



# 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 [2435 \(2018\)](#), by which the Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which it requested the Secretary-General to report on the activities of the Mission every 90 days. The report covers the period from 27 June to 26 September 2019.

#### II. Major developments

2. During the reporting period, the President of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez, completed the first year of his administration. With regard to the peace process, President Duque highlighted advances made in the implementation of the “Peace with legality” strategy, among them the number of productive projects approved for former combatants, the start of implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus, and his visits to the former territorial areas for training and reintegration to reinforce trust with former combatants. These welcome efforts should go hand in hand with additional progress in the implementation of the other aspects of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, a set of interconnected and mutually dependent commitments to bring peace, security and development to communities affected by the conflict.

3. On 29 August, in a video statement, the former lead negotiator of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) to the Havana peace talks, “Iván Márquez”, announced a return to armed struggle under the name “FARC-EP,” arguing that the Colombian State had “betrayed” the peace agreement. Surrounded by approximately 20 individuals, including the 5 other former FARC-EP commanders against whom the Special Jurisdiction for Peace had already opened non-compliance verification procedures for failing to uphold their responsibilities under the peace agreement, he called upon FARC-EP dissidents to join the group and announced its intention to seek to coordinate efforts with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

4. The announcement was swiftly and emphatically rejected by all sectors of society, State institutions and the international community, including the Mission. The political party Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) immediately



rejected the announcement, reaffirmed its commitment to the peace agreement and initiated proceedings to expel from the party those appearing in the video. President Duque condemned the announcement, stating that it was a threat from a criminal group attempting to cover its illegal activities, including drug trafficking, under ideological justifications. He further affirmed that the Government would continue to support law-abiding former combatants. There were widespread expressions of support from different sectors for the vast majority of former FARC-EP leaders and combatants who remain committed to the peace process, and many calls for a reinvigorated implementation of the peace agreement as a whole. The Government, FARC party leaders and the Mission have since conducted visits to the reintegration areas, jointly in most cases, to help to reassure former combatants and reiterate their support for their reintegration efforts, including a visit led by President Duque to the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Miravalle (Caquetá Department) on 18 September.

5. Elections will be held on 27 October to elect 3,306 local and departmental officials, including governors, mayors and local council members, who will take office on 1 January 2020. A recent spike in attacks against candidates from parties across the political spectrum demonstrates the risks facing these first nationwide local elections since the entry into force of the peace agreement. In a report in September, the non-governmental Electoral Observation Mission confirmed 54 incidents of electoral violence since the closing of the registration of candidates on 27 July, comprising 7 killings, 5 attacks, 2 kidnappings and 40 threats. On 4 September, the Ombudsman's Office issued an early warning identifying 418 municipalities (36 per cent of the total municipalities in Colombia) facing risks associated with the electoral process, due mainly to the presence of illegal armed groups.

6. On 26 August, under the leadership of the President of the National Committee of the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence, Monsignor Héctor Fabio Henao, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, 12 national political parties, including FARC, signed the National Pact for Political Culture and Non-Violence during the Electoral Campaign to reject violence and stigmatization and promote dialogue and political rights in the context of the upcoming elections. President Duque, who signed the Pact as a witness, noted that Colombians were able to come together when focusing on the interests of the nation. My Special Representative also signed as a witness. Efforts are under way to sign and implement similar pacts at the departmental and local levels, including through departmental and municipal councils on peace, reconciliation and coexistence.

7. On 20 July, the 2019/20 legislative session was inaugurated. President Duque and the new presidents of both chambers stressed the importance of working towards unity and national consensus. To date, the Government and members of Congress have presented more than 440 bills and constitutional reforms, some of which are related to key aspects of the peace agreement. I reiterate my call for all parties to ensure that any proposed reforms are the result of inclusive dialogue, that they are not applied retroactively and that they respect the spirit and integral nature of the peace agreement.

8. Congress is currently reviewing the bill on the national budget for 2020, which must be approved before 20 October. Although the proposal does not include a specific budget line on peace implementation, the Government included an annex describing planned expenditures for each chapter of the peace agreement. It is important to ensure that all ministries and entities entrusted with the implementation of the peace process receive adequate funding. I therefore welcome the inclusion of a 15 per cent increase for the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition in the proposed budget.

9. The implementation of the 16 development programmes with a territorial focus continues, with the Government reporting more than 650 community projects completed and more than 500 under way, benefiting communities affected by the conflict. The Obras por Impuestos programme, which permits companies to meet part of their tax obligations through infrastructure investments in conflict-affected regions, is also supporting the implementation of the development programmes.

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

10. The Government and FARC have both declared that the other party has fallen short of fully implementing some commitments in the peace agreement. Senior government officials have stated that FARC has not fully complied with its obligations to provide information on the location of mines and minefields and that, among other things, it has not fully disclosed and handed over the entirety of its assets. FARC has called upon the Government to do more to guarantee its security and has argued that the Government is focused on reintegration, rather than on a more comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement.

11. Under the peace agreement, mechanisms to resolve controversies and overcome implementation challenges were established, including the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI). I encourage both parties to use CSIVI to resolve such issues and to strengthen other existing coordination mechanisms. The establishment of technical working groups for specific issues, such as the tripartite mechanism on demining issues established recently between the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, FARC and the United Nations (the Mission and the Mine Action Service) is a welcome development. The United Nations stands ready to support such constructive dialogue between the parties.

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

12. During the reporting period, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace prioritized the participation of victims in the seven cases currently on its docket, supporting them in getting accredited, providing evidence, obtaining legal counsel and requesting protection measures. It is also reviewing the accreditation of indigenous communities and Afro-Colombian community councils.

13. Under the transitional justice system established under the peace agreement, benefits are assured only for those who comply with their obligations. Following the announcement on 29 August that some former combatants were rearming, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace stated that taking up arms again was cause for expulsion from its jurisdiction. It ordered the arrests of four of the individuals appearing in the video (another two were already subject to arrest warrants) and announced that existing procedures of verification of compliance would be expedited and that new procedures against other individuals in the video would be opened. On 13 September, it announced its decision to exclude both “Jesús Santrich” and Hernán Darío Velásquez, alias “El Paisa”, from its jurisdiction and to remove their benefits under the transitional justice system, including the guarantee of non-extradition. It also instructed its chambers and sections that all the individuals appearing in the video should have all of their benefits removed.

14. On 13 September, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace announced that it had opened an additional case of verification of compliance against Léider Johany Noscué Bototo (alias “Mayimbú”), accused by the Ministry of Defence of being the leader of a group of dissidents suspected of being responsible for a massacre in Suárez, Cauca Department, in August (see below). This brings to seven the number of former commanders who have cases of verification of compliance under review.

15. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has continued to raise awareness of the transitional justice system and to provide individual legal assistance to former combatants through workshops in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and to military personnel in garrisons.

16. The Unit for the Search for Persons deemed missing currently has information to proceed with the search for 1,082 persons, including information on 276 cases submitted by FARC during the reporting period and on 806 cases provided by seven social organizations. The Unit has encouraged more individuals and entities to come forward with information.

17. The Truth Commission has so far received more than 940 testimonies from individuals and communities. During the reporting period, the Commission held a regional meeting on sexual violence, another on missing persons and three on the situation of social leaders and human rights defenders. The Commission also received a report documenting over 100 cases of sexual violence by illegal armed groups between 1985 and 2006. The Commission has now inaugurated 22 of 27 planned regional “houses of truth”.

18. On 2 August, the heads of the three components of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition met with the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation and agreed on the development of a joint workplan and monthly follow-up meetings.

#### **Substitution of illicit crops**

19. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, of the 60,070 ha of coca registered by 99,097 families, an estimated 37,629 ha have been eradicated voluntarily since August 2017 under the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops provided for in the peace agreement. A total of 24,246 families have received their full year of interim payments, and 60,731 families have received technical assistance. The Office reports that 94 per cent of families are complying with their voluntary eradication commitments. Challenges remain with the next critical phases of the Programme, in particular the implementation of sustainable alternative development projects for families.

20. Individuals participating in the Programme continue to be victims of threats, attacks and killings, as repeatedly highlighted by the Ombudsman’s Office, including through early warnings. It is important that the Government fully implement the measures for the protection of leaders participating in the Programme, announced in July.

#### **Ejército de Liberación Nacional**

21. On 20 July, during the installation of the new legislative session, President Duque reaffirmed his Government’s position that any potential dialogue with ELN was conditioned upon the release of all individuals held in captivity and the cessation of all violent actions. ELN has refused those conditions and reiterated its call for the resumption of dialogue on the basis of progress made during the negotiations with the previous administration. Continued violence stemming from ELN presence in various regions of the country has ongoing grave impacts on the civilian population.

### III. Mission tasks

#### A. Reintegration

##### **Transition in territorial areas for training and reintegration**

22. On 15 August, the legal status of the territorial areas for training and reintegration expired. According to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, approximately 3,100 former combatants currently reside in these areas, along with family members and others. On 14 August, the Government issued a statement explaining that, although their legal status was to change, there would be a two-year transition period for all 24 locations during which the provision of services, food, health and collective security schemes would be extended.

23. In preparation for the transition, the Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the FARC component of the National Reintegration Council, accompanied by the Mission, undertook joint visits to 11 territorial areas for training and reintegration in which the Government identified obstacles to their permanence in their current locations. The visits were carried out in a constructive spirit and road maps were agreed for each location. It is important to ensure joint monitoring of the implementation of these road maps. During all visits, local authorities and communities expressed their support for the continued presence of those areas, indicating that they had brought State institutions, security and economic opportunities.

24. On 9 September, the Government issued a decree granting the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization responsibility for administering the goods, services and food supplies for the reintegration of former combatants in locations and for a period to be determined by the Government, pending the adoption of regulations by the Agency. While the decree does not stipulate a period for the extension, in a statement that day, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation declared that the extension would be until August 2020. The decree also conferred on the Agency the responsibility to administer the sites in which the public security forces were located, to guarantee security around the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and the sites to which some of them would be relocated.

25. The adoption of the decree is a welcome development. I trust that the specific regulations to extend these services until August 2020 will be adopted promptly. There is also an urgent need to clarify the specific details of the security arrangements, the provision of services, and land and housing arrangements for each of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in their current or future locations. Doing so will help to reassure former combatants at this critical time.

26. The long-term integration of these areas into municipal arrangements poses significant challenges in terms of resources and capacity of local authorities. The Government has stated that it has enough resources to begin purchasing land for the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and has committed approximately \$4.7 million for this purpose so far.

27. The basic monthly allowance for former FARC-EP members, due to expire on 15 August, was extended to December 2019 by the Government, conditioned upon participation in reintegration activities and pending the approval of the reintegration road map by the National Reintegration Council. The approval of the road map remains a key pending issue.

28. The Mission and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization are working on an outreach strategy to explain the continuity of the reintegration process to former

combatants both within and outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

### **Economic and social reintegration**

29. During the reporting period, the National Reintegration Council met on two occasions and approved 11 new collective productive projects, bringing the number of approved initiatives to 35, benefiting 2,204 former combatants (including 630 women). Funding has been disbursed for 22 of them, benefiting 1,433 former combatants (including 426 women) and 16 participants from communities. To date, 431 individual projects have been approved and funding has been disbursed for 424 of them, benefiting 483 former combatants. A total of 1,916 former combatants, or 14.7 per cent of those accredited, have received funding for productive projects through these mechanisms. The Mission is also aware of 159 self-funded productive initiatives and 71 initiatives supported by international cooperation.

30. It is fundamental to define clear criteria to ensure the long-term sustainability of these productive projects, including: a territorial approach so that projects are better linked with strategies such as the development programmes with a territorial focus and local development plans; a community-based approach so that projects are developed jointly with local communities; access to markets; land; and technical assistance throughout project implementation. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is actively promoting private sector engagement in the reintegration process.

31. Approximately 5,000 former combatants are involved in 120 productive organizations, including cooperatives and associations, many of which require support to overcome technical and bureaucratic limitations to operate, including barriers to opening bank accounts.

32. Although a gender-sensitive approach is included in the review and approval of productive projects by the National Reintegration Council, implementation on the ground remains insufficient, particularly with regard to the participation of women in decision-making processes and targeted actions for the economic empowerment of women. Despite these limitations, women former combatants continue to develop their own productive initiatives, including through women's associations and partnerships with local communities.

33. Currently, 822 former combatants are employed in activities related to peace implementation: 690 former combatants in the National Protection Unit, 102 in the FARC humanitarian demining organization Humanicemos and 30 in the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization.

34. A total of 3,543 former combatants (including 914 women) are enrolled in vocational training programmes through the National Training Service, and several universities and educational institutions are providing similar opportunities.

35. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is currently working on an "employability route" to support former combatants in entering the labour market, which remains difficult owing to the lack of employment opportunities in conflict-affected areas and other factors.

36. Access to land remains a key challenge. While the legal avenues have been established (Decrees Nos. 756, 758 and 902 and art. 283 of the National Development Plan), greater efforts are required from the National Land Agency and the National Reintegration Council technical working group on land to move forward. Allocation to former combatants of the only plot identified thus far (in Colinas, Guaviare Department) is still pending. In some cases, ethnic authorities have provided access to land to former combatants in collective ethnic territories.

37. The medical facilities in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration are still functioning, but greater efforts are needed to offer quality health-care services, especially to former combatants living outside those areas. There is limited progress on psychosocial support for former combatants. Limited access to sexual and reproductive health care, including maternal health care, is also of concern. It is important that the national plan for rural health be approved and implemented, for the benefit of both former combatants and communities.

38. The adoption of a national strategy for access to housing for former combatants is urgent. Despite funding from the European Union, a housing project for 350 former combatants in the Pandores and Tierra Grata former territorial areas for training and reintegration is still pending approval.

39. The “Arando la educación” education programme, benefiting 3,300 former combatants and community members, has been extended until April 2020. The “Maestro itinerante” programme, led by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization alongside the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, is benefiting 1,335 former combatants in 128 municipalities. These efforts should be included in a strategy to extend educational services to former combatants and communities, in line with the national plan on rural education.

40. Progress has been made in the provision of day-care arrangements in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration in La Guajira, Guaviare, Meta and Caquetá Departments. A comprehensive response from national and local authorities is still required to provide education, health and protection for approximately 2,500 children living with former combatants, 600 of them in those areas.

41. Discussions continue between the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples on a “harmonization programme” for former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin. Key elements should be considered under the programme, including access to land and productive projects in ethnic territories.

42. Efforts to work towards the targets in the Government’s acceleration plan for productive projects, employment, housing and other aspects should be redoubled, with the aim of benefiting some 11,000 former combatants by December 2019.

### **New geography of reintegration**

43. According to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, as at 31 July, 8,816 former combatants, or roughly two thirds of those accredited, resided outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in varied settings in rural and urban areas. FARC has identified approximately 70 new settlements in which former combatants are carrying out their collective reintegration. Urban reintegration is gaining relevance as larger numbers of former combatants are residing in major cities, including Bogotá (655), Villavicencio (211), Cali (206) and Medellín (202).

44. This evolving context makes it essential for all relevant entities to increase efforts at outreach, the provision of services, and productive opportunities for former combatants living outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, as they face greater difficulties in gaining access to productive projects, housing, health, education and security.

45. In July, the tenth departmental reintegration board was established, in Caquetá Department. These regional mechanisms and the 24 territorial councils for reintegration contribute to improved coordination and to the appropriation of the reintegration process by local actors.

46. The reintegration process must go hand in hand with the extension of State presence and services in conflict-affected areas to ensure that the benefits of the peace process reach communities and former combatants alike and to thus help to foster reconciliation.

### **Political reintegration**

47. The FARC party has been actively engaged in the campaign for local and departmental elections, endorsing 308 candidates, including for municipal councils, departmental assemblies and mayors. One third of the candidates are former combatants, while 38 per cent are women. Sixty candidates are joining coalition lists with other parties and movements. In addition, some former FARC-EP combatants are running as candidates of other parties.

48. Protection and mitigation measures should be reinforced to address risks and stigmatization facing FARC party candidates and former FARC-EP members endorsed by other parties. The Mission has observed specific challenges facing women candidates, including access to information, resources and close protection.

49. FARC members of Congress remained actively involved in legislative activity, including convening oversight hearings and promoting bills. On 21 August, a FARC member of Congress was elected vice-president of a congressional committee. On 2 September, the President of FARC, Rodrigo Londoño, was selected by the five opposition parties to deliver an official opposition statement.

50. On 20 July, Israel Zúñiga (known as “Benkos Biohó”) took up the party’s fifth seat in the Senate, which had been vacant in the absence of “Iván Márquez”. On 2 September, the Inspector General opened an investigation and ordered the suspension of “Jesús Santrich” as a member of the House of Representatives, and on 3 September, the House requested the Council of State to initiate the lifting of his investiture.

## **B. Security guarantees**

### **(a) Security guarantees for former FARC-EP members**

51. I remain gravely concerned over the high number of killings of former FARC-EP members. During the reporting period, the Mission verified 24 homicides, bringing the total number of killings in 2019 to 52. At the current pace, the number of killings in 2019 will surpass the 64 killings reported during 2018. Since the signing of the peace agreement, the Mission has verified 147 homicides, 12 disappearances and 21 attempted homicides. Most killings occurred in the Departments of Cauca (28), Nariño (20), Antioquia (19), Caquetá (17), Norte de Santander (13), Putumayo (10), Valle del Cauca (8) and Meta (7). Women former combatants and children of former combatants continue to face additional risks of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and forced recruitment.

52. Only five attacks have been reported near the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. This underscores the importance of a decree normalizing what has been an effective presence of the public security forces around those areas while ensuring urgent comprehensive security measures for the approximately 8,000 former combatants living outside those areas, including in new rural and urban settlements. Security forces should also make greater efforts to build trust with local communities and new settlements, including through the deployment of women personnel.

53. Nevertheless, the Special Investigation Unit of the Attorney General’s Office, in coordination with the Elite Corps of the National Police, reports important progress: 13 cases with convictions, 13 at the trial stage, 27 under investigation and

30 with pending arrest warrants. A total of 64 homicides are linked to criminal organizations, and for 10 of those, the intellectual authors were arrested. To ensure greater impact on the criminal organizations behind those attacks, investigation efforts must be increasingly oriented towards the prosecution of intellectual authors, and investigations should be supported by improved coordination between the Unit, the public security forces and other State entities.

54. The joint working group on the investigation of attacks against former FARC-EP members, which includes FARC, the Special Investigation Unit, the National Protection Unit, the Elite Corps of the National Police and the Mission, is prioritizing cases and elaborating shared investigation methodologies. It is important that the group continue to meet regularly.

55. In a welcome development, in June, the Government, under the coordination of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, announced measures to strengthen the security guarantees for former combatants, and some initial progress has been observed. The Special Investigation Unit has been strengthened through the deployment of 25 judicial police officers and additional attorneys in prioritized departments. An interinstitutional mechanism led by the Ministry of Defence has been established to support investigations. In addition, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is promoting a working group and regional initiatives for the prevention of stigmatization against former FARC-EP members. It is important to include FARC in the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms of these measures, which the Mission stands ready to support.

56. The Specialized Subdirectorate for Security and Protection of the National Protection Unit plays a fundamental role in ensuring close protection for former FARC-EP members. The Subdirectorate's budgetary shortfalls and recent disagreements between the Government and FARC on the functioning of the close protection programme are undermining its capacity. The Subdirectorate reports that, as at 31 August, one third of the close protection schemes were incomplete and 100 bodyguards were needed in order to complete them. No efforts should be spared to allocate resources for the Subdirectorate, and the Government and FARC should resolve issues constructively in order to guarantee the security of former combatants.

57. The Tripartite Protection and Security Mechanism, in coordination with the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, is elaborating analysis and early warning guidelines on specific risks for FARC candidates. The Mechanism will continue to monitor effective coordination between the Subdirectorate and the public security forces.

58. The spate of violence against political candidates requires urgent action. On 8 July, President Duque convened the high-level unit responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, provided for in the peace agreement. He also announced additional security measures for the electoral period. The Ministry of the Interior established a road map for the protection of political candidates, including the FARC party.

**(b) Security guarantees for communities, human rights defenders and social leaders**

59. Attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders continue to be a major concern, and I am particularly worried about their impact on communities and their social fabric. In 2019, 123 alleged killings of human rights defenders and social leaders have been reported so far by civil society actors and State institutions. In large demonstrations in cities across Colombia on 26 July, Colombians reiterated their rejection of violence against social leaders and human rights defenders and demanded their protection.

60. The situation in Cauca Department continues to be dire. In just one weekend, between 30 August and 2 September, an alarming 19 killings were registered, including the brutal attack against the Liberal Party candidate for mayor in Suárez municipality, massacred along with five other persons, including the candidate's mother and a candidate to the municipal council. The Ombudsman's Office had issued three early warnings specifically addressing the risks in that municipality.

61. The Nasa indigenous community in northern Cauca has also been particularly affected by clashes between criminal organizations over territorial control. During the reporting period, 11 community members, including 6 of their leaders, were killed. In 2019, 25 members of the Nasa community were killed. In addition, I am concerned about the situation of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in southern Chocó and eastern Antioquia Departments, as well as in Nariño Department.

62. Comprehensive security measures are urgently needed for communities in Cauca and other departments historically affected by the conflict. These should include a gender-sensitive and ethnic approach and specific protection measures that include the strengthening of the Indigenous Guard, as well as concrete actions to advance investigations in conjunction with clear plans for dismantling criminal organizations and their support networks.

63. On 9 July, the Minister of the Interior reactivated the Intersectoral Commission on Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and its technical working groups, which are developing the action plan for the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. On 3 July, the Ombudsman and the Inspector General organized the third national meeting of the Pact for Life and for the Protection of Social Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, focused on the risks faced by women leaders and human rights defenders. Greater efforts are still needed to address the specific protection and security needs of women leaders.

64. On 12 August, President Duque convened the National Commission on Security Guarantees for the first time since January. Its mandate of elaborating a public policy for the dismantling of criminal organizations and their support networks, as provided for in the peace agreement, is critically important. Civil society representatives to the Commission presented proposals, and the High Commissioner for Peace presented the results of the territorial sessions of the Subcommission on Security Guarantees and progress achieved in the dismantling of some criminal groups. It is crucial that the Commission meet on a regular basis to advance on the development of public policy, taking into account the proposals presented so far, and that immediate concrete actions be taken in the most affected territories.

65. The Ministry of the Interior has been promoting dialogue with civil society, including at the departmental level, along with the international community, for the elaboration of a comprehensive public policy for social leaders, human rights defenders and journalists.

66. In August, the Government announced the Zonas Futuro strategy (Strategic Zones of Comprehensive Intervention) targeting five regions affected by weak or limited State presence; illicit economies, violence and criminality; and high rates of deforestation. The Government's objective is to go beyond military and police control to focus on integrated institutional interventions through joint actions, under civilian leadership, of the State, the private sector, local communities and international cooperation actors. The Mission will follow up on this initiative, including its effective coordination and linkages with entities and strategies provided under the peace agreement, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus.

67. During the reporting period, the Ombudsman's Office issued 12 early warnings (concerning eight departments), stressing the continuing structural causes of the violence linked to the strengthening and expansion of illegal armed groups and criminal structures and highlighting risks to the safety of communities and individuals, including sexual violence, forced recruitment and forced displacement. The Ombudsman's Office reports that in numerous cases in which it has issued early warnings, the risks highlighted in those early warnings have materialized. The joint monitoring strategy between the Ombudsman's Office and the Inspector General's Office to strengthen accountability for follow-up of these early warnings is welcome.

### **Legal guarantees**

68. Transition to legality and accreditation of former FARC-EP members are essential prerequisites to their political, social and economic reintegration, as they can access their reintegration benefits only through this process. Delays faced by some former FARC-EP members in the resolution of their legal situation are a source of uncertainty.

69. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, FARC and the Mission have been meeting regularly to address pending challenges. During the reporting period, no new accreditations were issued by the Government, whose focus has been on reviewing the list of former FARC-EP members that have already been accredited in order to eliminate duplications. As a result, the new total number of accredited former FARC-EP members stands at 13,057. The Office completed the administrative notification of 236 accredited former combatants through the publication of their accreditation resolutions.

70. Some 270 non-accredited individuals remain under review by the Government, of whom 164 are in prison. FARC and the Office of the High Commissioner, within the framework of the tripartite mechanism and under the umbrella of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, agreed that FARC, accompanied by the Mission when possible and with the facilitation of the Office, would conduct visits to penitentiary institutions, with the aim of gathering more information on their cases. The visits started on 29 August.

71. Some 140 individuals from the list submitted on 15 August 2017 are pending accreditation. The Office of the High Commissioner announced that it was unable to determine whether these individuals belonged to the former FARC-EP. The Office and FARC have expressed their commitment to expedite the process and resolve the situation of these individuals.

72. There has been no progress in the situation of approximately 160 former combatants, duly accredited by the Office of the High Commissioner, who remain in prison and whose legal situation is under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Prompt resolution of these cases by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is required so that individuals who satisfy the legal criteria for conditional liberty or amnesty can be freed, in accordance with the peace agreement, and participate in the reintegration process.

73. With regard to the list of approximately 1,000 former FARC-EP members received by the Government on 10 August 2018, the Office of the High Commissioner formally announced that the deadline for submitting names for accreditation purposes was 15 August 2017. Furthermore, it indicated that, according to the Minister of Defence, the option for these persons to enter the individual route for reintegration was no longer possible. FARC disagrees with this conclusion and plans to raise this issue in the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement.

## **C. Cross-cutting issues**

### **Gender**

74. It is essential to ensure a gender-sensitive approach to the reintegration process, particularly since women make up approximately 25 per cent of former combatants in the process of reintegration. On 20 August, the Government's High-level Forum on Gender met to discuss the gender-related actions under the national reintegration policy, and the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation requested the respective government institutions to develop implementation plans for these actions. The Government and FARC should collaborate closely to monitor their implementation. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, such as the gender technical working group of the National Reintegration Council, and the gender capacity of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization at the local level is likewise critical.

75. On 14 August, the FARC Gender Committee presented the conclusions of its first national meeting of women former FARC-EP members. The conclusions highlighted key needs, including access to resources and funding for productive initiatives led by women; access to higher education and work opportunities; access to decision-making spaces; support for childcare and sexual and reproductive health services; greater support from FARC party leadership to advance their gender agenda internally; and strengthening women's organizations and gender committees at the local level.

76. As the Special Forum on Gender completes its first year of work in support of the verification of the gender provisions of the peace agreement, it is important that the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement ensure the Forum's continuity beyond December 2019, including with adequate resources and more sustained dialogue between the Forum and the Commission.

77. The Mission continues to have a productive dialogue with women's organizations at the national and local levels, as well as with women former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders, candidates, and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community.

### **Ethnic affairs**

78. On 13 August, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement approved the workplan of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples, aimed at strengthening its role as the Commission's main interlocutor for the implementation of the chapter on ethnic matters of the peace agreement. There has been some progress in the implementation of commitments undertaken by several public entities in May to include concrete actions in their workplans and budgets relative to the implementation of the chapter. The Thematic Subcommittee of Ethnic Issues of the National Commission on Security Guarantees is encouraged to resume its work.

79. Former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin continue to face specific challenges in reintegration. In addition to the harmonization programme being discussed by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, it is important to support productive projects for this population. The security risks for former combatants of ethnic origin in Chocó Department are of particular concern, particularly those who left the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Vidri after it was closed.

## **Children**

80. In a welcome development, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has assumed increased leadership in the implementation of the “A different path of life” reintegration programme for children, including through local follow-up committees. As at August 2019, 120 of the 123 adolescents formerly associated with FARC-EP had turned 18; 111 were in the reintegration phase of the programme; and 110 were receiving monthly stipends. Eight adolescents are under the protection of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare.

81. Of the 123 participants in the programme, the Mission has received reports of at least six cases of adolescents without proper documentation. Clarification by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace is required with regard to the situation of 218 new cases of young people identified by FARC that could be included in the programme. A legal instrument that guarantees the programme’s sustainability and resources is also fundamental. Lack of access to psychological and family support, reparations and productive projects with a youth-sensitive approach remains a significant challenge.

82. The effective provision of social services for family members of former combatants, especially children, is crucial. The Mission continues to support training courses and activities on childcare skills and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sports and cultural activities with children, adolescents and their families in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and surrounding communities. No advances were made regarding cases of former FARC-EP members seeking legal guardianship of their children.

83. On 26 June, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace received a report with testimonies of persons who were forcibly recruited by FARC-EP as children and survived an army attack in 2000. The report is an important step in investigating violence against children during the conflict.

## **Youth and peace and security**

84. Young Colombians across the country continue to be engaged in creative ways in peacebuilding efforts, including through volunteering, sports, cultural activities, and reconciliation and dialogue initiatives. Universities in several regions are also supporting initiatives for their students and faculty to support the reintegration projects of former combatants. The Mission has partnered with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research on a project fostering youth-led reconciliation dialogues between communities and former combatants near the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, starting with a successful pilot in Tierra Grata (Cesar Department). In July, two young former combatants from the Agua Bonita former territorial area for training and reintegration (Caquetá Department) participated in the Latin America meeting of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, alongside other young Colombian leaders, and later welcomed a delegation of members of the Network from different countries to visit the former territorial areas.

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

85. During the reporting period, with funds from the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, three local stabilization projects were approved for implementation by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund to improve access to health in 23 municipalities with the former territorial areas for training and reintegration; to provide short-term subsistence support to families

enrolled in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops; and to deploy government teams in 170 municipalities to accelerate the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus. Moreover, innovative blended finance funds were approved for seven private sector social impact projects in 61 municipalities with development programmes. In addition, funds were allocated to expand the territorial outreach of the Truth Commission.

86. The joint Mission-United Nations country team reintegration group has focused its support for reintegration in preparation for the transition of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, community-based reintegration and the response to the growing migration of former combatants to urban areas. Financial and technical support from UNDP and the International Organization for Migration has been approved for 22 collective productive projects. The fund further approved funds for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to scale up support for socioeconomic reintegration and local peacebuilding projects.

87. The Mission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regularly co-host meetings with human rights platforms and civil society organizations. Additional support is being provided to the national early warning system, improving capacities for the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of responses at the national and local levels. The Office reports continuously on all human rights-related components of the peace agreement and collaborates with the Mission on various cross-cutting issues.

88. The Mission and the country team continue to work with the Ministry of the Interior and civil society organizations on the development of a comprehensive national policy for the protection of human rights defenders. Joint meetings were held with the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia on a specific action plan for indigenous territories.

89. The \$3 million Peacebuilding Fund project on reintegration, implemented by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and developed in coordination with the Mission, identified productive projects in 15 locations and began rolling out the social component, focusing on childcare, protective environments for children and support for local gender committees.

## **IV. Mission structures**

### **A. Mission support**

90. The Mission continues to adjust its presence and mobility in the field to be closer to former combatants and communities in remote areas. Further to security recommendations, the Mission completed works in one of the Mission's temporary camps, to which the local team was able to deploy on 8 August, and works are under way in another location.

91. The Mission continues efforts to meet its gender parity objectives. As at 23 September 2019, 44 per cent of all civilian staff were women. Women represent 54 per cent of United Nations Volunteers, 35 per cent of the international observers and 58 per cent of consultants and individual contractors. On 29 July, I appointed Karla Gabriela Samayoa Recari as my Deputy Special Representative.

## **B. Safety and security**

92. During the reporting period, security incidents in areas near some former territorial areas for training and reintegration, mainly illegal checkpoints and curfews, and reports of explosive devices along roads resulted in mobility restrictions for the Mission. In addition, alleged members of a dissident group of the former FARC-EP temporarily retained, extorted and robbed United Nations personnel carrying out a field mission in Arauca Department. The Department of Safety and Security also temporarily suspended field mission movements in Cauca Department owing to the security situation in several municipalities. It also assessed the security implications of the 29 August announcement. Residual risk levels after the implementation of security risk management measures remained medium to low.

## **C. Conduct and discipline**

93. The Mission continues its efforts to prevent and respond to misconduct, including sensitization activities regarding prevention of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority and the Mission's code of conduct for Mission staff and contractors. The Mission-United Nations country team task force on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse continues joint efforts on awareness-raising on sexual exploitation and abuse, including joint training for country team and Mission staff, implementing partners and civil society organizations in field locations.

94. During the reporting period, six allegations were reported to the Mission, including an allegation of sexual exploitation, and are under investigation.

## **V. Observations**

95. The Final Agreement charted a route for Colombia to transit from decades-long conflict to sustainable peace through an interlocking set of commitments aimed at putting an end to violence, delivering justice and truth to victims, substituting illicit economies for licit ones and bringing about a profound transformation of areas long affected by war. I commend the efforts of President Duque and his administration in implementing the "Peace with legality" strategy. However, greater efforts are needed by all involved to implement other parts of the peace agreement in order to deliver on commitments made to victims, conflict-affected communities and former combatants. Fully consolidating peace, a precious opportunity for Colombia, will require a comprehensive effort, for which Colombians can continue to count on the resolute support of the United Nations.

96. I strongly condemn the announcement made by a group of former FARC-EP commanders of their decision to take up arms again. Colombia has suffered enough, and there is no justification for resuming an armed struggle or reneging on the commitments in the Final Agreement. I am concerned about the potential impact that this announcement may have on violence in the territories. I welcome the immediate rejection of this announcement by the FARC party and the widespread expressions of commitment to the peace process from former combatants across the country. These law-abiding former combatants should not be stigmatized as a result of the ill-advised actions of a small minority. Two years after the conclusion of the laying down of arms, it cannot be emphasized enough that the vast majority of former combatants remain engaged in the peace process and are developing productive efforts in partnership with local communities, pursuing academic studies, participating in local politics, establishing and seeking opportunities for their families and contributing to

the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. The commitments made to the former combatants who laid down their weapons in good faith and remain part of the reintegration process must be honoured, and I welcome President Duque's reaffirmation of his commitment to their reintegration. At the current juncture, it is more important than ever to accelerate and deepen the implementation of the peace agreement as a whole and, within that, to make all possible efforts to ensure the safety, livelihoods and legal guarantees of the thousands of former fighters who persevere in the pursuit of peace despite the attacks against them, the uncertainties and the attempts to lead them astray.

97. I welcome the signing of the National Pact for Political Culture and Non-Violence during the Electoral Campaign and commend the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence for its leadership and all political parties that have subscribed to it. The Pact is an example of what can be achieved when political differences are set aside for the benefit of national interests. I encourage all parties and Colombian society to move beyond polarizing and stigmatizing discourse and instead work to build bridges and pursue inclusive consensus on the issues that matter most to Colombians, particularly those who have suffered the most from the conflict.

98. The conduct of a peaceful campaign free of political violence and stigmatization is in the interest of all Colombians. The recent attacks against candidates, including the horrific massacre in Suárez, Cauca Department, and the killing of a mayoral candidate in Tibú, Norte de Santander Department, demonstrate the need for urgent protection measures for candidates of all parties, including tailored measures for women candidates. The parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2018 were the most peaceful in decades. I encourage the Government and all parties to spare no effort to prevent further incidents of violence in the weeks that remain before the coming local elections, which should be another important milestone in building peace in Colombia.

99. The attacks related to the elections are occurring in a context of continued and alarming violence against social leaders, human rights defenders, former FARC-EP combatants, persons participating in the implementation of the peace agreement, and rural communities, including indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. Clear measures for dismantling criminal networks and effective criminal investigations to identify intellectual and material perpetrators are urgently needed. I welcome the recent meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees and encourage it to meet regularly and focus on immediate, concrete, context-specific measures to target criminal networks in the most vulnerable areas, namely Cauca Department, the Catatumbo region, the Pacific coast and the rural areas of Antioquia Department. I also encourage the Government, public security forces and local authorities to respond with immediate coordinated actions to the early warnings and recommendations of the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings. Time and again, these early warnings have proved tragically accurate.

100. As I have stated in previous reports, the underlying causes of violence can be effectively addressed only through the integrated and coordinated deployment of the State, both through the public security forces and through civilian institutions, in order to bring security, development, infrastructure, economic opportunities and fulfilment of basic human rights to conflict-affected communities. The Government has continued its efforts to bring security, infrastructure and services to the rural areas, including through the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus, and I encourage further progress on other components of the comprehensive rural reform. Coordination among government-led programmes and strategies in rural areas should be a priority, along with the involvement of local actors, including municipal authorities, civil society and the private sector.

101. I commend the Government for its responsible handling of the transition of the territorial areas for training and reintegration, and FARC for its constructive role. In particular, I welcome their joint visits to the territorial areas with specific challenges, which were key to allaying the uncertainty among former combatants. It is important for the joint visits between the Government, FARC and the Mission to continue to other former territorial areas for training and reintegration and to new settlements. This joint exercise should set an example for overcoming hurdles in implementation through dialogue.

102. The peace agreement stipulates that reintegration into civilian life shall be a comprehensive and sustainable process. A comprehensive view of reintegration requires complementary implementation of other key commitments in the peace agreement. For example, socioeconomic reintegration is closely linked to comprehensive rural reform, political reintegration to political reform, community-based reintegration to the development programmes with a territorial focus and reconciliation to transitional justice and victims' rights. It is crucial that all relevant ministries and institutions play their part. Effective coordination is also paramount, both among national entities, under the leadership of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, and between the national Government and local authorities.

103. To ensure the sustainability of reintegration, relevant actors, including the National Reintegration Council, should make certain that all reintegration initiatives and productive projects have a medium- and a long-term vision that helps to improve the lives of former combatants and communities. I also encourage further follow-up on the implementation of the gender-related actions of the national reintegration policy, as well as an increased focus on the aspirations and participation of young people. Specific attention should be placed on the needs and particular circumstances of former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin and those with disabilities.

104. The sustainability of the reintegration process also requires that all actors, including the Government, FARC and departmental and local authorities, pay more attention to the situation of the more than 8,000 former combatants who reside outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and who face even greater challenges in terms of security, basic services and productive opportunities. Furthermore, targeted efforts are necessary to address the reintegration and security needs of former mid-level commanders and emerging leaders in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new settlements, as their leadership is key to the sustainability of the process.

105. Victims should remain at the centre of implementation of the peace agreement. The development programmes with a territorial focus, along with other development strategies, should ensure that conflict-affected communities, victims and their families enjoy the dividends of peace. I also commend the three components of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition for their work to guarantee the rights of victims and their families, and I continue to call upon all parties to support the work of these bodies, including by continuing to appear before the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and coming forward with information for the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed missing.

106. I pay tribute once again to the many individuals, social organizations and institutions in Colombia that are working relentlessly to foster reconciliation, build opportunities for prosperity and achieve lasting peace. In these noble efforts, they can count on the partnership of the United Nations through the Mission and the agencies, funds and programmes, which I thank for their tireless efforts in support of peace in Colombia, as well as the steadfast support of the international community, which remains committed to the country's inspiring example of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.