

**Remarks of Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to the
Peacebuilding Commission Ambassadorial-level meeting on Colombia
13 April 2022**

Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to address the Peacebuilding Commission.

It is an honour do it in the presence of President Duque. I want to reiterate my appreciation for the trust that you, Mr. President, have placed in the work of the United Nations in Colombia.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

The report highlights the progress made in the implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Government and the former FARC-EP, including on issues related to the long-term success of reintegration, as well as the challenges facing the consolidation of peace, especially in the territories most affected by violence and poverty.

It also underlines the inclusive and participatory character of the recent congressional elections, the second since the signing of the Peace Agreement, which included, for the first time, the election of 16 new seats from the special electoral districts for peace, giving voice to the regions most affected by conflict.

These elections have been ground-breaking in several aspects. More than 28% of members of Congress will be women, a significant increase from the last elections. Communities were able to go to the polling stations unhindered, and issues pertaining the *Comunes* party participation were addressed through institutional channels.

The mostly peaceful character of the elections reflects the significant changes that Colombia's democracy is undergoing, in part owing to the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

In his report, the Secretary-General also warns that there are important risks ahead, most significantly, security challenges that affect former combatants, communities, social leaders and human rights defenders, especially in conflict-affected regions.

The Secretary-General cautions about the growing threats facing key areas of implementation that deserve all our attention.

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement, 318 former combatants, including 10 women, have been killed. I referred in the Security Council yesterday to the importance of doing more to safeguard their lives beyond the measures currently in place.

The persisting violence in several regions calls for the full implementation of the Peace Agreement, included but not limited to the security guarantees provisions of the Agreement. The chapters on rural reform, political reform and the fight against illicit drugs, are intended to address deep rooted factors that continue today to underpin dynamics of violence.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

In his latest report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, the Secretary-General highlights that in today's world, "there are fewer political settlements to conflicts, making cases like Colombia important exceptions which created opportunities to build and sustain peace".

The meeting of the PBC in Cartagena in 2020 introduced a novel approach that took the PBC closer to those affected by conflict.

Innovation has been at the core of both the Agreement and its implementation.

The verification of the cease-fire through a tripartite mechanism, the extensive mainstreaming of gender throughout the accord, the inclusion of a special chapter on ethnic peoples and the pioneering transitional justice system are examples of how the Colombian peace process is breaking new ground. The architecture of the Agreement, allowing for continuous dialogue among the parties, is itself a step forward.

The Mission, the UNCT and relevant Government agencies consult extensively with former combatants and with communities to target initiatives that add value to the process of strengthening social and economic fabric in areas historically torn by violent conflict.

Extrabudgetary funding from diverse sources including the PBF, bilateral donations and DPPA have all contributed in important ways to peace implementation.

As we move toward a new phase in the implementation of the peace agreement, there are many areas that require attention. I will highlight three:

First, the security in the regions where rising violence is afflicting communities that suffered the most during the many decades of conflict.

Second, consolidating and strengthening the peacebuilding efforts in the territories. As the Secretary-General highlights in his report, efforts should now concentrate in deploying the State's capacities to uphold citizens' rights and to ensure the provision of essential goods and services, including strengthening State presence in conflict-affected areas, and furthering long-awaited investments and reforms in remote rural areas.

Third, supporting the Transitional Justice system which is at the heart of the peace process. I welcome the commitment of the PBC and of the Peacebuilding Fund to support the Special Jurisdiction for

Peace, and especially for the participation of victims in the transitional justice system. The issuance of its first restorative sentences, expected later this year, will be a major step in this historic process. I also welcome the PBF's decision to further support the work of the Truth Commission as well as the Committee for Monitoring and Follow-up of its recommendations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Final Agreement remains an unprecedented opportunity to bring to fruition decades of peacebuilding efforts by Colombian society and institutions.

It is in these decisive moments for the consolidation of peace when we must hasten our joint efforts to assist Colombia.

And while robust funding is critical to sustaining and building upon the hard-fought gains of these years of implementation, it is equally, if not more important to continue counting on your political support.

I thank you.
