consolidated information-sharing mechanisms with the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Inspector General to monitor the follow-up of the early warnings and the work of the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings. With support from the Mission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and OHCHR, the Ministry of the Interior is strengthening its local capacities for enhanced monitoring of the implementation of recommendations, including specific recommendations for local authorities.

C. Legal guarantees

64. Notwithstanding the regular meetings between the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, FARC and the Mission, no substantial progress has been made in the process of accreditation of former combatants. The lack of accreditation limits their access to benefits provided through the reintegration process, including employment opportunities.

65. Over the reporting period, the Government reported progress on 29 cases of former FARC-EP members from the list submitted to the Government on 15 August 2017 who were awaiting accreditation. Approximately 130 former combatants from the list continue to await accreditation despite having submitted all their required documentation, some of whom have been waiting for over a year.

66. No progress has been made regarding the list of approximately 1,000 individuals submitted by FARC after 15 August 2017. The Inspector General has underlined the specific risks of recidivism for these individuals due to the legal uncertainty that they face, and corresponding difficulties in gaining access to the reintegration process.

67. No progress was made in the accreditation of approximately 270 individuals whose cases remain under review by the Government, of whom 164 are in prison. FARC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, with the support of the Mission and within the framework of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, visited penitentiary institutions to meet with 135 of these individuals; discussions are under way to decide on their accreditation.

68. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has denied conditional liberty to 74 out of approximately 160 accredited former combatants who remain in prison. Those individuals will remain in prison while the Special Jurisdiction rules on the applicability of the pardon on the basis of Act No. 1820 of 2016. FARC representatives to the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement have voiced their concerns related to the pace at which the Special Jurisdiction is reviewing these cases, as well as their concern over the cases of accreditation still under the Government's review. In November, the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation organized a meeting with the Special Jurisdiction, during which FARC had the opportunity to submit its concerns to the Special Jurisdiction.

D. Cross-cutting issues

Gender

69. Modest progress has been made in implementing the gender actions of the national reintegration policy. The Government High-level Forum on Gender, the National Reintegration Council Gender Technical Working Group and the FARC Gender Committee play a key role in advancing this agenda. Adequate resourcing for the full implementation of these actions remains a challenge.

70. The security of women human rights defenders and social leaders continues to be of concern. According to the analysis by the Office of the Ombudsman of its 2019 early warnings, women continue to be targeted by illegal armed groups, including to discourage them from participating in political, social and peacebuilding processes. Women who denounce sexual violence and those participating in the implementation of the peace agreement are at particular risk. The Intersectoral Commission on Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders has yet to finalize and implement its action plan. Despite these challenges, departmental and local initiatives

have continued, including regional security round tables for women leaders in the Montes de María region and Putumayo and Magdalena Departments. The Ministry of the Interior and local authorities have an important role to play in implementing the local action plans derived from these round tables.

71. Two recent reports, one by the Special Forum on Gender and one by the international verification component for gender established under the peace agreement, noted slow progress in the implementation of the gender provisions of the agreement and urged stronger efforts in that regard.

72. As part of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Mission supported more than 10 events in communities and former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in which women and men from different sectors were engaged in dialogues and cultural activities on the prevention of violence against women.

Ethnic affairs

73. Progress remains limited in the provision of tailored support for former combatants of ethnic origin. Many are living in remote locations outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration, and some have returned to their communities of origin. Former combatants who have established new settlements in ethnic territories face precarious security conditions and difficulties in gaining access to basic services. For example, in Mandé (Antioquia Department), a group of 53 former combatants, mostly Afro-Colombians, from the territorial area for training and reintegration in Vidrí, are facing critical security risks in a context of very limited institutional presence. In November, the Office of the Ombudsman reported that the risks in its June 2019 early warning regarding the danger to former combatants in this new settlement had materialized as predicted.

74. In September, my Special Representative met with the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples to discuss ethnic issues within the framework of the Mission's mandate. The Mission's ethnic affairs focal points continue to engage with ethnic communities and organizations at the regional and local levels.

75. Continued progress by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in case 002, on the situation in the Tumaco, Barbaças and Ricaurte municipalities, and case 004, on the situation in the Urabá region, including the accreditation of ethnic communities as victims, is important for the recognition of the disproportionate effect of the conflict on ethnic communities.

Children

76. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization continues to implement the "A different path of life" reintegration programme for 123 children formerly associated with FARC-EP. As at November, 115 adolescents were receiving monthly stipends and 8 adolescents were under the protection of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. At least 64 adolescents have been granted reparations in accordance with the Victims and Land Restitution Act. It is crucial that measures be taken to ensure the sustainability of the programme, including through adequate resources and regular meetings of its local follow-up committees.

77. Access to productive projects for adolescents formerly associated with FARC-EP remains challenging. Only six participants in the programme have received disbursements (one has not received the full amount), and an additional nine requests are pending evaluation. During the reporting period, the Mission identified and followed up on cases in which there was incomplete documentation and a need for psychological support.

78. The Technical Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council has not been convened since July, postponing urgent decisions regarding the 218 new cases of young people identified by FARC that could be included in the programme.

79. More than 2,200 children of former combatants continue to require dedicated support and services. A total of 900 of those children live in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, while those living outside the territorial areas have even more difficulty gaining access to basic services. Five former territorial areas for training and reintegration have initiated planning for establishing child protection spaces and day-care activities with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, which are being implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). A strategy to address issues related to the economy of care is important for facilitating the participation of women former combatants in reintegration activities. Many former combatants are still facing difficulties in regularizing the legal guardianship of their children.

Youth and peace and security

80. Young people, in particular those involved in student organizations, have been very active within the popular mobilizations of the past few weeks, including in calling for the protection and full implementation of the peace agreement. Young people also participated actively in the electoral campaign, including as candidates.

81. Young volunteers continue to support and lead reintegration and reconciliation activities. Over 40 youth volunteers, including from the National Training Service, supported the organization of the national rafting championship in the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Miravalle in November. In Remedios (Antioquia Department), young women organized a soccer league to promote reconciliation among former combatants and the local community, including the creation of a team composed of local women and women former combatants. Inspired by their experience in Mission-facilitated visits to former territorial areas for training and reintegration, youth leaders from the World Economic Forum Global Shapers hub in Bogotá arranged for former combatants involved in 10 productive initiatives to participate in a national product fair in December, with support from the Mission and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization.

Coordination with the United Nations country team

82. During the reporting period, the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia approved additional funding for United Nations and civil society projects and initiatives related to the implementation of the peace agreement, including support for reintegration, local stabilization projects for economic recovery, community infrastructure and the protection of human rights defenders. Support was also provided for collective reparations to victims, the return of internally displaced persons, the participation of victims in the transitional justice process and the strengthening of the Office of the Inspector General.

83. The United Nations country team has engaged with the Presidential Counsellor for National Security to provide international expertise for the Government's "Zonas futuro" strategy and share best practices on civil-military stabilization approaches in territories with limited State presence. The country team will continue to provide technical assistance as requested in the early phases of the implementation of the strategy.

84. The international community continues to provide key support to the reintegration process, including through the multi-partner trust fund and the European

Union, as well as through projects implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme, UNDP, IOM and others. Progress was made on the joint reintegration project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by UNICEF, UNDP and UN-Women in coordination with the Mission, with nine gender equality professionals deployed to 15 locations and activities to address issues related to the economy of care implemented in two former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

IV. Mission structures

A. Mission support

85. The Mission has been working to further delegate financial and other management decisions to the field, reflecting the new delegations of authority. In addition, the Mission is replacing its vehicle fleet to better reflect the Mission's mobility needs and continues to keep its deployment under review, in particular in the context of the evolving geography of the reintegration process.

86. The percentage of professional and field service female staff on fixed-term, continuing and permanent contracts was 42 per cent as at 28 November 2019. For other categories, women represented: 54 per cent of United Nations volunteers; 33 per cent of international observers; and 50 per cent of consultants and individual contractors. Overall, 44 per cent of all civilian staff were women.

B. Safety and security

87. The Department of Safety and Security has been closely monitoring the security impacts of ongoing strikes and protests. Activities in Bogotá and Cali (Valle del Cauca Department) were suspended on some days in the context of the national strike, and the Mission's office in Popayán suffered minor damage. In some parts of the country, the presence of illegal checkpoints (in particular those set up by ELN in Norte de Santander Department) and the presence of anti-personnel landmines have resulted in mobility restrictions for the Mission. In Arauca and Córdoba Departments, Mission contractors have received threats of extortion by illegal armed groups. The residual risk level after the implementation of the security risk management measures remains medium to low.

C. Conduct and discipline

88. The Mission's Conduct and Discipline Team continues activities to raise awareness across the Mission of the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and of measures to prevent discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

89. During the reporting period, five cases of misconduct were closed and five new allegations were reported, including an allegation of sexual exploitation. Of the five allegations, one has been referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services, two are under investigation by the Mission, one is pending the investigation of a fact-finding panel and one has been documented in an investigation report, which is under review.

V. Observations

90. Three years after the signing of the peace agreement, Colombians are striving to write a new chapter of peacebuilding, reconciliation and hope. Thousands of former combatants continue their reintegration into civilian life while Colombian society continues to show inspiring signs that it is willing to embrace them. Victims are participating more and more actively in the transitional justice mechanisms and continue to be powerful voices in the search for truth, justice and reconciliation. The strong participation and comparatively peaceful nature of the local and departmental elections in October demonstrated once again the gradual advance towards a more inclusive and democratic Colombia. The peace agreement and the commitment of the parties to its implementation, despite multiple challenges, have created the conditions for these and many other positive changes. Indeed, in recent meetings, elected mayors and governors have expressed nearly unanimous interest in taking advantage of the opportunities presented in the agreement to bring long-awaited peace and development to communities that have suffered immensely from the conflict. Business leaders are recognizing the economic benefits of the peace process and are getting personally involved in supporting reintegration efforts. Furthermore, in recent mobilizations, Colombians across the country, especially young people, have called for the protection and full implementation of the agreement. All these developments are clear reflections of a widening consensus that the positive advances brought as a result of the agreement must be preserved and that its implementation will continue to improve the country's prospects for peace and prosperity.

91. I trust that ongoing conversations between the Government and the sectors that have mobilized in recent weeks will bring Colombians closer together towards common solutions, in a spirit of inclusive, respectful and peaceful dialogue. Sustained dialogue is also essential for the parties to the agreement to overcome differences over its implementation. I urge the parties to make full use of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement to resolve their disputes. In addition, tripartite arrangements between the Government, FARC and the United Nations have also been a valuable tool in promoting dialogue, from the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism that oversaw the bilateral ceasefire to the recent joint visits to the former territorial areas for training and reintegration to prepare for their transition. I encourage the parties to continue to make use of such valuable tripartite mechanisms. The United Nations, as always, stands ready to support.

92. I commend the Colombian people and institutions for the successful conduct of the local and departmental elections. Despite regrettable cases of violence and stigmatization during the campaign, election day took place relatively peacefully and many more Colombians were able to run for office and to vote than in previous local elections. The participation of former combatants and the FARC party in these polls, including the election of party members and former combatants to political office, represents an important step in the political reintegration process.

93. The role of local and departmental authorities is critical for the success of the country's peacebuilding efforts. I congratulate the new mayors, governors and other officials on their election and encourage them to make peace implementation an agenda of their own. Municipal and departmental authorities will be key in implementing the development programmes with a territorial focus and in improving security for communities and leaders, as well as in ensuring the sustainability of the reintegration process, as they gradually take on increasing responsibilities over the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. I invite the newly elected authorities to continue to make use of regional and local coordination mechanisms such as the departmental reintegration boards, the local reintegration councils, the

territorial councils for peace, reconciliation and coexistence and the tripartite mechanisms for protection and security. The new administrations can count on the partnership of the Mission and the United Nations entities, funds and programmes, and the international community more broadly. We look forward to working closely with them.

94. I call, once again, for more effective measures to protect the lives of social leaders, human rights defenders and persons involved in the implementation of the peace agreement, including specific measures for women and for indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders. I urge the Intersectoral Commission on Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders to finalize and implement its action plan, in coordination with women's organizations. It is also important to work towards improved dialogue between the Government and civil society regarding the comprehensive public policy on guaranteeing and respecting the work of defending human rights.

95. I also reiterate my calls for more effective measures to protect the lives of former combatants, particularly considering that 2019 has been the most violent year for former FARC-EP members since the signing of the peace agreement. Family members, including children, of former combatants killed since the signing are facing particular vulnerabilities; specific measures should be considered to support them.

96. The security of social leaders and human rights defenders, as well as of former combatants, is intrinsically tied to the safety of their communities. Notwithstanding the overall improvements in security following the peace agreement, communities continue to be preyed upon by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations in areas where the limited presence of the State has left institutional vacuums and where the lack of economic opportunities has left the communities vulnerable to illicit economies. I am alarmed by the consequences, in particular for ethnic communities, of the fighting among illegal armed groups in the illicit trafficking corridor that extends from the Bajo Cauca region in Antioquia Department to Chocó Department, as well as the incessant violence in Cauca Department.

97. A public policy for the dismantling of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and their support networks, as called for in the peace agreement, is essential to curb the violence that these groups inflict upon vulnerable communities. I encourage the Government to reconvene the National Commission on Security Guarantees in order to make progress in the finalization and implementation of this policy. As another important vehicle for improving the security of communities in former conflict areas, further progress on the implementation of Decree No. 660 of 2018, regarding the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories, should be considered.

98. As stated in my previous reports and as confirmed repeatedly by the Government, the vast majority of former FARC-EP combatants continue to make efforts to reintegrate into civilian life and remain committed to the peace process despite continued uncertainties and attacks against them. Multiple actors, including the Government, local authorities, universities, the private sector and religious and civil society organizations, continue to develop initiatives to support former combatants in their reintegration efforts, including educational, productive and employment opportunities. However, there are several pending challenges that require concerted action. First, it is important for FARC, the Government and the range of actors supporting the reintegration process to adopt a longer-term vision for former combatants' productive projects in order to ensure the sustainability and viability of such projects. This includes essential elements such as access to land and credit; technical assistance; linking projects to viable commercial opportunities; strengthening former combatants' productive associations; and ensuring the active participation of women. Second, a community-based approach should be further

pursued so that productive projects involve and benefit local communities, which in turn will help to promote reconciliation and broader local development. Third, although the first phase of the transition of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration has proceeded successfully, greater clarity on timelines, locations, roles and responsibilities and increased outreach and communication efforts are key to reducing remaining uncertainties among inhabitants of the former territorial areas in terms of the sustainability of health, food, housing, security, infrastructure and services. Fourth, it is important to make further progress on specific measures to support former combatants of ethnic origin. Finally, I acknowledge the steps taken by the Government to reach former combatants living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, specifically through productive projects, and urge all actors to continue their efforts to help to ensure that they have adequate access to security, basic services and opportunities for education, employment and productive projects. I urge the parties to make increased use of the National Reintegration Council and its working groups to have strategic discussions on the range of issues regarding the reintegration process.

99. The slow progress in resolving the accreditations of former combatants remains an urgent concern. Failure to address their situation impedes their participation in the reintegration process and makes them vulnerable to recidivism and recruitment by illegal armed groups. I urge all relevant actors to redouble their efforts in this regard.

100. I welcome progress in the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus, envisioned under section 1 of the peace agreement as part of a broader rural reform, which are starting to bring peace dividends to these conflict-affected rural communities in the form of much needed investments in infrastructure and services. Local authorities and communities participated actively in the planning phase of the development programmes; I trust that they will continue to be as actively involved in the implementation phase. These investments must be coupled with progress in extending to these areas a sustained and integrated presence of the State, including not just the public security forces but also the civilian institutions that can bring education, health, basic services and overall development.

101. While a long-term transformation of Colombia, in particular the areas ravaged by the conflict, was envisaged under the peace agreement, the foundations of that transformation should be built now through concrete actions by all actors to implement the entirety of the agreement. It is important to underscore the interconnected nature of its provisions. Consolidating progress in the reintegration of former combatants and the security guarantees for communities in conflict-affected areas requires that progress be made simultaneously in other areas of the agreement: in the rural reforms designed to combat poverty and underdevelopment in the countryside; in the political reforms aimed at more inclusive and participatory politics; in the illicit crop substitution efforts to counter illegal economies; and in the transitional justice mechanisms that are providing Colombian society, especially victims, with truth, justice and reconciliation. Furthermore, the gender-related provisions and ethnic chapter of the agreement provide specific measures to support women and ethnic communities. Implementing all aspects of the agreement will help to build confidence between conflict-affected communities and State institutions in areas where this vital link has been eroded by decades of war. This in turn will provide opportunities for sustainable progress, security and development.

102. With the peace agreement as its road map, Colombia can continue to build the peace that its citizens yearn for. The United Nations remains fully committed to that goal, working in partnership with the parties, with Colombian society and with the international community.