



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 [2655 \(2022\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The present report covers the period from 27 December 2022 to 26 March 2023.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [2673 \(2023\)](#), the report also includes information on the implementation of sections 1 and 6.2 of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, regarding the comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter, respectively.

II. Major developments

3. The developments described in the present report reflect the commitments to peace by the Government that continued to be put into practice through actions aimed at deepening the implementation of the Final Agreement, as well as the pursuit of peace through dialogue with armed groups under its total peace policy. The progress made across various sections of the Final Agreement were the result of efforts by Government and State institutions, former combatants and civil society.

4. In a welcome development, the Government and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) agreed to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement for four years. The Government also formalized the appointments of senior officials as its representatives before the Commission. Their engagement in the Commission should help move forward the discussions regarding the Final Agreement between the signatory parties. The Commission held three sessions focused on the inclusion of provisions of the Final Agreement in a specific chapter of the National Development Plan.

5. The High Commissioner for Peace continued engaging several armed groups both in political negotiations and in approaches aimed at their submission to justice. On 31 December 2022, along with a presidential announcement, the Government issued decrees declaring a bilateral ceasefire with several illegal armed actors and is



working to operationalize them. In parallel, the Government has engaged in consultations with Congress and with the Attorney General, among other relevant State actors, on legal and political aspects of its peace initiatives. In addition, the Government submitted draft legislation defining the framework for submission to justice agreements. The Government has also asked judicial authorities to investigate allegations of attempts by third parties to be included illegally in the lists of members of armed actors engaged in exploratory talks to receive judicial benefits.

6. The Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) held their second round of peace negotiations in Mexico City, reaching the agreements announced on 10 March, including a revised agenda of talks and commitments for the next round on ceasefire negotiations and the participation of society (see paras. 110–113).

7. Also, in the context of the total peace policy, in March, the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, announced the beginning of peace talks with a dissident group of the former FARC-EP that did not sign the Final Agreement and which identifies itself as the Central High Command of the FARC-EP. The announcement followed the decision by the Office of the Attorney General to lift arrest warrants against various of the leaders of the organization, allowing the group to designate delegates to start negotiations with the Government.

8. The progress in the peace dialogues with ELN and the aforementioned ceasefire decrees were referred to by the Foreign Minister in his letter of 14 February 2023 to the Security Council requesting that the mandate of the Verification Mission be expanded to support these processes.

9. On 19 March, President Petro announced the suspension of the ceasefire with the Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) and instructed the armed forces to resume operations against this organization. The decision came after an armed attack against the public security forces amid a miners' strike in Antioquia Department. Authorities had reported the alleged involvement of this group in other violent incidents amid the protests.

10. Another key development of the period was the presentation by the President of the draft National Development Plan to Congress. The Plan, which will guide public policy over the next four years, reflects priorities, such as human security and social justice, climate action, and tackling inequality. The Plan also includes total peace as one of its cross-cutting elements and highlights the centrality of the Final Agreement to achieve it. The commitments under the Final Agreement are contained in an annex to the Plan, which includes a \$10.7 billion budget for the next four years.

11. Congress continued discussing bills related to Government priorities, several reforms and pending legislation related to the Final Agreement. The reforms include a draft health-care reform and a reform to include additional resources for the implementation of different elements of the Final Agreement in the 2023 national budget.

12. Congress held two sessions to follow up on the implementation of the Final Agreement, one by the Peace Commission of the House of Representatives and another by the ad hoc commission created for this purpose and led by the Comunes party. The party is also actively supporting the legislation proposed by the Government.

13. In February, thousands of citizens took to the streets peacefully following calls by President Petro and by the opposition to express either their support for, or their rejection of, the proposed Government reforms.

14. The Mission registered with concern events of violence against State officials, including the killing of a member of the Office of the Ombudsman in La Guajira

Department and an armed attack against the Director of the National Protection Unit, who was unharmed. Investigations are ongoing.

15. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace filed a criminal complaint against former members of the Office of the Attorney General for alleged obstruction of justice, fraud against a court order and concealment of evidence in 2018, during the process of no-extradition guarantee of former FARC-EP leader Seuxis Paucias Hernández Solarte, also known as Jesús Santrich, who returned to arms.

III. Mission tasks

Comprehensive rural reform

16. As part of its newly mandated verification of the key comprehensive rural reform Section of the Final Agreement, the Mission has stepped up its engagement with stakeholders, such as the Minister of Agriculture, the heads of institutions responsible to carry the rural reform forward, as well as peasants' and rural women's organizations. Discussions centred, among others, on the importance of comprehensive implementation, enhancing inter-institutional coordination and granting access to land for victims, peasants and rural women. The Mission has also strengthened its cooperation with the United Nations country team and jointly established the inter-agency working group on rural reform.

17. The prioritization by the Government of rural reform is reflected in the proposed National Development Plan, which includes a significant budget allocation for section 1 of the Final Agreement (82 per cent of the total for peace implementation). The Plan also provides for the activation of a national agrarian reform system, created by law in 1994, as a key mechanism to ensure institutional coordination for rural reform. Peasants' organizations have called on Congress and the Government to include their proposals in the Plan along with the identification of the funds required for their implementation.

18. The objectives set in the investments stipulated for the implementation of the National Development Plan are lower than the goals announced by the Government of 2.9 million hectares for adjudication of land to peasants and 3.9 million hectares to be formalized during the four-year term of the current Government.

Access to land

19. Enabling more equal and comprehensive access to land for rural and conflict-affected populations is a cornerstone of rural reform efforts. According to the National Land Agency, the current Government has added 1,931 hectares to the Land Fund created by the Final Agreement, for a total of 2,232,867.

20. As at November 2022, 17,506 hectares had been adjudicated out of the 3 million goal stipulated in the Final Agreement. The National Land Agency has so far purchased some 7,000 hectares for rural reform purposes. In March, during an event in Montería, Córdoba Department, President Petro announced the delivery of some 3,500 hectares to ethnic communities, rural families and former combatants.

21. The Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers offered 259,526 hectares of land for purchase in the framework of an agreement reached with the Government in October 2022; 47,179 of which were deemed suitable for rural reform purposes by the National Land Agency, since they are fertile and not subject to land restitution processes.

22. Under the current Administration, the National Land Agency has formalized land tenure for 1,015,000 hectares. The Agency committed to formalizing 1.5 million

hectares and delivering 500,000 hectares in 2023, and to update 70 per cent of the multipurpose cadastre, which currently stands at 9.4 per cent.

23. In December 2022, the National Land Agency established four new peasant reserve zones – a form of territorial organization predating the Final Agreement, but prioritized for rural reform purposes, granting close to 400,000 hectares to some 16,000 beneficiaries in Cauca, Meta and Cundinamarca Departments. The zone in Cundinamarca includes communities with victims and overlaps with reintegration projects and other peace-related efforts, offering an opportunity for comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement.

24. In northern Cauca Department, land issues have recently led to the escalation of tensions among Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, peasants and landowners, in some cases, with clashes resulting in people killed and wounded. This underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach, including through the activation of alternative mechanisms to solve disputes regarding land use and tenure, as provided in the Final Agreement.

25. According to the Land Restitution Unit, since the enactment of the law on victims and land restitution in 2011, 500,000 hectares have been restituted to victims of land-grabbing during the armed conflict, and there is a backlog of approximately 6 million hectares for which the legal situation has yet to be determined. Additional resources for the Unit could help bring about meaningful progress in this regard.

Development programmes with a territorial focus

26. The Agency for Territorial Renewal has committed itself to implementing two umbrella projects, bringing together different existing initiatives in a coherent manner in each of the 16 regions with development programmes with a territorial focus, so as to ensure inter-institutional coordination and a comprehensive and participatory approach. Implementation of the umbrella projects will start in the Catatumbo region. The Agency held meetings with communities and local authorities in 12 regions with development programmes with a territorial focus in order to bolster their implementation. The draft National Development Plan stipulates the allocation of \$200 million for the implementation of the development programmes.

National plans for rural reform

27. The implementation of the 16 national plans for rural reform is instrumental to extending the comprehensive presence of the State and to closing the rural-urban development gap. In the National Development Plan presented to Congress, it is proposed that the Ministry of Agriculture facilitate the coordination of the plans and ensure coherence in their implementation. The Plan also stipulates that the implementation should be coordinated with other elements, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus, the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops and the comprehensive collective reparation plans.

Reintegration

28. In a welcome development, the newly appointed Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, Alejandra Miller, committed to furthering the reintegration processes with a broader focus on community-based initiatives, reconciliation, locally led efforts and support for women former combatants' leadership.

29. A session of the National Reintegration Council was held recently in Arauca Department, where violence by armed groups has forced many former combatants to abandon their settlements and productive projects.

Reintegration policies and institutions

30. In February, the National Reintegration Council approved the establishment of the national reintegration system, a mechanism to coordinate a broader institutional response to implement reintegration policies. The issuance of a presidential decree is still required for the system to be formally established.

31. In December, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization issued a resolution extending flexible conditions so that more than 12,000 former combatants could continue to access their monthly stipend until 30 June 2023. In addition, the Agency and former combatants have continued to work on the design of the comprehensive reintegration programme aimed at strengthening the capacities of former combatants, their families and communities and at ensuring a rights-based approach to reintegration.

32. Both the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and Comunes have stressed that elements for coordination and sustainability of the reintegration process should be included in the National Development Plan, including the national reintegration system and the comprehensive reintegration programme.

Access to land and housing

33. There was progress regarding access to land in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and for productive projects outside of these areas. The National Land Agency eased requirements to grant land titles for former combatants and their cooperatives. The Agency announced the purchase of three plots of land for former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Caquetá, Nariño and Tolima Departments, which would bring to 11 the former territorial areas for training and reintegration with purchased land.

34. Housing construction is ongoing in four former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Arauca, Cauca and Caquetá Departments. In Cauca, 15 houses are ready for delivery. The Ministry of Housing relaunched the construction process in Antioquia following a suspension owing to lack of resources. Clarity on available funds to launch housing construction in the remaining former territorial areas would provide certainty to former combatants. A strategy to address the specific needs of former combatants living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration remains to be established.

35. The reactivation of the working groups on housing and land could help leverage a coordinated institutional response to both these matters.

Socioeconomic reintegration

36. Seven new collective projects were approved during this reporting period following eight months of no approvals by the National Reintegration Council. To date, the Council has approved 128 collective projects; 118 of them have received financial support, benefiting 3,898 former combatants (1,087 women). So far, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has approved 5,376 individual projects (149 during this period), involving 6,475 former combatants (1,592 women). Therefore, 76 per cent of accredited former combatants participate in productive initiatives, 62 per cent of these being individual projects.

37. The perception-based assessment carried out by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, former combatants, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration and the Mission on 81 collective productive projects, was concluded, and a financial assessment of these projects is ongoing. Preliminary results show that 32 per cent of the projects are on track to

become sustainable, 45 per cent benefit from some level of sustainability factors, such as access to markets, and about 23 per cent are lagging behind. The recent agreement at the National Reintegration Council to discuss a sustainability strategy could help boost collective productive projects. Individual initiatives are facing similar challenges, calling for a tailored response.

38. Approximately 84 per cent of accredited women former combatants participate in productive projects. However, more than one third of them provide unpaid care services, compared with only 2 per cent of male former combatants, limiting their availability to dedicate time to reintegration matters. This disparity hinders women former combatants' access to reintegration benefits and participation in decision-making.

39. A total of 6,746 former combatants (1,831 women) are part of 190 cooperatives, 17 of which are exclusively composed of women. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the Ministry of Labour agreed to allocate funds and work jointly to support the capacities of these organizations.

40. In February, the National Reintegration Council approved the continuity of health services for the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, crucial for former combatants and surrounding communities alike. A resolution allocating the resources has yet to be issued.

Former combatants residing outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration

41. To date, 10,577 of the over 13,000 accredited former combatants (2,570 women) pursue their reintegration process outside the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in over 600 municipalities, including collectively in 75 new reintegration areas. The recent willingness by the Government to consider the specific needs of former combatants in these areas presents an opportunity to provide a tailored response.

42. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has been providing temporary financial support to 83 former combatants forced to flee from Arauca Department owing to insecurity in 2022. Threats facing cooperatives and productive projects in Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Guaviare and Tolima Departments are placing the lives of former combatants in jeopardy, as well as the sustainability of their reintegration.

Community-based reintegration

43. The Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has committed to deepen the restorative and reconciliation components of the joint strategy on community-based reintegration, to ensure that reintegration takes root, and to provide options for tasks, works or activities with restorative and reparative content as part of the restorative sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

44. The Agency for Territorial Renewal has stated that projects in regions with development programmes with a territorial focus should also aim to strengthen the sustainability of the reintegration process by reinforcing coordination across different programmes of the Final Agreement, including on rural reform and substitution of illicit crops. The National Reintegration Council and local reintegration councils could inform those efforts with local, context-specific inputs.

Political reintegration

45. The Comunes party held its third annual National Assembly, electing 75 new members of the National Council of Comunes (50 per cent women), which in turn re-elected Rodrigo Londoño as president of the party and appointed the 15 new members of its political council (seven women).

46. In February, Comunes announced it has officially joined the Government's Pacto Histórico coalition. For the upcoming local elections, former combatants are preparing their candidacies both under the banner of the Pacto Histórico and by seeking alliances with other political parties.

Security guarantees

47. Improving security for conflict-affected communities, social leaders and former combatants remains a critical challenge for consolidating peace. As part of its efforts to enhance coordination on security guarantees, the Government appointed the Director of the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement, Gloria Cuartas, as its representative to entities created under section 3.4 of the Final Agreement, namely the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, and the Technical Committee on Security and Protection.

Regional dynamics of violence

48. The Mission observed a recent reduction of killings resulting from clashes between armed actors in rural areas of regions, such as in Caquetá, Meta, Norte de Santander and Putumayo Departments. Nevertheless, high levels of conflict-related violence remain of concern in Departments such as Arauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca. Especially concerning is the situation in Cauca Department, where confrontations between armed actors continue, exacting a heavy toll on already vulnerable communities caught between them.

49. According to Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between 27 December and 21 March, 7,900 people were displaced and 17,500 were confined countrywide. Almost half of the people affected are Afro-Colombian or members of Indigenous communities. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered 29 massacres (13 verified and 16 under verification), mainly in the Caribbean region and Antioquia. In the verified cases, 44 people were killed (10 women, 12 youth and 5 children). In addition, the Office of the Ombudsman issued 10 early warnings alerting to security risks for 35 municipalities in Cauca, Guainía, Huila, Meta, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Risaralda and Tolima Departments. The offices of the Ombudsman of Colombia and Ecuador issued their first binational early warning, identifying risks along the border area, notably those facing the Awá Indigenous People.

50. Illegal actors continued to use explosive ordnance in various regions. Of special concern during the reporting period is the situation in Tumaco, Nariño Department, where authorities have registered at least five victims during 2023.

Security and protection for former combatants

51. Notwithstanding the killings of six former FARC-EP members (all men) in Arauca, Cauca, Caquetá, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca Departments, this latest quarter was among the least violent periods against former combatants since they laid down arms in 2017. Nonetheless, the Mission has observed the continuity of other forms of violence against them: six attempted homicides against former combatants in Cauca, Huila, Meta and Norte de Santander Departments; one former

combatant deemed missing in Meta and the kidnapping of one former combatant and his brother in Antioquia, who were later released. In March, Comunes reported that the security detail of its representative to the National Reintegration Council, Pastor Alape, was disarmed and detained for several hours in Arauca by individuals identifying as members of ELN.

52. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, the Mission has verified a total of 362 killings of former combatants (11 women, 49 Afro-Colombians and 33 Indigenous persons), 122 cases of attempted homicide (eight women), and 28 cases of former combatants deemed missing (all men).

53. In March, Comunes reported that some 200 families of former combatants from the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Mesetas, Meta Department, had received threats from the dissident group of the former FARC-EP known as Central High Command demanding that they leave the area. During an emergency meeting convened in Mesetas, the Government committed itself to providing assistance to the residents of the former territorial area for training and reintegration, to ensure their security and to explore options for their relocation. The Government also committed itself to addressing the matter with the Central High Command and to demand that all armed groups engaged in talks with the Government respect the lives of former FARC-EP combatants. The Verification Mission was present at the meeting and is constantly monitoring the situation in Mesetas.

54. Security deployments around 13 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration have changed from a fixed presence to coverage by rotating patrols, creating concerns among former combatants that this has weakened their security. The Mission has recently registered serious security incidents, including attacks against former combatants in the perimeter of two former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Caquetá and Norte de Santander Departments, where these changes took place. The Mission is liaising with the Ministry of Defence to improve security and protection in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new reintegration areas.

55. In the wake of the downsizing of the police force tasked with providing security around reintegration areas, which began in 2021, the police are working to re-establish its operational capacity to improve security for former combatants, with plans to engage at least 1,700 personnel in the coming months. A resolution by the Ministry of Defence approving this key measure will be issued in the coming weeks.

56. The Technical Committee on Security and Protection, created for the parties to jointly design arrangements for former combatants' security, was reactivated to adjust the Strategic Plan for Protection and Security of former combatants with a view to improve comprehensive security guarantees beyond the measures of the National Protection Unit.

Violence against social leaders and conflict-affected communities

57. Violence against social leaders and human rights defenders remains a major concern. OHCHR received 35 allegations (4 verified and 31 under verification) of killings of human rights defenders, including six women, five Indigenous leaders and 12 peasant leaders. According to OHCHR, most killings were reported in Bolívar, Cauca, Córdoba and Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments; the victims included peasants and Indigenous leaders, crop substitution leaders and members of local administrative boards. The violence against social leaders included the killing of an Indigenous leader, Marco López, and recent death threats reported by former Truth Commissioner and Afro-Colombian leader, Leyner Palacios.

58. The Mission also observed an increase in violence against women leaders in Meta, Casanare, Cauca and Norte de Santander Departments, compared with the same period in 2022. For instance, in January, a human rights defender and renowned peasants' leader, Edilsan Andrade, was killed in Cauca Department.

59. The Mission registered the killings of three members of the Government's Pacto Histórico coalition in Nariño and Norte de Santander, which highlights the importance of reactivating the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, especially considering the upcoming local elections in October 2023.

Judicial measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Constitutional Court

60. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace summoned the High Commissioner for Peace to a hearing following up on its orders from July 2020 regarding the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, and its action plan. The High Commissioner informed on progress in finalizing the public policy and action plan by the National Commission on Security Guarantees and requested a new deadline. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace underscored the importance that the policy be aligned with the total peace policy and ordered that it be presented by 2 May 2023.

61. There is currently a backlog of over 1,100 protection requests to the National Protection Unit and 43 former combatants have been killed waiting for protection since the signing of the Final Agreement. A decongestion mechanism remains critical, as highlighted by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and the National Protection Unit is currently working to that end, emphasizing collective and physical protection measures in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new reintegration areas.

National Commission on Security Guarantees

62. In February, President Petro chaired the National Commission on Security Guarantees for the third time since taking office. By finalizing the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and its action plan, the Commission could contribute to the Government's "total peace" initiatives.

Emergency plan for social leaders and former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo

63. The Government has yet to develop a road map to materialize its commitments regarding security and protection for social leaders and former combatants in the context of the emergency plan adopted in 2022. Efforts by Government entities are under way to enhance coordination and response within the National forum on Guarantees led by the Ministry of Interior and mechanisms provided under section 3.4 of the Final Agreement.

Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General

64. Out of the 429 cases of attacks against former combatants being investigated, the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General reports a total of 61 cases in trial phase, 415 arrest warrants issued (42 per cent of which have not been executed), including 82 for those who ordered the attacks, and 65 convictions (five convictions against those who ordered the attacks). This represents progress in about 15 per cent of all cases.

65. The Special Investigation Unit also reported that, out of its investigations into 454 killings of human rights defenders and social leaders since the signing of the

Final Agreement, 50 cases are in the trial phase and a total of 36 convictions have been achieved. Strengthening efforts by the Office of the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute those responsible for these crimes, is essential for deterrence purposes.

66. The Office of the Attorney General and former FARC-EP combatants agree on the importance of the tripartite mechanisms to build trust and lead to progress in investigations, prioritizing Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Norte de Santander and Putumayo.

Restorative sentences

Progress on cases of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace

67. The Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has assumed jurisdiction over Case 01 (on hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and concurrent crimes committed by FARC-EP), as well as over Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents) regarding crimes committed in Norte de Santander Department. This marks the beginning of the trial phase leading to the issuance of restorative sentences upon former top commanders of the FARC-EP, former members of the public security forces and one civilian who have already acknowledged responsibility and contributed to the truth. Prior to issuing restorative sentences, the Tribunal will assess facts, evidence and the acknowledgements of responsibility and will assess the proposals for restorative sentences and the contribution to the truth by the indicted parties.

68. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace held a hearing to verify the State's preparedness to implement upcoming restorative sentences. During the hearing, 23 ministries and national level entities presented initiatives in which individuals eligible for restorative sentences could participate as part of possible tasks, works or activities with restorative and reparative content. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also assessed conditions necessary to implement the restriction of rights and freedoms' component of its sentences. Key Government entities expressed their commitment to enabling the conditions for the implementation of restorative sentences.

69. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first indictment under Case 05 (on the situation of northern Cauca and southern Valle del Cauca) against 10 former mid-level members of the western front of FARC-EP (including one woman). The Special Jurisdiction for Peace charged them with war crimes and crimes against humanity and gave the indicted parties 30 working days to acknowledge their responsibility and provide observations. Over 178,000 victims are accredited in this case, including peasants, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and their territories. Victims and the Office of the Inspector General can also submit observations. Furthermore, the indicted parties need to provide the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace with information and a detailed plan for locating and identifying missing persons.

70. Recently, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace presented an analysis under Case 07 (on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict) indicating that at least 94 children (13 per cent female) were used by the public security forces during the conflict, mostly in Antioquia, Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace called upon victims of these crimes to request accreditation to participate in its proceedings. Also within Case 07, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to investigate forced recruitment and use of children by the former FARC-EP, including through observations by victims regarding versions provided by the members of the former FARC-EP secretariat and central command.

71. Women's organizations and organizations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons continued their advocacy for the opening of Case 11 on sexual and gender-based violence, which currently is in a preparatory stage following the announcement of its opening in July 2022. Also in this regard, victims' organizations are gathering information on how to repair damages caused by conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and will submit recommendations for consideration by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Preparations to verify restorative sentences

72. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General met with the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to discuss progress towards the issuance of restorative sentences, underscoring the importance of strengthening coordination with the Government to ensure the conditions for their implementation, including the allocation of financial resources. The Mission also continued efforts to address concerns of former FARC-EP combatants and members of the public security forces under the authority of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Former combatants have reiterated the importance for restorative sentences not to jeopardize ongoing reintegration efforts, including political participation. Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General met with the Executive Secretariat of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, State institutions and current and former members of the public security forces under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to discuss the latter's legal situation and obstacles to access work opportunities, among others. Representatives of the international community also attended, with a view to exploring opportunities for support.

73. In keeping with the commitment by the State to the success of the transitional justice process, the draft National Development Plan acknowledges the importance of improving coordination between the Government and the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. It also stipulates that public institutions should establish the conditions for the implementation of the sentences. In addition, the Plan foresees the creation of a specific support route for former and current members of the public security forces under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Those provisions could help to ensure a whole-of-Government approach to the transitional justice process.

74. In February, the Mission resumed field visits with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace judges responsible for issuing restorative sentences, to allow them to witness first-hand the challenges facing individuals under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Through a visit to the former territorial area for training and reintegration in La Guajira Department and a military detention facility in Cesar Department, the judges assessed the needs and factors to be considered for the sustainability of future tasks, works or activities with restorative and reparative content, as well as the conditions for the implementation of the restorative sentences.

75. In four municipalities of Cundinamarca, victims, authorities and former combatants are jointly defining and implementing activities, including the improvement of road infrastructure and schools, contributing to trust-building and reconciliation. Those activities have been certified by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and, where applicable, could be considered part of the restorative component of the upcoming sentences.

Ethnic chapter

76. In recognition of the disproportionate effect of the conflict on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement contains provisions, measures and safeguards to ensure that the needs and considerations of

those communities are duly incorporated throughout the implementation of all sections of the Final Agreement.

77. According to the National Planning Department of Colombia, implementation of the ethnic chapter has been comparatively low in relation to other sections of the Final Agreement, as the implementation rate of its provisions stands at 44 per cent compared to the average 60 per cent rate of overall implementation.

78. With a view to enhancing the implementation of the ethnic chapter, the Office of Vice-President Francia Márquez is working alongside the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement. In addition, under the responsibility of the Vice-President, institutions with implementation responsibilities are currently reviewing progress attained and establishing new goals.

Land-related developments

79. According to the National Land Agency, 910,893 hectares have been formalized to Indigenous Peoples and 5,712 to Afro-Colombians since the current Administration took office. In addition, the Agency has compiled 134 conflicts involving ethnic communities over the use and possession of land for the attention of the Agency. Furthermore, the Land Restitution Unit and the Agency have set up a coordination mechanism to ensure that lands illegally taken from ethnic peoples in the context of the conflict are not deemed suitable for purchase for rural reform purposes.

80. Following the arrival of the current Administration, the Land Restitution Unit began processes to return land for 37 Indigenous and 13 Afro-Colombian territories. Restitution processes are ongoing in 451 Indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories within municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus.

81. The Land Restitution Unit has initiated legal actions for the restitution of over 1 million hectares of land for the five prioritized territories included under the ethnic chapter in Chocó, Guaviare, Nariño and Córdoba Departments.

82. In February, the Special Assets Administration rented a 77-hectares plot at a discounted rent to 25 women of the Zenú Indigenous Peoples in Sucre Department.

Reintegration and security guarantees

83. There was no further progress regarding the implementation of ethnic-related provisions of the national reintegration policy despite the persisting challenges facing Indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants.

84. In a positive development, two former combatants were elected as traditional authorities by their communities: a woman former combatant in the Alto Guayabal reservation, in Chocó, and a male former combatant in the Munchique los Tigres reservation, in Cauca.

85. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities continued to be targeted by illegal armed groups. Indigenous guards, especially in Cauca, have been the target of several attacks, resulting in the death and injury of several of them.

86. In February, the Office of the Ombudsman issued an early warning for municipalities in Guainía Department highlighting the disproportionate risks facing Indigenous Peoples in the area owing to the presence of armed groups competing over illicit economies.

87. Despite being prioritized in the ethnic chapter for land restitution and humanitarian demining, the Nukak and Jiw Indigenous Peoples are facing acute socioeconomic vulnerability, leading to consequences that include sexual exploitation

of girls and child labour. A swift and comprehensive response by Government and State entities is needed.

Solution to the illicit drugs problem

88. The Government has informed that it intends to strengthen initiatives to support transitions from illicit crops among Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities based on traditional knowledge. This approach is in line with the recommendations stipulated in the Truth Commission's final report. Out of the 99,097 families in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, 8,837 reside in Indigenous reservations and 12,461 reside in Afro-Colombian territories.

Victims and transitional justice

89. To date, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and traditional authorities have held 115 interjurisdictional coordination sessions regarding various cases under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including 77 sessions within Case 02 (on the situation of Ricaurte, Tumaco and Barbacoas, Nariño Department). The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is also engaging with the Wiwa and Kankuamo Indigenous peoples to explore potential tasks, works or activities with restorative and reparative content in relation with crimes investigated in the Caribbean region within Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents). These coordination efforts are crucial to ensure that Special Jurisdiction for Peace procedures consider the views and needs of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

90. In the light of the persisting violence, victims accredited in Case 09 have put forward 25 requests for precautionary measures before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

IV. Other developments related to the implementation of the Final Agreement

Political participation

91. The 16 representatives of the special transitional electoral districts for peace provided inputs regarding peace, reparations and rural development during the design of the draft National Development Plan. The peace and victims caucus also advocated for the inclusion of pending legislation related to the Final Agreement as part of the Government's legislative priorities.

Solution to the illicit drugs problem

92. In line with the President's commitment to promoting a change in the approach to the problem of illicit drugs, the draft National Development Plan posits that the new policy will prioritize protecting rural communities, the environment and territories affected by illicit drugs, and will foster crop substitution and the transformation of local economies.

93. The Government has prioritized the fulfilment of its obligations under the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops vis-à-vis the 99,097 participating families and is working to identify additional funding for that purpose.

94. The National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops is currently undergoing review, including through consultations with beneficiaries in several regions. The Government has pledged to enhance coordination with other

programmes of the Final Agreement, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus, which coincides with calls made by communities themselves.

Recommendations of the Truth Commission

95. Owing to the advocacy of the committee for follow-up on the recommendations of the Truth Commission, the draft National Development Plan includes a provision indicating that relevant entities will progressively address the Commission's recommendations, with guidance from the Presidency and technical support and monitoring from the National Planning Department.

96. The Ministry of Defence is developing a strategy to raise awareness among public security forces on the chapter of the Final Report of the Commission regarding violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law, specifically on extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. This measure is part of reparative measures ordered by the Council of State in 2022 in a ruling declaring the State responsible for the extrajudicial killing of a civilian in Norte de Santander in 2007.

Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing

97. In March, Luz Janeth Forero, a former head of the national forensic medicine institute, was chosen out of 137 candidates as the new Director of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing for a five-year period, in replacement of Luz Marina Monzón. As stipulated in the Final Agreement, the Committee in charge of the selection was composed of delegates from national and international organizations, including Marcie Mersky, designated by the Secretary-General.

98. The Unit received extensive information from the Ministry of Defence collected from members of the security forces on potential victims of enforced disappearance, highlighting the importance of contributions by all parties to the conflict to search efforts.

Former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo assets

99. In compliance with provisions of the Final Agreement, the Special Assets Administration used assets handed over by the former FARC-EP and, jointly with the Victims' Unit, compensated more than 2,300 individual FARC-EP victims with around \$4.3 million. Former FARC-EP assets were also used to provide collective reparations (approximately \$1.6 million in cash and \$3.4 million in kind) to groups of victims, including Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities from various Departments.

V. Cross-cutting considerations

Gender

100. Gender inequalities persist and specific risks facing women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons continue to hamper their effective participation in peacebuilding efforts. In response, Government and State entities, women's organizations and the international community, including the Mission and the United Nations country team, are conducting important work to advance the implementation of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement.

101. Regarding reintegration, a joint project between the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on comprehensive caregiving is under way in 10 former

territorial areas for training and reintegration jointly defined with the parties, benefiting some 500 women and 370 young former combatants.

102. The design of an Action Plan for the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders is ongoing, aiming at strengthening coordination among relevant State institutions and local women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex organizations. This is particularly important as the Government moves forward with the implementation of section 1 of the Final Agreement, on the comprehensive rural reform, which may further increase the risks facing women leaders who actively defend their communities' land and environmental rights.

103. Bearing in mind that women's contributions to peacebuilding are critical, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General continued engaging with women's organizations to exchange views on the implementation of the Final Agreement. Women's representatives conveyed the need to include gender issues in dialogue efforts with armed groups in the context of the total peace policy.

104. The Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equity and women's organizations are jointly hosting regional dialogues for the design of the National Action Plan of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). Some 100 women leaders are expected to participate in each dialogue, and the Mission is supporting efforts to ensure the participation of at least six women former combatants in each case.

Children

105. Social and productive reintegration for the members of the programme "A Different Path of Life," for children formerly associated with FARC-EP, showed some progress as the number of participants with resources for productive projects increased by 3 per cent, reaching 85 (51 women).

106. Insecurity remains a serious concern for members of the programme. One male member suffered an attempt on his life in Huila and one female member was forcibly displaced in Norte de Santander. Despite of those and other issues, the working group on children of the National Reintegration Council has not been convened since December 2022, causing delays in the approval of the action plan to enhance programme implementation. Delays by local institutions continued to affect the resumption of regular programmes for children in former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

107. The Mission registered with concern several cases of child recruitment by illegal armed groups, especially Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children in Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca and Nariño Departments. Other grave violations against children are particularly concerning in Cauca, as shown by the killing in late December 2022 of José Taicus Pascal, aged 16, an Indigenous leader and member of the Indigenous guard.

Youth

108. Young Colombians continued to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. With support from the Mission, youth organizations participated in sessions of the peace council of La Gabarra, Norte de Santander Department, to provide inputs for the municipality's peace-related policy. In addition, in a joint effort with the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the public security forces and a local non-governmental organization, nearly 20 young leaders from Tolima, including children of former combatants, received training on leadership, gender issues and conflict resolution. Similarly, young people from seven Departments, among them victims, members of Indigenous communities and peasants, participated in a sports

event in Vichada Department focused on reintegration and reconciliation promoted by former combatants.

109. Regrettably, insecurity continues to affect young leaders. In January, the National Youth Council asked the Government to develop a protection route focused on the specific risks facing young leaders, citing concerns over threats received by two of its members in Antioquia and Córdoba Departments, one of whom ceased participation in the Council owing to this situation. The Mission has also registered with concern reports of increasing threats against young community members and leaders related to recruitment attempts by illegal actors in Departments such as Caquetá, Meta and Putumayo.

VI. Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional

110. The second round of talks between the Government and ELN took place in Mexico City between 13 February and 10 March 2023. The constructive atmosphere in the talks underscored the determination of the parties.

111. Negotiations were held in the presence of the guarantor countries: Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Norway and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). A representative of the Catholic Church and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia also participated in their permanent accompaniment role. The accompanying countries, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, were present at the beginning and the end of the second round. Notably, on the occasion of International Women's Day, on 8 March, the parties issued a joint statement announcing that a gender approach was central in their discussions.

112. At the closing of the round, on 10 March, in the presence of the Vice-President of Colombia, the parties announced agreements on a new agenda which sets out a common vision and objectives for the process and indicating six specific points for the negotiations. In addition, the parties announced their agreement on initial elements on participation of society and on the design of a national and temporary bilateral ceasefire. These two issues will be discussed at the next round of negotiations to be held in Cuba in April.

113. In January 2023, based on an agreement between the parties, representatives of the Government and ELN carried out a humanitarian caravan along the Bajo Calima (Valle del Cauca) and Medio San Juan (Chocó) regions, accompanied by representatives of State institutions, civil society organizations, the church and members of the international community, including the Mission and the United Nations country team. During five days, the parties spoke to local communities, ethnic and regional authorities, among other actors, and assessed the situation in the region. The parties delivered recommendations to the Vice-President at the conclusion of the second round of negotiations, highlighting the need for humanitarian relief and actions to strengthen the presence of the State in the area.

VII. Coordination with the United Nations country team

114. The inter-agency working groups on transitional justice and on rural reform, comprising members of the United Nations country team and the Mission, met with Government counterparts, the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Director of the Agency for Territorial Renewal. Results of this collaboration include the identification of priorities for 2023 and of possible joint actions to advance the transitional justice process and the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform.

115. The Mission and the United Nations country team have also strengthened coordination regarding the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement, including the Mission's participation in the inter-agency taskforce on ethnic affairs. Furthermore, the Mission and the country team participated in preparatory sessions for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

116. With funds of the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, along with the Mission, are supporting the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in the design of activities on matters of mine action, reforestation and the preservation of historical memory, among others, that could later be deemed as early compliance with restorative sentences.

117. The working group on mines has resumed its awareness-raising and data collection efforts on the location of explosive ordnance in Cesar, Caquetá and Meta Departments, in the framework of the extended pilot project on data collection, with assistance from the Mission and the United Nations country team.

VIII. Mission structures

Mission support

118. As at 26 March, 48 per cent of all civilian personnel and 40 per cent of international observers were women.

Safety and security

119. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security registered 40 incidents affecting the United Nations system. This included eight movement restrictions owing to the presence of illegal armed groups and civil unrest in the municipalities of Bolívar, La Guajira, Nariño and Norte de Santander. There were also five armed incidents reported in Cesar, Nariño and Norte de Santander, including an illegal checkpoint and crossfire between the public security forces and an armed group. In addition, a Mission vehicle and a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime vehicle were stolen by armed individuals in separate incidents in Norte de Santander Department. None of these incidents resulted in injured personnel. The Department of Safety and Security is working to strengthen monitoring, communication, training and analysis in high-risk areas of the country.

Conduct and discipline

120. The Mission has continued to prioritize a strong misconduct prevention programme with training and sensitization for all staff, including through 12 workshops with over 200 participants across the Mission. The completion of the annual quality assurance exercise has strengthened case management, as well as the Mission's risk management framework.

121. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse nor of serious misconduct were reported from 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023. Risk assessment activities have been strengthened to consolidate these gains. The Mission is working on the operationalization of the revised action plan on sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure adequate resources, enhanced victim support and coordination with the country network for the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

IX. Observations

122. The determination of Colombian society in the search for peace has been tested time and again throughout the country's history, including in recent times. And yet, the progress made during this period is proof that the process set in motion by the Final Agreement remains a driving force for all actors involved in peacebuilding. From the commitment of the Government and former FARC-EP members to uphold their obligations, to the tireless work of thousands of anonymous Colombian men and women, I continue to find reasons for optimism, even amid immense challenges.

123. It is precisely bearing in mind the magnitude of these obstacles that I commend the steps taken by the Government to attain lasting peace through its "total peace policy". Focused implementation of the Final Agreement across all its sections must remain at the core of this effort and our support. At the same time, I commend the additional efforts under way to expand the scope of peace through dialogue. The unescapable reality on the ground today in Colombia is that consolidating the peace depends on both the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement and the authorities' ability to curb ongoing expressions of violence. These two objectives are mutually reinforcing. I welcome in this context the pursuit of ceasefires that, if carried out properly, have the potential to reduce violence and build confidence in incipient dialogue processes while alleviating obstacles to the implementation of the Final Agreement.

124. Redoubling the pace of implementation in the period ahead will require that dialogue efforts be accompanied by actions to enhance the integrated presence of the State in conflict-affected regions of Colombia. To this end, I cannot overemphasize the importance and the urgency of deploying, in a coordinated manner, the much-needed goods and services provided by civilian entities along with appropriate security and justice mechanisms needed to deter further violence and lessen the suffering of vulnerable communities.

125. The discussion of the National Development Plan in Congress is an opportunity to advance in this direction. I trust that discussions between the Government and the different political forces in Congress will lead to the approval of a Plan that manages to link the long-term goals of the Final Agreement and the ambitious objectives of the current Administration.

126. The Government's actions thus far to implement the comprehensive rural reform speak of its commitment to bridging historical inequalities that are among the causes of the decades-long conflict in Colombia. Equally noteworthy are steps to advance the implementation of the ethnic chapter through provisions cutting across the Final Agreement to address long overdue demands by Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians.

127. The dire situation of conflict-affected communities calls urgently for de-escalation and for perseverance in the search for peace through dialogue. In this vein, I salute the delegations of the Government and ELN for their constructive engagement during the second cycle of negotiations in Mexico and I trust that we will see further results as soon as possible as they turn to key agenda items, including the call of communities for a ceasefire in the next round.

128. As we come closer to the issuance of the first restorative sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, actions by State entities to prepare for their implementation are noteworthy. I trust that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, individuals under its jurisdiction, Government and State entities will all continue to do their part to advance towards the central goal of the Final Agreement of upholding victims' rights. Efforts of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to consider the conditions facing individuals

under its jurisdiction, including their security, will also be instrumental to the success of coming stages.

129. As Colombians did in the recent observance of International Women's Day, I also recognize the leading role of Colombian women as builders of peace and agents for justice and reconciliation. The United Nations will remain their partner across the country. I trust that their meaningful participation will be ensured so that their voices can continue to influence the ongoing discussions around peace and security. The United Nations is inspired by their example and stands by their side.

VERIFICATION MISSION PRESENCE AND MUNICIPALITIES PRIORITIZED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT- COLOMBIA

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