



# 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 [2603 \(2021\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The present report covers the period from 28 December 2021 to 25 March 2022.

#### II. Major developments

2. The reporting period was marked by an election campaign and congressional elections, held on 13 March. Colombians elected a new Congress for the 2022–2026 period, which will be inaugurated on 20 July. These were the second congressional elections since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and represented a significant milestone in its implementation: it was the first time that Colombians from the rural, conflict-affected areas of the country voted to elect representatives, all of them accredited as victims, for the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace (see para. 13 below). Voter turnout was over 46 per cent, about the same as in 2018. The elections to Congress had the highest number of women candidates in the history of the country, 39.5 per cent of candidates were women, an increase from 34.5 per cent in 2018, and an increase in the number of women elected to Congress. On the same day, voters took part in primary elections to determine the presidential candidates for three different coalitions who will now participate, along with other individuals, in the first round of presidential elections scheduled for 29 May, with a second round planned for 19 June, if needed.

3. Despite some security incidents, including the killing of two soldiers in the Meta and Caquetá departments, respectively, voting took place with few disruptions across the country. Only 3 out of the over 112,000 polling stations installed had to be relocated because of security issues. Nonetheless, during the campaign, threats and intimidations affected various candidates from across the political spectrum and prompted the national Government and electoral authorities to increase efforts to ensure safe elections for both voters and candidates, through measures such as the Democracy and Agora II plans.



4. Controversy has arisen during the post-electoral process, regarding the counting of the votes and possible effects on the distribution of seats in the Senate, with several parties from across the spectrum raising concerns about the management of the electoral process by the National Civil Registry. This was the subject of a meeting of the National Commission for the Coordination and Follow-up of Electoral Processes (comprised of the Government, oversight bodies, electoral authorities and political parties). The counting is being finalized and the National Electoral Council is expected to declare the final results of the elections in the coming weeks.

5. In March, representatives of 13 political parties signed a pact for non-violence during the elections promoted by the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence and civil society organizations. The signing ceremony was chaired by the President of Colombia, Iván Duque. In remarks delivered at the event, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, expressed hope that the message of the pact of upholding dialogue, tolerance and respect for life would endure beyond the elections.

6. Violence continued in several of the regions prioritized for the implementation of the Final Agreement, affecting, among others, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in the Pacific region of the country. Also of note is the significant deterioration of security in Arauca department where, according to authorities, 116 persons were killed in the context of clashes and tensions between the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups, and thousands of persons have been displaced and confined.

7. In response to several writs of protection presented by former combatants from different regions, in January the Constitutional Court informed that it had declared an “unconstitutional state of affairs” regarding the guarantee of former combatants’ rights to life, physical integrity and peace. This is a judicial figure used to order measures to address a generalized violation of the fundamental rights of a specific group. In its decision, the Court determined that there is a low level of compliance with the implementation of security guarantee provisions of the Final Agreement.

8. The Court ordered the Government to guarantee adequate resources for the protection of former combatants and those who appear before the transitional justice system; and to prioritize municipalities where they face greater risks. In addition, the Court ordered the Government to ensure the effective functioning of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics and the National Commission on Security Guarantees, both created by the Final Agreement, and also ordered strengthened efforts to prevent stigmatization and to include gender and ethnic considerations in security measures. The Court called upon Congress to adopt pending legislation regarding security guarantees. The Government has noted its disagreement with the Court’s assessment affirming that several of the Court’s orders reiterate measures already being implemented by government and State entities and, as a result, has recently asked the Court to nullify its decision.

9. In addition, the Court upheld requests by civil society organizations and local communities who claimed that measures carried out by the Government to reactivate aerial spraying of illicit crops with glyphosate had overlooked the right to participation of communities potentially affected, including the right to prior consultation of ethnic communities. The Government has requested the Court to review and nullify its decision.

### **III. Comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement**

#### **Comprehensive rural reform**

10. The Government has concluded the preparation of 15 of the 16 stabilization road maps. The Government had pledged to group under those long-term planning instruments over 32,000 initiatives, submitted by more than 220,000 Colombians from impoverished and conflict-affected regions who had participated in the design phase of the development programmes with a territorial focus, completed in 2018. The Government also reported that over 3,200 of those initiatives are already being implemented, with investments totalling around \$3 billion. Of those initiatives, 564 are funded through royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation. Of the 564 initiatives, 71 have already been completed and 302 are under execution.

11. The High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples created by the Agreement and the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation agreed to develop a workplan for 2022, which will include a road map for the promotion of development programmes with a territorial focus that include an ethnic approach. Communities in areas affected by the conflict, such as Putumayo, are requesting additional actions and investments in development programmes with a territorial focus.

12. According to the Government, over 1.9 million hectares out of the 3-million-hectare goal set in the Agreement to be made available to peasants without land have been placed in the Land Fund. Likewise, 473,464 hectares have been handed over, which constitutes 16 per cent of the hectares to be delivered. A group of members of Congress from different political parties insist that the purpose enshrined in the Agreement is not being met as only very small percentage of the land has been allocated to landless peasants or peasants with insufficient land.

#### **Political participation**

13. As provided for in Section 2 of the Agreement, voting for the 16 newly created special transitional electoral districts for peace was held for the first time in the rural areas of the 167 municipalities most affected by the conflict, allowing some 533,000 citizens to cast their vote in over 4,500 new polling stations. The 16 new members of the House of Representatives (including three women, one indigenous person and four members from Afro-Colombian organizations) were elected out of a total of 403 candidates (201 women and 152 from indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations).

14. Multiple issues were reported in the weeks leading up to the elections. Despite the existence of Government-led prevention and protection strategies, several candidates to the special districts experienced security threats and attacks. For instance, in February, a candidate in Arauca department, Guillermo Murcia, was kidnapped, and later released, allegedly by an illegal armed group. Candidates also reported significant delays in the disbursement of much-needed public funding, which hindered their ability to conduct their campaigns in remote and inaccessible areas. In the days before the election, several candidates from those special districts announced the withdrawal of their candidacies claiming a lack of guarantees. Lastly, civil society organizations reported that, in some rural areas, voters faced obstacles while trying to exercise their right to vote, including the presence and actions of illegal armed actors.

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

15. The implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, stipulated in Section 4 of the Agreement continues

despite persistent challenges, including security issues. As at January 2022, the Government has reported that some 46,000 hectares of illicit crops have been voluntarily eradicated through the programme. The Government has reiterated its commitment to the programme, reporting that it has allocated thus far \$134 million to support productive projects for over 45,000 families (40 per cent of which are headed by women). The swift implementation of the projects, coupled with greater progress in the rural reform measures stipulated in the Agreement and the necessary access to markets for alternative, legal products, is of the essence to ensure that participating families remain in the programme and to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

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

16. In keeping with the core principle of the Agreement of maintaining victims at the centre of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, all three entities of Colombia's transitional justice system continue to ensure the victim's active participation in the implementation of their mandates.

17. As the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues moving forward with its ongoing cases, it recently announced its decision to launch three new cases: one on crimes committed by the former FARC-EP nationwide; one on addressing crimes committed by the public security forces and other State agents, including in partnership with paramilitary groups and civilian third parties; and a third one focusing on crimes against ethnic peoples and their territories, including the impact of violence on the environment. According to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, all three cases would address crimes such as conflict-related sexual violence and forced displacement, among others. As at 10 March, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace had held seven hearings with victims, including from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, to collect their observations regarding the forthcoming cases, which included requests for a wide regional coverage within the cases, and for the strengthening of protection measures for individuals participating in them.

18. The Truth Commission continues to gather information from diverse stakeholders for its final report, due in June. The Commission reports that it has collected over 27,000 testimonies from victims and other actors within Colombian society. It has also received over 900 reports from victims' organizations and State institutions on violence and human rights violations during the conflict and has carried out more than 1,700 interviews in Colombia and abroad with a broad range of actors. As part of that work, the Commission interviewed alias "Otoniel", the former leader of the Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia), in detention since his capture last year. In February, the Commission reported that part of the interview record was stolen and called upon authorities to investigate and provide guarantees for the Commission's work. Several civil society and political actors have expressed concern that the theft was an attempt to silence a key testimony to shed light on conflict dynamics. Separate from his interviews with the Commission, "Otoniel" has requested to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

19. The Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing recovered 18 bodies of persons reported missing between 1998 and 2011 in three departments (Antioquia, Santander and Sucre), aged between 16 and 35 years, including a woman, a former combatant and an indigenous minor. So far, the Unit has recovered 376 bodies. In Sucre, it recovered the body of an indigenous minor illegally recruited 20 years ago; as well as nine bodies in Antioquia and the body of a teenager illegally recruited in 1999 in Santander department. The Unit held a territorial session of its Advisory Council, made up of six civil society organizations and eight State institutions, in Santander department and with representatives of victims and authorities to discuss the strategy to search for over 4,000 people who have been reported missing in that department.

### **Mechanisms for dialogue on implementation**

20. In a welcome development, the parties decided once more to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement until 2023, and representatives of Comunes (formerly the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) party) before the Commission presented a list of priorities for implementation during the coming months, which is under consideration by the Government. The Government and Comunes also reached an agreement on the activation of four radio stations in municipalities in, Caquetá, Guaviare, Magdalena and Nariño departments, which will be used to disseminate information on the implementation of the Agreement. So far, 16 out of the 20 radio stations for coexistence and reconciliation, provided for in Section 6 of the Agreement, have been established across the country.

21. Within the tripartite working group on mines, the Government and former combatants continue to work jointly and move forward on locating mined areas, with support from the Mission and the United Nations Mine Action Service. In March, the parties launched a pilot project that, following national and international best practices, will build former combatants' capacity to collect and record information on minefields. The project is an encouraging milestone in a challenging trust-building process which will help inform much-needed humanitarian demining operations in six conflict-affected regions.

22. Constructive dialogue between the Government and former combatants has been crucial for attaining progress in the implementation of key aspects of the Final Agreement. As both parties have continued to express willingness to contribute to the realization of reparations for victims of the conflict, reconvening the tripartite mechanism created to help the parties move forward with the handover of FARC-EP assets, could help overcome obstacles in the interest of victims' rights.

## **IV. Mission tasks**

### *Reintegration*

23. Notwithstanding the significant challenges facing the reintegration process, chief among them the deteriorating security in several regions, the majority of the over 13,000 former combatants (23 per cent women) continue to pursue their political, social and economic reintegration into civilian life. Support from the Government, host communities, civil society and the international community continues to be fundamental to accompany their efforts.

### *Political reintegration*

24. Former FARC-EP combatants participated in congressional elections for the second time. As provided for in the Final Agreement, to ensure political representation, this is the second and last term for which Comunes will be guaranteed five seats in the 108-member Senate and five seats in the 187-member House of Representatives. Two of the ten members of Comunes to occupy seats in Congress are women.

25. While former combatants encountered problems that potentially hindered their political participation – such as the suspension of their political rights and exclusion from the voters' registry – government entities, electoral authorities, oversight bodies, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Mission worked jointly to find solutions. Comunes candidates and former combatants were able to access their bank accounts, although the party reported delays in receiving public funding for their Senate campaigns. In addition, in March, the National Civil Registry issued several

resolutions to ensure the participation of over 132 former combatants whose identification cards had been cancelled. The National Civil Registry also ensured that former combatants could participate as electoral witnesses. The majority of former combatants were able to vote, and incidents registered during election day were resolved through coordination mechanisms between government and State entities, former combatants' representatives and the Mission.

26. The National Civil Registry conducted training sessions on the electoral process in five former territorial areas for training and reintegration and five municipalities to raise awareness of voting rights and participation mechanisms among former combatants and community members.

27. In spite of efforts by authorities to ensure security for former combatants and members of the Comunes party engaged in electoral activities, two Comunes candidates, both former combatants, were attacked by unidentified armed individuals in separate incidents in Huila and Valle del Cauca departments during the campaign, resulting in the death of a bodyguard. Campaign teams in at least eight departments also reported threats and the Comunes party reported stigmatization against its candidates. In addition, in January, an explosive device was found and deactivated by the police in the facilities of a productive project belonging to a former combatant in Bogotá, where Comunes and other political movements regularly hold meetings.

#### *Access to land and housing*

28. In a positive development, the Government purchased two plots of land for the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Anorí, Antioquia department, bringing to 10 the number of former territorial areas for which it has now purchased land. The Government also purchased an additional plot of land for 47 former combatants and their families who remained in Ituango, also in Antioquia, after the former territorial area there was relocated to Mutatá for security reasons in 2020.

29. The working groups on land and housing, established by the parties to develop joint efforts in these regards, did not meet during the reporting period.

30. The former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Buenos Aires and Miranda in Cauca department, and Puerto Asís in Putumayo department, continue to face security threats while awaiting the purchase of land for their transfer. In addition, recent reports mention deteriorating security around the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Remedios, Antioquia department, calling for the prompt identification and purchase of land for its relocation. Former combatants who relocated from Meta to Caquetá last December owing to insecurity have been settling in their new host community, with support from local authorities and the Government. The feasibility study to build housing in this area was finalized and the Ministry of Housing has allocated funding for the construction of 75 houses.

31. In a welcome development, the Government has transferred ownership of two plots of land managed by the Special Assets Administration to former combatants of two cooperatives in Valle del Cauca department.

32. The Government has restated its commitment to deliver 207 houses in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Dabeiba (Antioquia), Arauquita (Arauca) and Caldono (Cauca). The Government reached an agreement with a contractor to build housing in Arauquita, which is expected to begin in the coming months.

33. Regarding access to housing outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, the Government has announced subsidies tailored to the needs of former combatants living in urban areas.

*Productive projects*

34. The number of former combatants participating in collective and individual productive projects has continued to increase steadily. Nine new collective productive projects were approved by the National Reintegration Council, benefiting 178 former combatants (61 women), and an additional 384 individual projects benefitting 451 former combatants (116 women) were approved by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. To date, there are 116 collective projects benefiting 3,855 people (1,089 women), and 3,918 individual projects benefiting 4,736 people (1,097 women), which means 63 per cent of accredited former combatants now take part in such initiatives.

35. Despite persisting challenges, including competing care tasks and limited participation in decision-making, almost 70 per cent of accredited women former combatants participate in collective or individual productive projects.

36. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and former combatants have agreed on a sustainability road map to address the main challenges facing productive projects, namely the need to strengthen cooperatives and access to markets, technical assistance, access to land, and security issues. A draft resolution to formally approve this strategy is currently under discussion.

37. As at February 2022, 168 cooperatives of former combatants had been registered, 37 of which are led by women and 16 whose members are all women.

38. Deteriorating security is increasingly hampering productive projects and the functioning of cooperatives, especially outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration (see paras. 57 and 58) in Arauca, Guaviare and Putumayo departments. Of special concern was the attack by armed individuals in February on a group of former combatants in Putumayo while at a meeting of their cooperative. Prominent reintegration and crop substitution leader Jorge Santofimio was killed, one of his children, aged 13, was injured, as were two women former combatants. In the light of this event, the Government has reinforced the security of this cooperative. The continuation of these measures will be instrumental to the future of this collective endeavour. Notwithstanding these unfavourable security conditions, former combatants remain committed to keeping their productive initiatives running.

39. Following new delays at the beginning of the year, the Government pledged to overcome challenges in delivering food to former territorial areas for training and reintegration by the end of March.

*Health*

40. The implementation of health schemes in former territorial areas for training and reintegration has been delayed as the Ministry of Health has yet to allocate resources for their functioning. While health visits have been carried out in most former territorial areas, medical staff and health visits to Antioquia, Arauca, Guaviare and Putumayo were limited pending resource allocation for 2022.

41. The Working Group on Health and its committee on the CaPAZciudades programme, benefiting former combatants living with disabilities, met twice. The assessment of the need for prostheses and technical support for 407 former combatants with disabilities is still pending.

*Former combatants living outside of former territorial areas for training and reintegration including in new reintegration areas*

42. The number of former combatants living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration has remained stable at approximately 10,500, and a third of

them live in 75 new reintegration areas. So far, 57 collective productive projects outside former territorial areas have been approved. Many of them continue to struggle to remain afloat with limited external support. While the Government has committed itself to ensuring that reintegration benefits reach all former combatants, regardless of their location, measures to address the specific needs of new reintegration areas are still limited.

#### *Role of regional authorities and community-based reintegration*

43. Local authorities continue to play a key role in supporting the reintegration process. In Tolima department, the Office of the Mayor of Icononzo, with support from the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the private sector, renovated the local school of La Fila, where a former territorial area for training and reintegration is located, benefiting 250 students of surrounding communities and the children of former combatants. In January, the Mayor of Bogotá, where 698 former combatants (230 women) reside, formally established the city's Council for Peace, with a focus on community reintegration and transitional justice. The Governor of Magdalena department inaugurated the departmental working group on reintegration. So far, there are 20 regional and local reintegration working groups, where local authorities, former combatants and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, continue to coordinate efforts in support of former combatants and communities.

44. A positive example of inclusion is under way in Cali, Valle del Cauca department, where former combatants take part in the Peace Mediators initiative, a programme of the Office of the Mayor. The initiative is led by former FARC-EP members and has provided training to some 360 mediators – many of them former combatants themselves – who help address social tensions and prevent violence from taking place during protests in Colombia's third largest city and also one of the epicentres of the 2021 national strike.

45. The Government has allocated approximately \$2.7 million to increase from 35 to 65 municipalities in 2022 the geographic coverage of the community-based reintegration strategy, which seeks to have former combatants and members of host communities jointly implement initiatives to improve local infrastructure. The security situation has hindered the implementation of initiatives in Arauca, Meta, and Norte de Santander.

#### *Reintegration policies and institutions*

46. The National Reintegration Council met three times to approve productive projects and discuss access to health and food in former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Representatives for former combatants have insisted that, given their impact on reintegration, security issues be addressed at this forum.

47. In January, the Government extended, until 31 August 2022, the flexible conditions to access the monthly allowance for former combatants, as well as the transitional phase to implement the reintegration road map. Discussions regarding the National Reintegration System remain ongoing.

48. Despite field visits by the gender working group aimed to spur implementation at the local level of gender actions of the national policy on reintegration, their progress continues to be affected by the limited engagement of national level entities. The mechanisms to monitor the impact of the policy's gender actions on the lives of women former combatants have yet to be established.

## Security guarantees

### *Regional dynamics of violence*

49. The year to date – an election year – has seen intensified levels of violence affecting the civilian population in several departments, including Arauca, Chocó and Putumayo. From 1 January to 15 March, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs registered 13,821 persons forcibly displaced and 48,331 confined. In Chocó department alone, more than 42,000 people, mostly from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, have been confined. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received information on 25 large-scale killings, 4 of which have been verified (resulting in 12 male victims, including 3 indigenous victims), 20 are still under verification and 1 was inconclusive or not verifiable. There have also been numerous attacks against the public security forces in various regions.

50. In view of the deteriorating security situation across several regions, civil society organizations, the Catholic Church, several embassies accredited in Colombia and the United Nations, issued statements calling for all armed actors to cease hostilities and urging them to respect international humanitarian law and allow for a peaceful electoral period.

### *Security and protection for former combatants*

51. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, a total of 315 former combatants (10 women) have been killed. In addition, 89 former combatants (6 women) have been victims of attempted homicide, while 27 are deemed as missing (all men). During the reporting period, 11 former FARC-EP members were killed (all men, one indigenous, one Afro-Colombian) and one former combatant (male) was reported missing in Arauca.

52. Serious threats persist, often leading to individual and collective relocations. This is having a damaging impact on social, economic and political reintegration initiatives, especially those of a collective nature, both in and outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Former FARC-EP members have also been affected by the worsening violence in Arauca, where one former combatant was killed in January and more than 60 others fled, abandoning their productive projects and the former territorial area in Arauquita. In February, over 30 bodyguards left a former territorial area in San José del Guaviare to seek refuge in the municipality's urban centre after being threatened by alleged members of a FARC-EP dissident group.

### *Precautionary measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace*

53. Several hearings have been held by Special Jurisdiction for Peace to advance the precautionary measures it issued in 2020. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace convened a hearing to follow up on the 35 cases of former FARC-EP combatants killed while waiting for a response to their protection requests or who had protection measures. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace expressed concern regarding the failure to provide them with effective protection, mostly owing to the late provision of approved protection measures and to issues regarding risk assessments. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace ordered the National Protection Unit to present an action plan with corrective measures and instructed the Inspector General to investigate possible errors in these cases.

54. There was no significant progress regarding the precautionary measures ordered last year by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace for former combatants in Meta department and the southwest region, including comprehensive security strategies for

new reintegration areas and productive projects, support in access to land and an evacuation strategy for former combatants.

55. In March, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reiterated its orders to the Government regarding the development of an action plan to assist surviving family members of killed former combatants, and the provision of a monthly allowance to the victims' children.

*Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General*

56. The fight against impunity remains one of the keys to dismantling criminal organizations, which are responsible for more than three quarters of the crimes committed against former FARC-EP combatants. The Special Investigations Unit reports a total of 58 persons convicted, 57 cases are in the trial phase and 28 are under investigation. In addition, 198 arrest warrants have been issued and an additional 261 arrest warrants are pending execution, including over 74 against those who ordered the attacks. In the 364 cases under investigation, only four convictions are against those who ordered the attacks against former combatants.

*Deployment of public security forces in former territorial areas for training and reintegration*

57. Former territorial areas for training and reintegration are facing increasing threats from illegal armed groups. The preventive security deployment of army and police units, which so far have proven key to ensure their protection, have shifted from fixed deployments to mobile patrols in 9 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The Mission is following up on the matter to avoid negative impacts on the security former FARC-EP combatants inside these areas, and the Government has assured that, despite these changes, public security forces will continue to provide security and protection for these spaces.

58. Since three quarters of former combatants live outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, tailored preventive security arrangements are necessary to strengthen their protection, including for new reintegration areas.

*Attacks against social leaders, human rights defenders and conflict-affected communities*

59. OHCHR received information about killings of 43 human rights defenders and social leaders, including four women (7 documented, 35 under verification and 1 inconclusive or not verifiable). Seven were Afro-Colombian and 13 were indigenous leaders. This includes the killing of Teofilo Acuña and Jorge Tafur, two renowned leaders in the Magdalena Medio region, in February.

60. The lack of adequate and timely security guarantees for women social leaders, tailored to their specific needs, continues to be of concern. During the reporting period, Luz Marina Arteaga, a leader in Meta department, was killed while waiting to receive protection measures approved months earlier.

*National Commission on Security Guarantees*

61. On 28 February, during its hearing on the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace ordered the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace to convene a plenary session. It also gave the Commission 30 days to discuss and approve its internal regulations, as well as 60 days to present the action plan of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, giving due consideration to inputs by civil society representatives. Finally, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace ordered the Inspector General to carry out the corresponding

disciplinary investigations on any omissions or wrongdoings resulting in the absence of the policy five years after the establishment of the Commission.

62. After nearly a year of not being convened despite the critical security situation in several regions, the Commission met on 7 March following the precautionary measures ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The session revolved around the internal regulations of the Commission, which were unanimously adopted after months of technical-level discussions. The adoption of the internal regulation should facilitate substantive progress in compliance with orders of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and, ultimately, the adoption and implementation of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and its action plan.

*Early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman*

63. The Office of the Ombudsman issued seven early warnings for Bogotá and other 20 municipalities in Córdoba, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, Putumayo, Risaralda, Tolima and Valle del Cauca departments, and the national electoral early warning. The latter identified 521 of Colombia's more than 1,100 municipalities as facing some type of risk, including 79 facing extreme risk. Half of these municipalities are within the special electoral districts for peace. Risks identified are linked to the presence and threats of illegal armed groups, affecting political campaigns and citizens' political participation. In March the Ombudsman submitted to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing a report on former FARC-EP combatants' security which presents an overview of the risks they face, as well as the protective measures in place and provides recommendations to enhance their protection.

64. The Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings has advanced in an agenda to follow up on early warnings from 2020 and 2021, implementing action plans in accordance with the recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman. In total, 13 follow-up sessions and 40 regional workshops were held during the reporting period.

*Comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories*

65. There was no significant progress in the implementation of the comprehensive security and protection programme. However, in January, civil society organizations agreed on a communications strategy at the local level to increase awareness on the programme, as well as judicial actions to further demand comprehensive and collective protection measures.

**Restorative sentences**

66. The Mission has intensified preparations for the implementation of its mandate to verify the compliance with restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the conditions for their implementation. This includes constant communication with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and individuals under its jurisdiction, including former FARC-EP members and members of the public security forces, as well as victims' organizations, to discuss progress and jointly identify potential challenges for the implementation of and compliance with restorative sentences.

67. The Mission is also following up on the efforts by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, victims and individuals subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to identify potential tasks, works and activities with restorative content which could be considered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as compliance with restorative sentences. In this context, the Mission has followed up on discussions between the

Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Government on the establishment of a set of mechanisms to enable the conditions for the implementation of restorative sentences, and on the identification of potential tasks, works and activities with restorative content to be funded by the Government.

68. The Mission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace have also continued discussions regarding the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism to ensure coordination and help overcome difficulties in the implementation of, and compliance with, restorative sentences. Furthermore, the Mission continues to coordinate with relevant United Nations entities to enhance complementarity on projects and activities aimed at strengthening the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including victims' participation.

69. In a key step towards the issuance of restorative sentences and as part of its mandate to ensure that there is justice regarding crimes committed during the conflict, in February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace announced the first public hearings on acknowledgement of responsibility within Case 01, on hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and other concurrent crimes committed by the FARC-EP and Case 03, on killings and forced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by State agents. The participation of victims in the hearings, scheduled to be held between April and June, will be fundamental.

70. During the hearings, those indicted will present before victims their acknowledgment of responsibility as previously submitted to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in writing, including their recognition of having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. They must also acknowledge the harm inflicted and commit to providing reparations for the victims, as well as to non-repetition.

71. The former FARC-EP combatants indicted in Case 01 are accused of being responsible for committing 21,000 kidnappings, among other related crimes. They have acknowledged responsibility for all the conduct attributed to them by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including having imposed labour upon victims of kidnapping, while rejecting the legal qualification of the latter as the crime of enslavement. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace explained that the discussion on the legal qualification will take place later in the proceedings.

72. The members of the public security forces and civilians appearing in these hearings, who have already acknowledged responsibility before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, stand accused in the extrajudicial killings of at least 120 people in Norte de Santander department, out of the over 6,000 victims estimated within Case 03.

73. In July, following the hearings, the Judicial Panel for Acknowledgement of Truth and Responsibility of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is expected to render its conclusions on both cases. If the Panel deems that the indicted individuals' acknowledgement of responsibility and contributions to the truth is sufficient, it will refer the case to the Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace with proposals of restorative sentences. If not, those indicted will not be eligible for restorative sentences and, if defeated in trial, they risk facing up to 20 years in prison.

## **V. Cross-cutting considerations**

### **Gender**

74. In January, the High-level Forum on Gender of the Government held a session to report on progress in the implementation of the 51 gender indicators of the framework plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement. So far, 25 per cent of the indicators have been completed and 75 per cent are in progress.

75. Colombian women peacebuilders continue demanding an acceleration of the implementation of the gender provisions of the Agreement, including by increasing funding. In February, in the context of the third Women and Peace Summit, over 100 representatives of women's organizations gathered to reflect on the state of implementation and make their demands to the Government and to political candidates. Women called for the safety and security of women leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants to enable their meaningful participation in peacebuilding and urged an immediate cessation of hostilities by all armed groups and the demilitarization of their communities.

76. According to the non-governmental organization Electoral Observation Mission, the participation of women candidates in the 2022 electoral process has been affected by security risks, gender-based political violence, unequal access to resources and gender-based discrimination, with additional challenges for indigenous and Afro-Colombian women.

77. Thousands of women marched across the country on International Women's Day. The importance of women in peacebuilding was highlighted, including at an event organized by the Vice-President, Marta Lucía Ramírez, during which she underscored the efforts by the Government to implement Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). The Mission, in coordination with the Government, former combatants and women's organizations, also organized 27 events across the country to highlight women's key role in peacebuilding. For example, in the former territorial area of Tumaco, Nariño department, 40 women victims and the three entities of the transitional justice system created by the Agreement discussed the impact of the armed conflict on women and gender and ethnic approaches in relation to access to truth and justice.

#### **Ethnic affairs**

78. Violence by illegal armed groups in ethnic territories is increasingly endangering indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and their leaders. The situation along the Pacific coast is particularly acute. Three indigenous and one Afro-Colombian former combatants and their families from Chocó department requested to be relocated as a result of threats. Also in Chocó, three Afro-Colombians, including an 11-year-old girl and one member of the Cimarrona guard, as well as an indigenous leader in the San Juan River area were killed. In Cauca department, four indigenous guards and one traditional indigenous authority were killed, and another four members of the Awa indigenous community were killed in Nariño department (including one guard and one leader), while the Bishop of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department, continued to receive death threats.

79. In the light of the critical security situation in Putumayo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia visited the department to follow up directly on these developments, engaging with indigenous communities, leaders and former combatants. A large-scale killing claiming seven victims took place in late December 2021 in a reservation of the Murui Muina indigenous peoples and, in February, two sons of a Murui Muina leader and a former governor were killed. In May 2021, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace had ordered protective measures for the Murui Muina people to be implemented by the Ministry of Interior and the offices of the Attorney General and the Ombudsman.

80. The working group on ethnic issues of the National Reintegration Council continues facing limitations in its operation and the definition of its agenda, which continues to hinder the reintegration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants.

### **Children**

81. There was modest progress on the economic reintegration of beneficiaries of the programme “A Different Path of Life” for 124 children formerly associated with FARC-EP, with the number of participants with resources for productive projects increasing from 47 to 56. Another 68 have yet to receive financial support. Eleven members of the programme reported problems with their national identification document, which remain unsolved. The Mission is providing technical assistance to the Technical Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council to develop an action plan to enhance implementation of the programme in 2022.

82. The Working Group continues working to trace and include another 288 former combatants, recognized between 2020 and 2021 as children at the time of accreditation, in the Programme. The parties are discussing a procedure to define whether these individuals can be included in the programme.

83. Sons and daughters of former combatants continue facing significant obstacles to access basic needs and care in and outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including education, nutrition and childcare. In January, a 17-year-old boy and his family were forced to relocate in Antioquia because of threats of recruitment, highlighting the need for special measures for children affected by security risks and the urgent strengthening of prevention mechanisms in conflict-affected areas. Child recruitment remains a critical concern. According to the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights, 68 municipalities from 15 departments are at high risk of recruitment, with an additional 226 municipalities at medium-high risk.

### **Youth**

84. In January, district and municipal authorities formally installed the local and municipal youth councils, elected for the first time in December 2021. Also in January, the Office of the Inspector General called upon national and local authorities to provide guarantees to ensure that the councils can fulfil their mandates of devising youth-related policies and programmes.

85. In late December, in an event with the participation of over 100 young delegates (48 per cent women) from across the country, the Comunes party installed its first national training school for Comunes youth. Party leaders highlighted the importance of promoting the participation of young people in advocating for the implementation of the Final Agreement and in the party’s long-term consolidation.

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

86. In the context of the congressional and presidential campaigns, the Mission and country team and have conducted outreach to candidates from across the political spectrum to discuss United Nations system priorities, with special emphasis on peace implementation. With the National Civil Registry, the country team supported an awareness-raising campaign for civil society and victims’ organizations in areas covered by the special transitional electoral districts for peace.

87. In coordination with the Mission, the roundtable on gender in international cooperation, which includes members of the country team and representatives from several embassies, supported the Government’s “More Women, More Democracy” strategy, to promote women candidates’ electoral participation. The strategy encouraged the inclusion of women in the lists put forward by political parties, promoted the inclusion gender issues in electoral debates, and advocated for non-violence against women in politics. More than 3,000 female candidates were

supported through capacity-building and 27 large media outlets received training and tools to carry out a gender-balanced coverage of the elections.

88. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia allocated more than \$10 million to support the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, victims' organizations that will disseminate the final report of the Truth Commission and two projects on illicit crop substitution and land rights. The country team is also providing technical assistance to 20 initiatives implemented by 65 civil society organizations in several regions on reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, guarantees for non-repetition and the prevention of recruitment. Some 4,800 persons (48 per cent women) have participated. Lastly, with the support of the trust fund, 30,026 children and adolescents participated in activities to prevent their recruitment by illegal armed groups.

## **VII. Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional**

89. Armed clashes between ELN and public security forces, and between ELN and other illegal armed actors, have intensified, particularly in the Arauca, Cauca, Chocó and Norte de Santander departments. In February, ELN carried out a three-day nationwide "armed strike" during which civilians were instructed to remain at home or in their workplaces and to avoid movement, except for humanitarian reasons. During the strike, ELN committed several violent acts in different regions, including the use of improvised explosive devices, leaving nine people injured, and burning at least 10 vehicles. The Government condemned the strike, noting that the public security forces would ensure security and protection of citizens across the country. The Catholic Church called upon ELN to abandon violence and to show true willingness to engage in dialogue. It also urged the guerrilla group and other armed groups to respect international humanitarian law.

90. ELN held a unilateral ceasefire between 10 and 15 March in view of the congressional elections on 13 March.

## **VIII. Mission structures**

### **Mission support**

91. As at 16 March, the percentage of Professional and Field Service female staff on fixed-term, continuing and permanent contracts was 43 per cent. For other categories, women represented 65 per cent of United Nations Volunteers; 34 per cent of international observers; and 50 per cent of consultants and individual contractors. Overall, 51 per cent of all civilian personnel are women.

92. To ensure the Mission's ability to deliver on its new mandate, work is ongoing to adjust field offices to respond to new requirements and responsibilities.

### **Safety and security**

93. In late December, a United Nations agency personnel member was killed in Bogotá during an armed robbery. Authorities have arrested the alleged perpetrators. The Department of Safety and Security recorded 19 incidents affecting United Nations personnel, including burglary, harassment and intimidation. Most incidents occurred in Arauca, Bogotá and Cúcuta. Two events led to minor injuries of staff members. Two Mission vehicles, that were part of a three-vehicle convoy (the third belonging to a humanitarian non-governmental organization), were burned in Guaviare department by members of a FARC-EP dissident group, who also warned that the United Nations was not welcome in the area.

**Conduct and discipline**

94. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported. One allegation of verbal assault was referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services for appropriate actions.

95. The Mission conducted refresher trainings on sexual exploitation and abuse, its code of conduct and prohibited conduct in the regional offices in Cúcuta and Pasto. Training on the “United to Respect” toolkit is ongoing for staff members in the Mission’s headquarters in Bogotá.

**IX. Observations**

96. While much work still remains to be done in order to deepen and consolidate peace in the country, Colombia continues to take steps, through the implementation of the Final Agreement, towards a more inclusive democracy that reaches all of its citizens and territories. The expansion of Congress to now include 16 new representatives from conflict-affected regions offers a historic opportunity to address structural inequalities and repair the damage caused by conflict.

97. Having endured decades of violence alongside their communities, men and women who will now represent these new districts have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to channel, at the highest levels of decision-making, their hopes for a better future. I hope that their presence in Congress will help to draw attention to the plight of victims and the needs of long neglected regions, as well as to inspire lawmakers from across the political spectrum to discuss key pending legislation related to the Agreement, including on the comprehensive rural reform and political participation.

98. The Final Agreement remains an unprecedented opportunity to bring to fruition decades of peacebuilding efforts by Colombian society and institutions. I applaud Colombians’ determination to persevere amid lingering expressions of violence that threaten to undermine the precious gains attained thus far. I have previously warned of the risks facing the consolidation of peace, and developments included in this report speak of a trend of growing threats facing key areas of implementation. The progress made in the reintegration of former combatants, substitution of illicit crops, transitional justice and opportunities for development in conflict-affected communities will remain vulnerable unless bold and effective steps are taken to consolidate security across the country in the holistic manner envisioned in the Final Agreement.

99. Effectively countering insecurity will only be possible through the integrated deployment of the State’s capacities to uphold citizens’ rights and ensure the provision of essential goods and services. The persisting violence in several regions calls for the full implementation of security guarantees provisions of the Agreement to reinforce the security measures implemented by government and State authorities. To that end, greater emphasis must be placed on dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations who thrive in regions characterized by poverty, illicit economies and an ineffective territorial control by State authorities.

100. I therefore welcome the recent progress within the National Commission on Security Guarantees and hope for the swift delivery on its most important task, namely the adoption and implementation of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups. Similarly, I call upon the Government to spare no efforts to ensure security for former combatants in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new reintegration areas, including by making progress towards the

safe relocation of those facing heightened risks and by properly addressing women former combatants' specific risks and needs.

101. In the more than five years since the signing of the Final Agreement, government and State institutions have made significant efforts to generate peace dividends. More than 13,000 former combatants continue to receive support for their reintegration, tens of thousands of peasant families are transitioning away from illicit crops and Colombians in conflict-affected regions are starting to see long-awaited investments. They all placed their hopes in the Agreement's promises of development, reconciliation and non-repetition and have also worked towards these goals. Undoubtedly, the long-term success of the Colombian peace process is contingent upon strengthening trust between the parties, as well as between citizens and institutions through their sustained commitment and coordinated efforts, which I trust will continue and be reinforced in this critical year.

102. The current year represents a turning point for the transitional justice system as it sheds light on the horrors of the past. As the Unit for the Search of Persons Deemed as Missing continues to provide solace to hundreds of families of missing persons, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is preparing to bring perpetrators to acknowledge, face-to-face with victims and before Colombian society, their responsibilities for crimes committed during the conflict and contribute to the truth.

103. At the same time, the Truth Commission is entering the last stages before releasing its final report. While I acknowledge the difficulty for any society to come to terms with a past tarnished by violence, I am confident that Colombians, their leaders and institutions, will have the strength and the wisdom to use the Commission's legacy to comprehend this painful history and to build upon its recommendations the groundwork for reconciliation and non-repetition.

104. Such landmark developments deserve no less than the full support of Colombian society, the commitment of all parties to the conflict, and the necessary guarantees from government and State institutions for the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition to continue working towards peace and reconciliation while upholding victims' rights to truth and justice. The entities of the Comprehensive System can continue to count on the full support of the United Nations.

105. The forthcoming restorative sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, possible thanks to Colombia's innovative transitional justice approach, have the potential to demonstrate that peace and justice can be mutually reinforcing by keeping victims at the heart of the process. As in the case of the reintegration process and the implementation of security guarantees, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia stands ready, under the mandate provided by the Security Council, to support the parties and Colombian society and institutions more broadly in this new chapter of the country's transition from war to peace.

106. By agreeing to end decades of violent conflict, Colombians reaffirmed to the world that even the most deeply entrenched conflicts can be resolved through dialogue. As the country continues on the path set forth in the Agreement, and with presidential elections approaching, I encourage political forces to maintain their commitment to a campaign free of violence and stigmatization, and invite them to continue channelling their differences through institutional means. In that spirit, I trust the Colombian citizens and political leaders will uphold the principles that inspired the Final Agreement as they engage in democratic debate.

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

Verification Mission  
Geospatial

