



Security Council

Distr.: General
26 September 2024

Original: English

United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2704 \(2023\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and 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 report covers the period from 27 June to 26 September 2024.

II. Major developments

2. The Government of President Gustavo Petro marked the completion of the halfway point of its four-year term in August and continued to pursue a comprehensive and sustainable peace through both the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the resolution of the remaining ongoing conflicts through dialogue. During his annual address on 7 August, the President laid out his Government's achievements to date and priorities for the period ahead and cited reductions in homicide, poverty and deforestation rates. He highlighted renewed momentum behind the implementation of the Final Agreement, emphasized progress on rural reform and expressed frustration over legal barriers to swifter land redistribution. He called upon Congress to support reforms to speed up this process.

3. In July, President Petro appointed new Ministers of the Interior, Justice, Education, Agriculture, Housing and Transportation. Amid criticism regarding low rates of budgetary execution, the President said the new Ministers were to focus on effective implementation of Government plans and budgets. Of note was the appointment of Juan Fernando Cristo as Minister of the Interior; he had previously served in the same capacity during the Administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos and had important responsibilities during the early stages of the implementation of the Final Agreement. Minister Cristo was tasked with coordinating and expediting the implementation of the Final Agreement. As announced by President Petro and Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo in the context of the last meeting of the Security Council on Colombia in July, the Ministry of the Interior set about developing a rapid response plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement, prioritizing the development programmes with a territorial focus, land distribution and security guarantees.



4. There was notable progress in some areas of the implementation of the Final Agreement, and limited advances in others. The Government issued several key regulations for the reintegration process to strengthen delivery through improved coordination (see para. 29). In August, President Petro chaired a plenary session of the National Commission on Security Guarantees and the High-level Unit of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics to foster the territorial implementation of the policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations (see para. 41). Progress in implementing the ethnic chapter was limited, with most of the processes remaining in the early stages (see para. 59).

5. The Government continued to pursue its ambitious goal of maintaining simultaneous dialogue processes with various armed actors with nine such initiatives currently underway. Formal peace talks continued with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), factions of the group known as Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), and the group known as the Segunda Marquetalia. A process was also established with the Comuneros del Sur, a splinter from ELN. Those groups are considered by the Government to be political in nature. Socio-legal dialogues, the framework applied for criminal organizations to advance towards their possible submission to justice, were also underway with criminal structures in, Buenaventura, Medellín and Quibdó. Furthermore, the Government established two new such dialogues, with the group known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) or Clan del Golfo, and with the Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada (ACSN).

6. Negotiations between the Government and ELN remained stalled, with no meetings taking place between the parties since 25 May and without further progress on the implementation of the agreement on the participation of society in peacebuilding. The reporting period was marked by tense public exchanges between the parties regarding the alleged lack of implementation of their partial agreements. However, both sides continued to underscore their commitment to peace and willingness to resume talks under certain conditions and to consider renewal of the bilateral ceasefire, which expired on 3 August (see para. 71).

7. In the absence of a mutually agreed extension of the ceasefire, on 6 August ELN announced its unilateral decision not to conduct military operations against the public security forces until 23 August, which was largely upheld. However, acts of violence involving ELN and public security forces that had not been observed during the one-year ceasefire were registered thereafter in Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca and Norte de Santander Departments, leading to loss of life on both sides.

8. During the bilateral ceasefire, the national-level communication channel of the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism helped prevent armed contact between the parties on 61 occasions. Civil society organizations and local authorities made repeated calls for a return to the negotiations and a resumption of the ceasefire. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Catholic Church and guarantor countries continued to engage with both parties to help overcome this impasse.

9. Dialogue between the Government and factions of EMC FARC-EP continued. A fifth round of talks was held in July, and agreements were reached on the definition of the agenda of the talks and the initiation of a georeferencing process. This process aims to clarify the presence of the group in the field, thereby facilitating local-level monitoring and verification. Also in July, the Government issued a decree extending the ceasefire with those factions for three months and emphasizing respect for life and the integrity of rural communities. The ceasefire oversight, monitoring and verification mechanism maintained active communication channels and reported having prevented two potential armed clashes between the sides. The mechanism

reported that at least three people held hostage by EMC FARC-EP were released. However, in-person activities within the mechanism only resumed on 24 September, partly owing to the delay in lifting arrest warrants against EMC FARC-EP representatives by the relevant authorities.

10. On 29 June, the Government and the Segunda Marquetalia concluded the first round of dialogues in Caracas. The parties agreed on a model for the talks based on the progressive implementation of agreements reached, in parallel to ongoing negotiations. The parties agreed to establish a subcommission that will work on a georeferencing process. Humanitarian measures were also agreed upon. However, the talks stalled amid a number of challenges, including on how to address the legal situation of members of the group.

11. In August, the Office of the Counsellor Commissioner for Peace announced the launching of a process to jointly work on territorial peacebuilding in Nariño with the Comuneros del Sur. Working groups have been established to address potential local-level projects and issues such as demining and the laying down of weapons.

12. Dialogues with local armed groups operating in urban settings have produced positive results. The Office of the Counsellor Commissioner for Peace reported that there was a significant reduction in homicides during the first semester of 2024 in Buenaventura (86 per cent) and Quibdó (54 per cent), compared with the same period in 2023.

13. The Government appointed its representatives to the newly announced talks with AGC and ACSN. The initial objectives include assessing and determining the will for peace in both groups, as well as exploring the possible terms for their submission to justice. On the latter, AGC maintains that its negotiations need to be recognized as political. The group appointed its own representatives and arrest warrants were suspended for three of them. One of the most significant challenges for the Government in relation to the socio-legal dialogues, both in urban settings and with AGC and ACSN, is the absence of a clear legal framework.

14. The Government's strategy has been increasingly characterized by a territorial approach to peacebuilding, with a focus on the progressive implementation of measures to bring tangible peace dividends at the local and regional levels. The rapid response plan of the Ministry of the Interior focuses on revitalizing the development programmes with a territorial focus through territorial pacts led by the national Government. The pacts aim to define investment priorities with the communities and stakeholders, including regional and local authorities. Regarding the process with ELN, the agreement on the participation of society in peacebuilding signed by the parties in May strives to promote results through structured consultations at the territorial level. Similar approaches have been applied to the process with the EMC FARC-EP structures that still take part in negotiations.

15. Despite efforts to address conflicts, the situation remained difficult for communities living in areas where different armed actors are present. Conflicts between armed groups continued to result in community displacement, confinement and mobility restrictions in various regions (see para. 45).

16. On 20 July, President Petro addressed Congress at the start of a new legislative session. He announced that the Government's priorities included bills to promote economic re-activation and social reforms, as well as bills to bolster the Final Agreement. Some members of the opposition took this opportunity to voice their criticisms regarding economic matters, the total peace policy, and the deterioration of security in certain regions. In August, the Ministers of Agriculture, Justice and the Interior took part in the formal presentation of the bill regulating the operational and procedural aspects of the Agrarian Jurisdiction to Congress.

17. The new Ombudsperson, Iris Marín, took office in August, following her election by Congress from a slate of all-female candidates nominated by President Petro. She is the first woman to lead this key institution, created in 1991, for the defence of human rights and advocacy for peace.

III. Main activities and priorities

A. Verification of the implementation of the Final Agreement

18. Implementation prospects have received a boost with reinvigorated coordination and leadership at the national level and through the recently established rapid response plan of the Ministry of the Interior, which was discussed on several occasions with the Mission during its development to identify priorities. The plan aims to streamline existing processes and ensure overall coherence among the main strategies developed to date.

Comprehensive rural reform

19. During the reporting period there were renewed efforts to accelerate the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform. The newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Martha Carvajalino, has prioritized this agenda and began fostering dialogue with key stakeholders during visits to various regions. She has sought to establish an agenda coordinated with the Ministry of Environment, including regarding the effective implementation of agreements between both Ministries on peasant activities in forest reserve zones.

20. The rapid response plan prioritizes development programmes with a territorial focus in coordination with the Agency for Territorial Renewal and the National Planning Department. It also focuses on land distribution efforts in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Minister of the Interior and the Director of the Agency for Territorial Renewal visited 16 regions with development programmes with a territorial focus.

21. Dialogue was established between the Government and national peasant platforms to address recent protests and demands for tangible progress in land delivery. The Mixed Commission for Peasant Affairs was installed to facilitate agreements on such issues. Dialogue between the Government and the private sector sought to enhance the role of the latter in relation to rural reform, while discussions between the Government and legislators focused on advancing key bills.

22. In order to resolve existing discrepancies and set a baseline to measure progress on land adjudication and formalization since 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture established new accounting criteria. Under the new parameters, as at August, 129,656 hectares of land had been adjudicated (approximately 86 per cent under the current Administration). This still represents only 4 per cent of the overarching goal of adjudicating 3 million hectares, as set out in the Final Agreement, for the Land Fund. As at July, 2,957,235 hectares have been formalized (38 per cent during the current Administration), which represents 42 per cent of the goal, included in the Final Agreement, of providing formal land titles for 7 million hectares. Despite an overall positive trend in both processes, the National Land Agency has yet to accelerate land purchase and adjudication, and, to that end, the National Land Agency is adjusting internal procedures and prioritizing agreements with stakeholders. These include the Special Assets Administration, the Victims' Compensation Fund, the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers and peasant platforms, which are crucial to achieve the Government's goal of adding 500,000 hectares to the Land Fund by the end of 2024.

23. A Constitutional Court decision in July overturned a procedure which allowed the National Land Agency to adjudicate State lands without judicial oversight. The Government expressed concern that the Court's decision could hamper efforts to meet the goal of adjudicating 3 million hectares as set out in the Final Agreement.

24. Regarding the beneficiaries of land distribution, peasants have received 54 per cent of the land adjudicated to date (70,284 hectares). The call persists for the implementation of a special land programme that would close the gender gap for rural women. According to the National Statistics Department, in 2022 nearly two-thirds of single-owner properties belong to men and 72 per cent of female-owned land was less than three hectares in size, limiting its potential for productive development and income generation. As far as victims of the conflict are concerned, 958 hectares were adjudicated to the peasant community of Las Pavas, in Bolívar Department. This constituted a step forward in an emblematic case of land dispossession.

25. The Rural Development Agency has improved coordination with the National Land Agency, yet it continued to face difficulties in implementing rural development initiatives without the definitive adjudication of land tenure to beneficiaries. The Rural Development Agency has been able to support, through its projects, the recipients of 5,400 hectares during the current Administration.

26. The Land Restitution Unit submitted new claims of dispossession for over 788,014 hectares before specialized courts. During the reporting period, 2,275 hectares were handed over to victims of forced displacement. The process however remains slow due to its complexity and a judicial backlog. In addition, progress was made in collective restitution for peasants in the Caribbean region, and in Caquetá, Chocó, Cundinamarca, Meta and Tolima Departments. Coordination between the agricultural sector and the victim's reparation system is crucial to guarantee effective redress.

27. In relation to strategic development programmes with a territorial focus initiatives pre-dating the Ministry of the Interior's rapid response plan, the Government, local authorities, communities and organizations in the Catatumbo region agreed on a course of action to implement projects with a regional impact and address land demands by peasants and ethnic communities. Other strategic projects included investments in new infrastructure along the Pacific coast of Nariño Department and agricultural production in Putumayo Department. In collaboration with the Agency for Territorial Renewal, the Rural Development Agency allocated up to \$8.5 million for projects for development programmes with a territorial focus in these regions. The Government allocated funds for 55 new projects for development programmes with a territorial focus. In addition, the management and decision-making body responsible for the approval and administration of investment projects related to the implementation of the Final Agreement, approved 30 projects for municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus, totalling around \$74 million.

28. The full implementation of the 16 national plans for comprehensive rural reform is fundamental for the territorial transformation of the regions most affected by rural poverty. As a result of the efforts by the Department of National Planning, progress was recently made in the development of the action plans associated with these 16 national plans. The plans with the highest levels of execution were solidarity economy, connectivity and rural electrification. Plans on irrigation and drainage, and rural housing are lagging behind. Consultations for the plan for rural health concluded and preparations for its issuance were underway.

Reintegration of former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo

29. A decree was issued in July establishing the National Reintegration System and the Comprehensive Reintegration Programme. In August, a separate decree regulating

the establishment of special collective reintegration areas was issued. This will facilitate the inclusion of approximately 3,000 former combatants, who are reintegrating collectively in various locations outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, among the beneficiaries. The Government and former FARC-EP representatives met three times within the framework of the National Reintegration Council to discuss operational aspects of the Programme and agreed to accelerate access to land and housing with the Ministry of Housing, the National Land Agency and the Special Assets Administration.

30. Regarding the implementation of the Comprehensive Reintegration Programme, former combatants and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization continued capacity-building activities for the design of nearly 12,500 individual reintegration plans and several collective ones, expected to be completed by the end of the year.

31. On the issue of land, approximately 486 requests have been submitted by former combatants to the National Land Agency since 2023 through the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. Of these, 36 have been prioritized with a two-fold objective: addressing the security risks facing former-combatant collectives and speeding up the consolidation of some former territorial areas for training and reintegration in their current locations. The National Land Agency finalized the formal adjudication of land purchased in 2023 in Sucre Department and advanced the process in other Departments. It remains important for the National Land Agency to establish and disseminate its current goals and timelines for purchase and adjudication.

32. Efforts to accelerate the long-term consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in particular in terms of land tenure, faced significant challenges, especially for former combatants living in Antioquia, Cauca, Guaviare and Putumayo Departments, where they face security concerns. Agreements reached on land for productive projects, housing subsidies, and the relocation of one of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration in the Guaviare Department, remained to be implemented. A plot was purchased and was close to being adjudicated for the relocation of a former territorial area for training and reintegration in Antioquia Department; while progress was slow related to the purchase of land for another former territorial area for training and reintegration in Putumayo.

33. The former territorial area for training and reintegration of Miravalle in San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá Department, faced threats from armed groups, forcing the relocation of 44 former combatants and their families to El Doncello in August, continuing a trend of displacement of former territorial areas for training and reintegration owing to deteriorating security. The Government provided short-term support with shelter and resettlement and assisted with the transfer of assets of some of the productive projects of former combatants. The projects include a women-led coffee cooperative and an ecotourism project led by a rafting team comprised of former FARC-EP and community members, which drew international attention when they participated in the 2019 world championships in Australia. The Mission provided support throughout the relocation process. A sustainable relocation of this community will require the timely formal provision of land and the full support of social services. The Mission has also drawn attention to the importance of maintaining security and support for the local communities left behind in Miravalle.

34. As for housing, 10,265 former combatants (2,485 of which are women) are living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Many have faced difficulties with financial entry requirements, making the Ministry of Housing's main programmes inaccessible to them. Approximately half of those former combatants reside in urban settings, where only 92 housing subsidies having been made available, 80 per cent of which were granted with support from local governments. In a recent

session of the National Reintegration Council dedicated to this issue, the Minister of Housing announced measures to overcome access barriers, including a review of existing regulations, updated procedures to grant rural housing subsidies and the provision of core funding. Regarding former territorial areas for training and reintegration, where approximately 1,809 former combatants (594 women) currently reside, three housing projects are underway in Antioquia, Caquetá and Cauca Departments, with a fourth one in Arauca Department pending reactivation. The Ministry of Housing and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization recently announced the launch of a new housing project in the former territorial area for training and reintegration of La Guajira. A combined total of 700 houses are expected to be delivered in said former territorial areas for training and reintegration over the next two years.

35. Regarding economic reintegration, as at July, approximately 80 per cent of accredited former combatants were engaged in collective or individual productive projects. During the reporting period, 36 new individual projects were approved, bringing the total to 5,946, benefiting 10,969 individuals, including 2,834 women. A total of 96 cooperatives are implementing 128 collective productive projects approved by the National Reintegration Council, benefiting 4,002 individuals, including 1,111 women. Notably, 25 projects are led by women former combatants.

36. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization formalized its economic sustainability strategy through a resolution, allowing for allocated funds to be spent. To date, applications have been submitted for 85 collective productive projects to benefit from financial and technical assistance, involving over 1,900 former combatants. Sustainability plans are being designed for only 14 per cent of the projects.

37. According to recent figures provided by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the number of children of former combatants is now at 9,958, with 1,121 of them living in former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The Comprehensive Reintegration Programme aims to mainstream family-related measures to address children's needs, including education, social care services, family reunification and protection.

38. Ownership at the local level is a crucial factor in achieving sustainable results in reintegration. To this end, 72 municipal and departmental reintegration working groups have been established with a view to foster engagement by local institutions in relation to reintegration needs. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization held seven capacity-building workshops during the reporting period to enhance the political advocacy skills of former combatants vis-à-vis local authorities on their development plans. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization launched political leadership capacity-building workshops, led by the University of Antioquia, for 530 participants in 10 municipalities.

39. The implementation of actions agreed upon between former combatants, local communities and local authorities as part of a community-based reintegration strategy launched in 2023, under the leadership of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, entered its final phase with 52 initiatives, including sports and artistic activities and small infrastructure projects. Integrating them into broader institutional territorial plans, such as development programmes with a territorial focus, would help to ensure their viability, given that some initiatives extend beyond the funding and capacities of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization.

40. In Congress, Comunes legislators continued to actively promote bills on peace implementation and gender parity in politics, among other issues. They succeeded in convening two parliamentary political oversight hearings in which Government

institutions reported and responded to legislators' questions on security and protection measures for former combatants.

Security guarantees

41. Significant steps were taken towards implementing key policy instruments established through the Final Agreement that are critical to addressing the persistent security risks to vulnerable communities and individuals in regions still affected by conflict. In August, President Petro led a joint session of the National Commission on Security Guarantees and the High-level Unit of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics. The session resolved that the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations would include Catatumbo, northern and central Pacific, Magdalena Medio, southern Bolívar and northern Cauca, among the 11 prioritized geographic areas (covering 71 municipalities). Two pilot projects are set to begin in the two latter regions. The Minister of the Interior announced the establishment of an inter-institutional coordination mechanism with the participation of relevant State entities to foster the implementation of the public policy.

42. The Government continued to work with human rights organizations in the development of prevention and protection policies for communities and social leaders. Key developments include the reconvening, for the first time since 2020, of the National Roundtable on Guarantees – the main mechanism for dialogue between the Government and human rights platforms established prior to the Final Agreement. The Ministry of the Interior completed regional consultations with civil society in regard to its comprehensive guarantees public policy. It is important that this policy be promptly implemented, along with other instruments such as the Comprehensive Programme for the Safeguarding of Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

43. The sustainability of reintegration efforts requires the integrated presence of the State, ensuring security for former FARC-EP combatants and local communities. Although there was a reduction in the number of killings of former combatants, from 25 in the last semester of 2023 to 16 in the first half of 2024, other forms of violence persisted, including threats and attempted homicides. The prompt issuance of a decree by the Government establishing the comprehensive protection programme for former combatants, foreseen in the Final Agreement, would constitute a much-needed step.

44. During the reporting period, nine killings and eight attempted homicides against former FARC-EP members were reported, in particular affecting Indigenous and rural former combatants in Cauca, La Guajira, Putumayo, Sucre and Valle del Cauca Departments. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, 432 killings (11 women) have been reported, including 56 Indigenous persons and 57 Afro-Colombians, along with 151 attempted homicides and 42 disappearances. Three cases of sexual and gender-based violence against female former combatants and children were reported to have taken place in Huila Department and in former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Meta Department.

45. Between 1 January and 31 August, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that more than 137,200 people were affected by displacement as a result of conflict (42,500 in mass events and 79,585 individually) and that 94,700 people had been confined in 62 municipalities across 13 Departments, in particular in the Pacific region, the northwest, and part of the border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as well as Putumayo, Caquetá, south of Bolívar and La Guajira Departments, which were previously relatively unaffected by humanitarian emergencies. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights received 11 allegations of massacres (four verified and seven under verification) during the reporting period. The most affected Department among the verified cases was Antioquia, six young men included among victims.

46. During the reporting period, there was a reduction in the number of homicides of social leaders. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 33 allegations of homicides against human rights defenders (9 verified, 15 under verification and 9 inconclusive), 22 less than during the previous reporting period. Among the victims reported in cases verified and under verification, there were 4 women and 29 men. Most victims were leaders of community action boards, and included Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, as well as peasants promoting the Final Agreement. Arauca, Cauca and Valle del Cauca Departments registered the highest number of cases.

47. In a welcome development, the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General, created by the Final Agreement, was strengthened with additional prosecutors and the establishment of a new investigative group. To date, only 98 sentences have been issued out of a total of 546 cases currently under the Unit's purview, with only five sentences pertaining to the main instigators. During the reporting period, the Unit conducted investigations leading to 11 arrests, 9 cases reached trial, and 11 sentences were issued. There is an urgent need to bolster the capacity of local-level justice to fight impunity in the regions most affected by violence.

48. During the reporting period, the Office of the Ombudsperson issued seven early warnings detailing security risks identified in Caquetá, Casanare, Cauca, Cesar, Huila, Meta, Norte de Santander and Vichada Departments. Since the establishment of the Intersectoral Commission for the Rapid Response to Early Warnings in 2017, spearheaded by the Ministry of the Interior, it has processed 324 alerts, 23 per cent (76 cases) of which included specific risks for former combatants. In response, a differentiated strategy to address these risks was developed in collaboration between the Intersectoral Commission and former FARC-EP members.

Restorative sentences

49. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continued its essential work as the judicial component of the transitional justice system established in the Final Agreement. The Mission continued to observe the consolidation of the Jurisdiction's restorative approach, including in hearings, during which individuals charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity publicly acknowledged their responsibility and provided testimony to contribute to the truth. During such hearings, victims were also given the opportunity to voice any concerns and observations they may have.

50. According to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as at 6 September, 14,346 individuals were under its authority, mostly members of the former FARC-EP (9,902) and the public security forces (4,260), with a smaller number of non-combatant State agents and civilian third parties (184). Individuals under the authority of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace have provided over 1,600 testimonies, and over 11,000 individual victims have been represented in judicial proceedings. The Judicial Panel of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, responsible for the initial investigative phase has issued four concluding resolutions, which are necessary for the Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to launch the trials for 38 individuals eligible for restorative sentences.

51. As cases progressed, the Mission continued to verify that the necessary conditions enabling the implementation of the restorative sentences were being put in place by relevant authorities. Conditions include the provision of appropriate security and living conditions for sentenced individuals, and the identification of long-term projects and financial resources to carry out their sentences. However, progress remained limited within the framework of the coordination mechanism between the Government and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. During the reporting period, the

Peace Tribunal requested information and held hearings to assess the relevant entities' readiness to provide said conditions. Their timely establishment is a critical prerequisite towards satisfying the interests of the victims and Colombian society. Greater inter-institutional coordination and information exchange at all levels would help expedite the process and enhance preparedness by State actors.

52. In August, as part of its investigative phase within Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace held its largest public hearing of acknowledgement. During the hearing, 74 members of the public security forces, including 28 who were deemed most responsible, acknowledged their responsibility before 140 victims for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Huila Department between 2005 and 2008. On this occasion, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Governor of Huila and the Mayor of Neiva signed an agreement to jointly support restorative activities in the region, similar to recent agreements signed in other regions of Colombia.

53. The trial stage continued in Case 01 (on hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and concurrent crimes committed by FARC-EP), and in Case 03, for crimes committed in Norte de Santander Department, the Caribbean region and Dabeiba, Antioquia Department. The Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has yet to decide on the challenges put forward by legal representatives of victims and by the defence of the former members of the FARC-EP secretariat, contributing to an uncertain timeline for the issuance of restorative sentence pertaining to their respective cases.

54. In September, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace announced the indictment of seven former members of the Northwestern Bloc of the former FARC-EP, as most responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity under Case 01 in Antioquia, northern Chocó, southern Córdoba, Caldas and Risaralda Departments. This is the third of seven regional indictments to be made against former FARC-EP members in the context of this Case.

55. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace held a preparatory hearing within its first adversarial trial, applicable for indictees deemed not eligible for a restorative sentence after failing to acknowledge responsibility. Falling into this category, retired Army Colonel Publio Hernán Mejía, a former commander of La Popa battalion in Valledupar, Cesar, stands accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between 2002 and 2003.

56. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization adopted a resolution establishing the support route for members of the public security forces appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization began implementing this process in Bogotá and in the Departments of Antioquia, Cesar and Norte de Santander, among others, including through awareness-raising sessions. The participation in this route, which is voluntary, has the potential to generate improved conditions for their effective participation in transitional justice and allowing those individuals to comply with their obligations vis-à-vis victims. As at 17 September, 826 participants had registered.

57. Meanwhile, challenges persisted with the provision of greater legal certainty to individuals under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a key objective established in the Final Agreement. The process put in place by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to address the situation of individuals not deemed most responsible for grave crimes is a case in point. Defence attorneys and legal experts have raised their concerns, noting that the complexity of the process risks further delaying the definition of the legal status of thousands of individuals, creating uncertainty and requiring significant human, technical and financial resources.

58. Another challenge facing the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is the persistence of violence undermining its activities. The actions of armed actors in areas such as Antioquia, Caquetá and Cauca Departments have directly and indirectly affected judicial proceedings in the field, including through threats against victims and individuals appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. These actions remain a major obstacle to delivering justice, and decisive action needs to be taken by relevant authorities.

Ethnic chapter

59. Progress in the implementation of the ethnic chapter remained limited during the reporting period. Significantly improved coordination among some 30 Government entities with implementation responsibilities is needed to achieve swifter and more concrete progress. In September, some 20 entities with responsibilities under the ethnic chapter and local communities from Quibdó, Chocó Department, took part in the first of five events due to take place in the Department by the end of 2024. Participants identified bottlenecks and priorities to accelerate the implementation of the chapter in the region.

60. Despite a directive issued in May requesting relevant institutions to identify budgets and report progress in the official monitoring system, delay in setting clear goals and the absence of reports that foster concrete action continued to hinder overall implementation. Out of 84 active indicators, only 37 have shown progress towards the objectives set in the Framework Plan for Implementation for 2023. Limited progress was reported on eight of the goals set out for 2024.

61. Round tables among entities with implementation responsibilities, aimed at improving coordination and identifying bottlenecks, were convened by the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement. The Mission has observed the need for implementing institutions to re-focus on the prioritized commitments outlined in the Framework Plan for Implementation through more sustained and coherent efforts.

62. The special consultation mechanisms – created to guarantee the effective participation of ethnic peoples in the development programmes with a territorial focus – actively engaged in 10 subregional forums to review the regional action plans for the development programmes with a territorial focus. So far in 2024, only five new development programmes with a territorial focus initiatives focused on ethnic peoples are being implemented, out of 4,961 such initiatives identified during the design phase of the development programmes with a territorial focus. It is critical to bolster the security of the members of these mechanisms, as they have reported new threats.

63. Since the adoption, in February, of the decree regulating the formalization and acquisition of land for Afro-Colombian community councils, the National Land Agency has received 25 new requests for the collective provision of formal land tenure of 76,361 hectares of land. It also received two requests for protective measures to safeguard the integrity of ancestral territories occupied by Afro-Colombian people, pending definitive clarification of their legal status. In June, the Government issued a decree aimed at improving the protection mechanism of the territories ancestrally occupied by Indigenous Peoples, by expediting 93 per cent of the 186 protection requests pending since 2014. Fostering greater dialogue and inclusion between ethnic and peasant organizations in the regions is essential to protect the rights already acquired by ethnic peoples and to mitigate tensions with the agrifood sector and with regard to the establishment of peasant reserve zones.

64. In August, for the first time an ethnic reintegration committee was created in Riosucio, Caldas Department, where more than 98 per cent of the former combatants belong to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The committee aims to

promote their participation in the design and implementation of policies related to reintegration at the municipal level.

65. The actions of illegal armed groups against ethnic peoples remain of concern. Communities along the San Juan River in southern Chocó Department continued to suffer the consequences of conflict involving illegal armed groups in the region, including confinement, displacement and various expressions of violence. The Ministry of Defence, in coordination with the Office of the Counsellor Commissioner for Peace, began implementing a programme aimed at reducing landmine-related risks in ethnic territories, covering three municipalities and eight Awá Indigenous reservations in Nariño Department and responding to specific incidents in Cauca Department.

66. During the reporting period, the five restitution courts specialized in land for ethnic territories created earlier this year, received 50 per cent of the 346 cases accumulated over the past 14 years. The courts faced significant operational and security challenges, affecting their ability to function effectively. To date, 32 rulings have been rendered, including 25 pertaining to Indigenous Peoples. The National Commission of Indigenous Territories identified 38 court orders pertaining to the formalization of Indigenous reserves, only six have been carried out in full.

67. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continued to incorporate an ethnic and cultural perspective in its work. Under Case 09 (on crimes against ethnic peoples and their territories), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace accredited the four Indigenous Peoples from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and their territory as victims. In addition, it accredited two Afro-descendant women's organizations from the Cauca Department. These accreditations will enable Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities to actively participate in judicial proceedings.

Gender issues

68. Of the 54 gender indicators of the Framework Plan for Implementation, 46.3 per cent were less than halfway completed. The majority are related to the comprehensive rural reform and political participation sections of the Final Agreement. The ongoing review of these indicators offers an opportunity to better reflect the Final Agreement's gender provisions in the Framework Plan and ensure greater relevance, with a focus on their effect on the lives of women and LGBTIQ+ persons. The Ministry of the Interior strengthened its gender and diversity working group by reinforcing its membership. The group was tasked with improving the coordination and coherence of different peace-related policies at the local level.

69. In July, the main national women's platforms, encompassing approximately 40 organizations, held meetings with the aim of defining strategies to advocate for their participation in the ongoing dialogue initiatives, one of their long-standing objectives.

70. Organizations of women former combatants continued to advocate for a more inclusive reintegration process, highlighting persisting challenges related to economic autonomy, such as unpaid care work, political participation, gender-based violence and threats from armed groups.

71. In July, the Ministry of the Interior finalized the draft action plan for the period 2023–2026 of the Comprehensive Programme for the Safeguarding of Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. The plan has a holistic approach, related not only to protection but also to prevention and non-repetition. Its implementation will require adequate funding and resources.

B. Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional

72. Developments during the reporting period illustrate the nature of the ongoing impasse and climate of uncertainty affecting the negotiating process between the Government and ELN. On 4 July, amid the commemoration of its sixtieth anniversary, ELN issued a statement stressing that it remained committed to seeking a political solution to the armed conflict, although it did not make any direct reference to the peace talks. In mid-July, the Government delegation called for a meeting between the parties to discuss the renewal of the ceasefire. However, in a statement on 26 July, the ELN Central Command rejected the proposal alleging that the Government had violated agreements on several instances, including by engaging with the Comuneros del Sur Front in Nariño and the fact that the Government had not removed ELN from the list of organized armed groups, as agreed at the negotiating table.

73. On 2 August, in their role as permanent accompanying parties to the process, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Episcopal Conference addressed a confidential letter to the parties, proposing a technical rollover of the ceasefire and an extraordinary meeting to discuss the terms of its extension. The Government delegation agreed to the proposal. In a statement on 2 August, ELN conditioned its participation in such a meeting on the issuance of a presidential decree removing the organization from the aforementioned list of organized armed groups by 23 August.

74. In early August, President Petro transmitted a confidential proposal to ELN to hold a meeting to discuss economic reforms, an item agreed in the agenda for the negotiations in the Mexico Agreement, reached in March 2023; ELN publicly declined, stating that the Government should first implement the agreements reached during the negotiations.

75. The Mission continued to monitor the implementation of the bilateral ceasefire, which was broadly respected by the parties, with very few incidents of armed contact between public security forces and ELN reported through 3 August, the expiration date of the ceasefire. However, the killing of two police officers on 21 and 25 June, respectively in Curumaní, Cesar Department and Arauquita, Arauca Department, constituted serious incidents and possible violations of the ceasefire, to be determined by the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism, which did not meet during the reporting period. During the reporting period, the Mission followed up on incidents involving the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict by armed groups in Antioquia, Boyacá and Chocó Departments. The Ombudsperson reported with concern that over 50 per cent of the cases of recruitment and use of children by the various armed groups targeted Indigenous communities.

76. The standstill in the negotiations and the decision, in March, by ELN to withdraw its delegates from the monitoring and verification mechanism have been to the detriment of its full functioning. During the reporting period, no formal sessions of the mechanism were held at the national level. Together with the Catholic Church, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team conducted bilateral meetings with both parties in an attempt to maintain indirect communication between them. In addition, between 26 June and 3 August, the nine regional and 22 local branches of the mechanism, in which representatives of the Government, the Church and the Mission participate, remained operational and held 78 sessions to process and analyse events potentially contravening the terms of the ceasefire. Mission capabilities deployed in the field allowed it to continue to monitor and follow up on developments closely after the expiration of the ceasefire maintaining regular contact with local authorities and communities and enabling preventive action when situations of imminent armed contact were reported by the parties.

77. On 3 September, clashes between ELN and the public security forces in La Vega, Cauca Department, left at least six ELN members dead. On 17 September, ELN attacked a military base in Puerto Jordán, Arauca Department, leaving three soldiers dead and 26 injured. Since the end of the bilateral ceasefire, and as at 25 September, a total of 15 ELN members and 11 members of the public security forces have been killed, doubling the number of casualties that occurred during the year-long ceasefire. Following the 17 September attack in Arauca Department, the Government peace delegation stated that it considered the dialogue process suspended and called for demonstrations by ELN of its will for peace in order to resume the dialogue. For its part, ELN had already declared in a statement issued on 19 February that it considered the dialogue process to be frozen following the separate process launched between the Government and the Comuneros del Sur ([S/2024/267](#)).

78. Although the ceasefire provided some relief to communities in several conflict-affected regions, ongoing violence involving other armed groups continued to impact negatively the humanitarian situation, in particular in Antioquia, Arauca, southern Bolívar, Cauca and Chocó Departments. Between 11 and 19 August, ELN applied measures considered as enforced confinement by the authorities. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this impacted some 20,000 people in the Department of Chocó. ELN claimed that this action was intended to protect the population from the advancing AGC units in the region. Subsequently, it agreed to the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to mitigate the humanitarian impact of this measure.

C. Good offices

79. As the Government has sought to expand the scope of peace in the country through dialogue efforts that are complementary to implementation of the Final Agreement, the parties at the various peace tables have turned to strategic partners to provide support and facilitation as accompanying parties, guarantors and supporting nations. This is exemplified by the intensive ongoing efforts of the Catholic Church, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in exercise of the Secretary-General's good offices and various guarantor and supporting countries, to accompany the peace table between the Government and ELN. Their presence and tangible assistance help to build trust, foster agreements through dialogue and support their implementation.

80. In view of the complex conflict environment that persists in certain regions, posing the greatest threat to peace implementation, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team have accompanied, alongside other strategic partners, the ongoing dialogues with EMC FARC-EP and associated local-level meetings dedicated to promoting development in conflict-affected territories. Such meetings in Antioquia, Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta and Norte de Santander Departments have involved the participation of environmental, grassroots and producer organizations, former FARC-EP members, women's organizations and local authorities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team accompanied the launch of peace dialogues with the Segunda Marquetalia and a process involving communities in Tumaco, Nariño Department, to identify potential local development initiatives in furtherance of those dialogues.

81. Such political engagement, and the trust built among parties involved, has enabled the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team to assist not only by accompanying peace dialogues, but also in situations requiring humanitarian support. A recent example was the support provided alongside the Office of the Ombudsperson and the peace mission of the Organization of American States, to help

secure the release of 66 soldiers that had been blocked by organized peasant groups in Guaviare in August.

82. In the context of the implementation of the Final Agreement, the good offices provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, along with Cuba and Norway, in their capacity as guarantor countries, have contributed to constructive dialogue between the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and representatives of Comunes, and reduced tensions over recent months.

IV. Coordination with the United Nations country team

83. In late June, the Government and the United Nations country team signed a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2024–2027 with five development priorities reflecting the linkage between sustainable peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The priorities include issues of common interest to the Mission and the country team, such as the consolidation of total peace, human security and social justice.

84. Efforts were underway within the country team to coordinate preparatory work for the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department, in October. The Mission was closely involved in the efforts, in view of the emphasis placed by the Conference on the linkages between inclusive peacebuilding and environmental protection.

85. Coordination of support to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace between the country team and the Mission continued in relation to the implementation of three restorative projects as pilot initiatives. One benefits the Awá Indigenous People's community house in Nariño Department, another aims to revitalize the environment in rural areas of Bogotá, while the third focuses on mine action in Antioquia Department.

V. Conduct and discipline

86. The Mission conducted an assessment visit to Meta Department and internal training sessions in Antioquia on the prevention of child prostitution, as well as sessions on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

87. One allegation of prohibited conduct was recorded against an international staff member after receiving information from multiple complainants.

VI. Observations

88. As the eighth year of the implementation of the Final Agreement draws to a close, and with the current Administration halfway through its term, important challenges remain to consolidating peace. These include achieving an integrated presence of the State throughout the country, resolving the difficult security situation in various regions, and expediting the materialization of the goals set forth in the Final Agreement through effective allocation and execution of resources. While I recognize the significant work done and the magnitude of some of these challenges, I call upon all involved to redouble their efforts and keep their focus on the overarching objective: achieving peace for the sake of the millions of Colombians, especially Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, still affected by the scourge of violence in their day-to-day lives.

89. I welcome the renewed efforts to revitalize the implementation of the Final Agreement. I trust that these will strengthen the process, providing it with a reinvigorated and comprehensive strategic approach. I hope that the new rapid response plan spearheaded by the Ministry of the Interior, which prioritizes, among other matters, progress in key aspects of the comprehensive rural reform, will soon start to deliver accelerated results.

90. With respect to security guarantees, I note the important steps underway to activate key instruments of the Final Agreement, such as the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. In view of the urgent need for improved security in many areas of the country, I call upon the authorities to take swift and concrete action to translate agreed objectives into reality on the ground. Sustained efforts are imperative to protect former combatants and social leaders, and to fight impunity regarding the multiple threats and attacks against them. Violence against ethnic communities and their leaders continues to be of grave concern, and more efforts are needed to ensure their protection.

91. I welcome the formal adoption of the National Reintegration System and the Comprehensive Reintegration Programme, as well as developments enabling the establishment of special collective reintegration areas. These complementary measures should galvanize and contribute to the sustainability of the social, economic and political reintegration of the former combatants, in particular those taking part in collective processes.

92. The easing of the tensions between the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and representatives of the Comunes party is encouraging. I welcome the will displayed by all involved to continue a constructive dialogue about the concerns expressed by former FARC-EP representatives pertaining to certain aspects of the transitional justice process, in full respect for the Jurisdiction's autonomy and independence.

93. The importance of a smooth and effective implementation of the transitional justice system to the peace process cannot be underestimated. Four of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace cases have reached the trial stage, and the issuance of restorative sentences should follow. I urge the Government to ensure that conditions are in place in a timely fashion for the implementation of those rulings, including restorative projects with adequate funding, and the necessary security arrangements.

94. A comprehensive approach to achieving peace in Colombia is of the essence. Historically, partial approaches have not been able to prevent or stem violence in the absence of a consolidated State presence. Despite the considerable challenges this implies, a holistic strategy to implement the Final Agreement and address the persisting violence remains an absolute necessity.

95. I take note of the difficulties affecting several of the ongoing dialogue initiatives spearheaded by the Government. Setbacks are to be expected in any such process, but their swift resolution through compromise is key. As regards the talks between the Government and ELN, significant achievements were reached by the sides at the negotiation table and should not be discarded, as they constitute an important basis to move the process forward. I urge the parties to continue to demonstrate their commitment to peace through concrete actions, and to show the necessary flexibility and vision to overcome their differences for the sake of the future of their country.

96. While ceasefires alone cannot bring an end to conflict, they can contribute to reduce the suffering it causes and build trust among the parties. I hope that the Government and ELN will reestablish their bilateral ceasefire as soon as possible, with a sufficiently robust monitoring and verification mechanism, and ensure that its scope is broad enough to have a positive impact on the security of conflict-affected communities.

97. At a delicate juncture in the peacebuilding process, the Mission's capacities constitute a key asset, enabling it to continue to monitor dynamics and maintain close contact with communities and local actors in conflict-affected regions. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to continue supporting efforts to build and consolidate peace in Colombia.

98. I remain grateful to the Security Council for the continued trust in the work of the Mission in these promising yet challenging times, and I encourage all involved to maintain their steadfast commitment to the task of furthering peace.

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

Verification Mission
Geospatial

