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United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2545 \(2020\)](#), by which the Council extended 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 implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The report covers the period from 29 December 2020 to 26 March 2021.

2. In his previous report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia ([S/2020/1301](#)), the Secretary-General proposed five priorities for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in 2021, taking into account their mutually reinforcing nature: ensuring protection and security for former combatants, conflict-affected communities and social leaders; ensuring the sustainability of the reintegration process; consolidating the integrated presence of the State in conflict-affected areas; reinforcing constructive dialogue between the parties; and strengthening conditions for reconciliation. With the Final Agreement well into its fifth year of implementation, steady progress in these priority areas in 2021 would contribute to the long-term consolidation of peace.

Major developments

3. One of the most significant peace process developments that took place during the reporting period was the meeting between the President of Colombia, Iván Duque, and the president of the Comunes party (formerly the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) party), Rodrigo Londoño, which took place on 10 March, to discuss the status of implementation of the Final Agreement. During this constructive dialogue facilitated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, both parties reiterated their commitment to the Final Agreement, and agreed to work jointly to design a road map for the remainder of the time frame envisioned for its comprehensive implementation, as well as to redouble efforts to strengthen the reintegration of, and security guarantees for, former combatants. Also present at the meeting were the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, the High Commissioner for Peace, and the representative of Comunes

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to the National Reintegration Council, all of whom expressed a willingness to make concerted efforts to improve the implementation of the Final Agreement.

4. The Second Extraordinary National Assembly of FARC, the highest decision-making body of the political party, took place from 22 to 24 January, with the participation of dozens of delegates from across the country. In addition to reviewing the programme and electoral strategy for the elections to be held in 2022, members voted to rename the party “Comunes”.

5. On 26 January, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first indictment for Case 01, on hostage-taking and other severe deprivations of liberty, against eight former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) secretariat (one of whom is deceased), including the president and two senators of the Comunes party. This is the first time that former FARC-EP leaders have been indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, and assassination. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace identified 21,396 victims of kidnapping (21 per cent women, and 5 per cent children) including civilians and members of the public security forces. The indictment alleges the criminal responsibility of those indicted either as indirect perpetrators, for the orders they gave to their subordinates, or under command responsibility. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace gave those indicted until 30 April 2021 to acknowledge their responsibility and provide observations and evidence and ordered them to present a detailed plan to help locate missing persons. During that same time frame, victims and the Office of the Inspector-General can also submit observations. In February, six of the indicted former FARC-EP leaders issued a statement asking for forgiveness and acknowledging their responsibilities for the crimes committed.

6. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its prioritization strategy for investigations within Case 03, on extrajudicial killings committed by the public security forces and illegitimately presented as combat casualties. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace indicated that it will apply a “bottoms-up” approach, starting by investigating local low-ranking perpetrators and then working up to those responsible at higher levels. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also indicated that it has identified 6,402 victims killed between 2002 and 2008, a figure higher than the 2,248 victims previously reported by the Office of the Attorney-General, and reported that it had reached that number following an exhaustive process of cross-checking information from State entities and civil society organizations.

7. The announcements by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace prompted diverse reactions reflecting a polarized environment, which remains a challenge to the transitional justice process. National actors supporting the peace process and the international community praised the actions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as major steps toward truth and justice for victims, while renewing calls for all concerned to respect the autonomy and independence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to conduct its crucial work.

8. In March, reports of a bombing by the armed forces of a FARC-EP dissident group’s camp in Guaviare Department, which resulted in several deaths, sparked concern and controversy over the reported presence of recruited children among the casualties. Investigations by forensic and judicial authorities are ongoing.

9. The Government began implementing its coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination strategy and is taking steps to ensure that populations targeted by peace-related programming, including former combatants, have access to vaccines.

Protection and security for former combatants, conflict-affected communities, social leaders and human rights defenders

Attacks against former combatants

10. Despite efforts by relevant authorities, killings of former FARC-EP combatants have continued. During the reporting period, 14 former combatants were killed (13 men, 1 woman), bringing the number of former combatants killed to 262 (including seven women) since the signing of the Final Agreement, as well as 59 attempted homicides (56 men, 3 women) and 21 disappearances (all men).

11. Former combatants continue having to relocate to preserve their safety. Three of the former combatants killed recently had been forced to leave the places where they were conducting their reintegration process owing to threats, including one person killed after fleeing Cauca Department following two assassination attempts and the killing of two of his brothers. In Antioquia Department, dozens of former combatants recently fled El Bagre and Ituango municipalities due to security issues.

12. National and regional authorities have provided support for some of these cases through evacuations, however, the evacuation road map announced last year by the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation has yet to be implemented. Relatives of former combatants are also facing threats, especially partners and children, for whom no specific support mechanisms exist.

Precautionary measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace

13. In January, as part of the precautionary measures issued in July 2020 for the protection of former FARC-EP combatants, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reiterated its orders to the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, as chair of the Technical Committee on Security and Protection, to present the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants. It also ordered the National Protection Unit to speed up the recruitment of new bodyguards, for which it received an additional \$3.8 million in September.

14. In February, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued a statement expressing its concern that the measures taken by Government and State entities to protect former combatants were insufficient and showed limited coordination. It gave a new 15-day deadline to the High Commissioner for Peace, as technical secretary of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, to present the guidelines for the public policy for the dismantling of illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks. It also issued new orders to other entities, including the Office of the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Attorney-General and the Ministry of Defence to take appropriate action to prevent and respond to this violence.

15. In March, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation presented the proposal of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection to the Subdirector of the National Protection Unit for comments by Comunes. The Government also presented the aforementioned guidelines for the policy on dismantling illegal armed groups, as requested by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

16. Of the 686 vacancies at the National Protection Unit, 256 bodyguards (including 47 women) have been recruited since the additional funds were provided; all 36 risk analysts have been recruited, and a workplan has been adopted to respond to the more than 1,000 pending protection requests by October 2021. To date, 302 close protection schemes have been implemented, including 59 women former combatants, and 49 collective protection measures.

17. Although women former FARC-EP combatants and female members of the Comunes party continue to face security challenges, the creation of committees to

provide gender-related recommendations within the security guarantee mechanisms created by the Final Agreement is a positive step, including in the Technical Committee on Security and Protection and in the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics. Those committees are crucial to address the risks that women face and to strengthen institutional capacity on gender. However, the approval and implementation of a specific protection strategy for women former combatants, provided for in the national reintegration policy, remain essential to address their specific security risks.

Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General

18. The Special Investigations Unit continues investigating attacks against former FARC-EP members, and has reported 35 convictions, 25 cases in trial phase, 42 cases under investigation and 47 cases with arrest warrants issued. The Unit has issued 275 arrest warrants against persons allegedly linked to those attacks, including 56 against intellectual authors, 17 of whom have been arrested. There are 125 warrants still pending execution. One conviction was reported in the killing of a former FARC-EP leader, Alexander Parra, who was a leader in the reintegration process and whose killing in October 2019 was documented in a previous report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2019/988); one individual allegedly linked to the same case was captured on 10 March.

19. The mission of the Special Investigations Unit to dismantle criminal organizations is instrumental to fighting impunity and ensuring non-repetition and can only be fulfilled with support from other relevant entities, especially public security forces and the judicial system. Given the limited resources and high numbers of cases in Departments such as Antioquia, Cauca and Nariño, strengthening local judicial capacity is paramount.

Deployment of public security forces

20. The preventive security deployment of army and police units around former territorial areas for training and reintegration continues, guaranteeing security and protection for some 2,600 former combatants and their families. However, security outside the former territorial areas remains a challenge. The Mission is liaising with the Ministry of Defence and the police to follow up on and respond to security risks of former combatants, with a focus on those living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Enhanced dialogue between former combatants and public security forces, including in the context of the Tripartite Mechanism for Security and Protection, could help provide timely and more effective responses.

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

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received information about 24 killings of human rights defenders and social leaders (one documented and 23 under verification), including four women. Seven were indigenous leaders. The Departments with the highest numbers of cases are Cesar, Nariño and Valle del Cauca. Ten large-scale killings were documented, and 12 are in the process of being verified.

22. The Mission has documented violence against members of political parties from across the political spectrum. In Argelia, Cauca Department, a recognized leader and a member of the municipal council, Fermiliano Meneses, was kidnapped and later killed in January. His killing caused the displacement of another 11 members of the council who also received death threats. This incident highlights the importance of making increased use of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of

Politics to strengthen prevention and protection measures for all political parties, especially in the light of the upcoming elections to be held in 2022.

23. Progress in the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders remains limited. Some meetings have been held to raise awareness and generate ownership of the programme among local authorities; the pilot in Putumayo continues to face challenges owing to limited institutional capacities.

24. On 3 February, through the creation of an intersectoral working group that included the Government and the Offices of the Attorney-General, the Ombudsman and the Inspector-General, the President announced a new strategy to consolidate disparate figures of killings of social leaders and human rights defenders. Civil society organizations have raised concerns that the initiative may hamper the independence and autonomy of State entities that are crucial for preventing and responding to these crimes.

Regional dynamics of the violence in Colombia

25. The concentration of violence in some regions is the result of a limited State presence, high levels of poverty and the proliferation of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations fighting over illicit economies. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, violence against former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders and communities has been mostly concentrated in 25 municipalities of Antioquia, Cauca, Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca Departments. Additionally, security conditions in areas that had seen improvements over the past few years, such as the border between Caquetá, Guaviare and Meta Departments and the south of Bolivar Department, have deteriorated. Three-fourths of the killings of former combatants registered by the Mission since the signing of the Final Agreement have occurred in rural areas and just over half have occurred in these 25 municipalities, which host 10 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, as well as new reintegration areas.

26. Violence against communities persists in Departments such as Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca. The situation in the Pacific region is particularly worrying, as thousands of civilians are caught in the crossfire between illegal armed actors, and between them and the public security forces. The effects on civilians are reflected in massive displacements and confinements, affecting 13,422 people (including 5,574 children) nationwide in January and February, and disproportionately affecting indigenous communities, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

27. In Buenaventura, security has deteriorated sharply, and clashes have severely affected thousands of civilians subject to confinement and displacement. In March, the Episcopal Conference of Colombia issued a statement condemning violence against civilians, rejecting the threats received by the Bishop of Buenaventura, and calling for durable solutions to the situation.

28. The Office of the Ombudsman issued four early warnings for municipalities in the Departments of Amazonas, Cauca, Caquetá, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca. The Ministry of Interior is strengthening the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings at the national and regional levels, through dedicated personnel to follow up on recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman. High-level State representatives, including the Minister, are now participating in sessions of the Intersectoral Commission at the regional level to better coordinate appropriate responses to the risks identified in the early warnings.

National Commission on Security Guarantees

29. In January, during a territorial meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees in Argelia, Cauca Department, the High Commissioner for Peace stated that he was committed to monitoring the situation of the members of the municipal council who had been forcibly displaced.

30. In March, during a meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees chaired by the President, the Government presented the proposed guidelines for the policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks. According to civil society representatives, the proposal includes some elements discussed with members of the Commission, but it still requires a specific action plan and regional prioritization for implementation.

Sustainability of the reintegration process

31. As part of commitments made by the President and former combatants after the Pilgrimage for Life and Peace that took place in November 2020, the first of seven regional sessions of the National Reintegration Council was held on 10 March. The parties approved a reintegration workplan for the Departments of Arauca, Guaviare and Meta. Former combatants and local authorities underscored the importance of the permanent engagement of actors at all levels and raised concerns about their security and the sustainability of the reintegration process, including the timely access to land and housing.

Access to land and housing

32. Some progress has been made by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the National Land Agency in the consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration, with the purchase of land for two additional former territorial areas in Mutatá, Antioquia Department, and Patía, Cauca Department. So far, the Government has purchased land for five former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Land titling for these plots is still pending. Only one of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration has been included in the planning arrangements of its municipality.

33. In the former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Caldono, Cauca Department, located in indigenous territory, former combatants reached an agreement with ethnic authorities to remain in the area, including allowing for the construction of housing for 55 former combatants and their families.

34. Only 4 of the 80 collective projects that have received financial support have purchased land through State-sponsored solutions. The Working Group on Land has resumed meetings to discuss mechanisms to access land for the consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration and for productive projects.

35. In January, the President enacted legislation that includes a specific provision to facilitate housing projects in former territorial areas for training and reintegration. According to the Government, around 580 houses for former combatants will be built in 2021.

Former combatants outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including in new reintegration areas.

36. Over 9,600 former combatants (including approximately 2,200 women) reside outside former TATRs, including in about 70 new reintegration areas, 20 of which require urgent attention, as they are located in municipalities with high levels of poverty, face major security challenges and have limited access to reintegration

benefits. In January, the Office of the Inspector-General issued a directive on reintegration, noting, among other issues, that former combatants outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration required tailored solutions.

37. So far, the National Reintegration Council has approved 40 collective productive projects located outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration (two approved during the reporting period) benefiting 1,066 former combatants (including 309 women), which represent about a third of the total beneficiaries from collective productive projects.

38. The Working Group on Health has prioritized Cauca and Meta Departments for engagement with local and regional authorities to address challenges facing former combatants living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration in municipalities with limited health facilities.

Relocation of former combatants due to security challenges

39. The former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Puerto Asís, Putumayo Department, and Buenos Aires and Miranda, Cauca Department, require urgent relocation. The situation in Miranda has deteriorated in recent months, as reflected by the killing of the leader of the former territorial area for training and reintegration in late December. Despite efforts from the Government and former combatants, the purchase of a plot for the transfer of the former territorial area for training and reintegration of La Macarena, Meta Department, to Caquetá Department, remains pending.

40. Of the 63 temporary houses for former combatants relocated from Ituango to Mutatá, Antioquia Department, in July 2020, 50 have been built. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has identified a plot in Ituango to relocate the 11 former combatants who remained in the area, and which could also be used to implement a productive project that would benefit 47 former combatants.

41. The productive project implemented in El Diamante, Meta Department, has been forced to temporarily relocate following renewed threats. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the cooperative of former combatants are working to find a plot for the long-term relocation of the project.

Productive projects

42. Approximately 47 per cent of the 13,589 accredited former combatants are participating in collective and individual productive projects, and 44 per cent (5,984) of them have received the economic support stipulated in the Final Agreement for this purpose. These include 88 collective projects approved by the National Reintegration Council, benefiting 3,383 former combatants (including 939 women), 80 of which have already received funding. Two new collective productive projects were approved during this period. A total of 2,449 individual projects have been approved by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (584 during the reporting period), benefiting 2,960 former combatants (including 666 women).

43. Some 4,575 former combatants (including 1,555 women) are part of collective efforts undertaken by 135 cooperatives (20 of which are led by women) and other forms of productive associations. Efforts to strengthen their administrative and managerial capacities, together with technical assistance, are pivotal to consolidate collective reintegration.

44. Approximately half of accredited women former combatants (1,605) have benefitted from productive projects. In 34 of the 88 collective projects approved, women represent at least half of the members of the committees leading their

implementation. However, women former combatants still require support to overcome obstacles to their participation, such as childcare duties.

Health

45. The Working Group on Health has continued monitoring COVID-19 cases among former combatants. According to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, 169 former combatants (112 men, 57 women) have tested positive, three of whom died (all men).

46. The working groups on Health and Gender of the National Reintegration Council are collaborating to provide guidance to regional authorities on sexual and reproductive health in accordance with the national reintegration policy.

Reintegration policies and institutions

47. In January, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization issued a resolution extending flexible conditions for former combatants to access their monthly allowance, owing to the pandemic, as well as for the development of individual and collective reintegration road maps, until 31 July 2021.

48. In February, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation announced the creation of the National Reintegration System and released guidelines for national and local entities to ensure coordinated action in the implementation of the reintegration road map. In response, Comunes issued a statement recalling that the national reintegration policy provides for a legally binding system designed within the National Reintegration Council and reiterated that the implementation of the reintegration road maps is contingent upon the system being established under such terms. The Office of the Inspector-General issued a directive on social and economic reintegration in January, calling for the establishment of the National Reintegration System as envisioned in the national reintegration policy and urging State institutions to ensure access to reintegration benefits for all former combatants, regardless of their location, including a gender and ethnic approach.

49. The Working Group on Gender of the National Reintegration Council is promoting the implementation of the 18 gender actions of the national reintegration policy, including through field visits to build capacities on gender among local reintegration councils, local authorities and former combatants, and to ensure that productive initiatives are implemented with a gender-sensitive approach.

Role of municipal and departmental authorities

50. The Office of the Mayor of Bogotá has moved forward with the implementation of initiatives inspired by the development programmes with a territorial focus in two vulnerable areas of the city, and with the identification of former combatants living in the city to ensuring tailored responses to their needs. Reintegration working groups in Cauca, Bolivar, Meta, Nariño, Sucre and Tolima met to review progress and challenges facing the process. These mechanisms are key to follow-up on the implementation of commitments made in local development plans.

Political reintegration

51. In February, 72 of the 111 members of the National Council of the Comunes party discussed the electoral strategy for the elections to be held in 2022 and voted to appoint 15 new members of the party's board.

52. In March, a female member of the local administrative board of one of Bogotá's largest districts, Luceris Segura, who was elected in 2019 as part of a coalition including Comunes, became the president of the board.

Consolidation of the integrated presence of the State in conflict-affected areas

53. Among the most regrettable consequences of the decades-long conflict in Colombia is how it perpetuated a limited State presence in some regions of the country, along with a reduced trust between communities and institutions, both of which contribute to the persisting violence. Through its different programmes, the Final Agreement has started to bring together communities and institutions to advance peace, development and the rule of law, especially in areas historically affected by the conflict.

Comprehensive rural reform

54. With the participation of communities in many of the construction efforts, to date 1,274 development programmes with a territorial focus works have been completed and 151 are under implementation. Using approximately \$470 million from royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation, 7 projects have been completed, 162 are under execution and 56 are pending contracting. The Government has supported the creation of offices for the development programmes with a territorial focus by local authorities in 124 of the 170 municipalities involved in the programmes' implementation to ensure better coordination and planning. So far, 3 stabilization road maps required for the implementation of the programmes have been concluded, including 2 during this reporting period, and 13 remain pending.

55. Several actors, including Comunes, continue to question the Government's view of the development programmes with a territorial focus, claiming that its approach is not in line with the Comprehensive Rural Reform as envisioned in the Final Agreement. In a report on the implementation of the Final Agreement, issued in February, a group of members of Congress from independent and opposition parties raised concerns about insufficient resources allocated to the development programmes with a territorial focus compared to the goals set in the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Agreement, and about limited citizen participation in the design of the stabilization road maps.

56. The Government reported that, of the 3 million hectares envisioned in the Final Agreement, so far approximately 1.2 million have been added to the Land Fund, and some 100,000 have been delivered to nearly 8,000 peasant families. In a report on access to land released in January, the Office of the Inspector-General warned that, of the hectares reported by the Government as added to the Fund, only 96,471 were available for allocation.

Illicit crop substitution

57. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as at 31 December 2020, of the 99,097 participating families (36.5 per cent headed by women and 6.7 per cent from ethnic communities), over 67,000 are receiving technical assistance and 64,000 have received support for food security. These activities continue amidst ongoing violence from illegal armed actors interested in hindering the National Comprehensive Programme for Substitution of Illicit Crops in certain Departments, such as Caquetá, Meta and Putumayo.

58. While 98 per cent of the families have complied with their commitments to eradicate, the reseeded of coca crops in areas that had been previously eradicated has grown from 0.2 to 0.8 per cent. So far, long-term productive projects benefit only around seven per cent of families participating in the Programme.

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

59. Progress regarding the 12 pilot projects of the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories remains limited. During a meeting with the Ministry of Interior, civil society representatives called for the full implementation of the programme and requested that six additional regional pilots and two national pilots for civil society platforms also be carried out.

Reinforce constructive dialogue between the parties

60. As the Final Agreement moves into its fifth year of implementation, dialogue between the parties at the political and technical levels is essential to jointly overcome challenges. Several issues have been addressed by the parties within the mechanisms devised by the Final Agreement, as well as in other forums with the support of the United Nations.

61. In December 2020, the parties agreed to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement to January 2022. With the participation of all key Government officials and accompanied by the guarantor countries, the parties have met regularly and agreed on an agenda for technical sessions on the status of the implementation. The first two meetings were held in February, focusing on security guarantees for former combatants and on comprehensive rural reform. The Government and State entities presented an update on measures taken. Comunes insisted that results on security remain insufficient, and that the Administration has a limited view of rural reform. The Commission also met with victims' organizations and the Special Forum on Gender and will continue to meet with the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples. These in-depth discussions underscore the Commission's essential role in ensuring mutual reflection and comprehensive follow-up on implementation, which should translate into joint solutions and the adoption of more effective measures on all sections of the Final Agreement.

62. The tripartite working group on transit to legality is addressing pending issues regarding accreditation of former FARC-EP combatants. The number of accredited former FARC-EP members stands at 13,589 (10,453 men and 3,136 women), with no progress since the previous report. Efforts continue to locate the 198 former combatants (156 men and 42 women) that remain to be located and accredited. The status of accreditation of 139 individuals (including 6 women), most of whom are in prison, remains pending. The working group is also following up on the situation of accredited former FARC-EP members that are still deprived of their liberty and Comunes has requested an update on their cases from the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

63. The project proposal to gather information on the location of mines, developed within the tripartite working group on mines, has been approved. Two pilot programmes are currently under discussion within the working group, and funding still needs to be allocated to support the former FARC-EP combatants' commitment to humanitarian demining. Additionally, under the lead of a female former combatant, Humanicemos DH – the humanitarian demining organization comprised of 94 former FARC-EP combatants (including 25 women) trained by the United Nations Mine Action Service – detected its first antipersonnel mine in Caquetá Department in March. This significant step towards non-repetition is the result of the joint work of the Government, former combatants and the United Nations.

64. Regarding the FARC-EP assets to be used for reparations for victims, the deadline set by the Government for their handover expired on 31 December 2020. In

January, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation submitted a report to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Office of the Attorney-General informing on the status of the process. As both parties have expressed a willingness to fulfil their obligations in the interest of victims, renewed work within the tripartite mechanism on this matter could help overcome obstacles.

Strengthening conditions for reconciliation

Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition

65. The transitional justice system created by the Final Agreement continues to make strides to provide truth, justice and reparations to victims of all parties to the decades-long armed conflict in Colombia with a view to ensuring non-repetition.

66. As anticipated in the previous report (S/2020/1301), President Duque sent a letter to the President of the Security Council on 13 January 2021 conveying the parties' request for the expansion of the mandate of the Verification Mission to support the verification of compliance with restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In response to a request from the members of the Security Council (S/2021/100), on 24 February the Secretary-General provided detailed recommendations on how this additional task would be carried out and the implications for the configuration of the Verification Mission (S/2021/186).

67. A committee composed of the three entities of the Comprehensive System and the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General, which was created to improve the prevention of killings of social leaders and former combatants and the disappearance of persons, held its first meeting in January. The committee has called for an integrated State presence and the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement to overcome the conditions underpinning violence.

68. In addition to the major developments in Cases 01 and 03, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace called seven former FARC-EP commanders to provide early contributions to the truth on several killings, including high-profile assassinations, acknowledged by former FARC-EP leaders in October 2020. In February, the President of Comunes, Rodrigo Londoño, spoke and asked victims for their forgiveness. He committed to responding to questions posed by victims during the hearing.

69. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also made progress on the participation of civilian third parties and non-combatant State agents in the conflict. This includes identifying patterns of criminal behaviour related to their collaboration with paramilitary groups and the involvement of civilians as recruiters of victims of extrajudicial killings in Case 03. Ninety-four civilian third parties fitting these patterns have asked for their cases to be under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

70. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace referred several complaints from members of the public security forces under its jurisdiction to the Offices of the Attorney-General and the Inspector-General, alleging undue pressure regarding their testimonies on Case 03 regarding extrajudicial killings and Case 04 on the situation in the Urabá region.

71. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace recently warned that the actions of illegal armed actors in some regions represented an obstacle to the work of the Comprehensive System, and a threat to victims' rights. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace further expressed concern that insecurity in Nariño was affecting its investigations and limiting victims' participation in Case 02, prioritizing the situation in Ricaurte, Tumaco and Barbacoas, Nariño Department.

72. The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition continues to hold regional dialogues to receive recommendations on non-repetition

from civil society organizations, victims and State institutions. The President of the Commission, Francisco de Roux, stated that the final report, due in November 2021, would focus on promoting reconciliation, and emphasized that Colombian society should not fear the truth and should be prepared to listen to the multiple voices incorporated in the report.

73. The Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing has received approximately 9,000 search requests from relatives of victims, and more than 250 voluntary contributions of information from former FARC-EP members, members of the public security forces and other actors. The Unit reported that, in coordination with the Office of the Attorney-General and civil society organizations, it has handed over the remains of 98 victims in the Departments of Antioquia, Caldas, Caquetá, Chocó and Meta, as well as Bogotá. The Unit is also working on the identification of some 25,000 bodies.

National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence

74. The National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence presented the guidelines for the public policy on reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization to the President in October 2020, however, the policy has yet to be adopted, along with an action plan and resources for its implementation. Over 500 local councils have been established across the country with support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

Cross-cutting considerations

Gender

75. Despite challenges to the implementation of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement, in particular those related to security guarantees and the reintegration of women former combatants, there have been positive developments by the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Affairs in engaging with several Government entities and local authorities, in particular around security guarantees for women leaders and human rights defenders. This includes work to identify economic empowerment opportunities.

76. Women social leaders and women human rights defenders continue to face security risks. In December, the Special Forum on Gender reported that 10 of its 16 members lacked the security and protection conditions to exercise their leadership. Following the decision by the Government to increase their protection, risk analyses were conducted and protection schemes were requested for the members of the Special Forum who lacked security details.

77. Gender-based violence is a persistent scourge hindering the reintegration of female former combatants, the valuable work of women social leaders and human rights defenders, and the dignity of Colombian women in general. Despite institutional efforts, conciliation between victims and perpetrators continues to be a common practice among local authorities, hampering victims' access to comprehensive assistance, including access to justice, and normalizing violence in their communities.

78. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons continue facing challenges to access services related to sexual and gender-based violence owing to stigmatization and discrimination.

79. In commemoration of International Women's Day, the Mission organized, in collaboration with local authorities, women's organizations and local Comunes gender committees, 15 events on women's leadership, including exchanges of knowledge and experiences of women-led productive initiatives.

Ethnic affairs

80. It is encouraging that former combatants of ethnic origin are working alongside indigenous authorities and communities. In February, a cooperative of 437 former combatants (including 86 women) came to an agreement with the indigenous reservation of Tacueyó, Cauca Department, to work jointly on a long-term local development plan. Similarly, in the new reintegration area in the Cañamomo Loma Prieta reservation, 12 former combatants and seven victims are working together on a fish-farming project.

81. Regrettably, ethnic communities continue to face acute security issues in several regions, including violence against indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants and against ethnic authorities, especially guards who fulfil essential security roles in their territories. In Chocó Department, threats from illegal armed actors have also caused the confinement of 9,352 persons, and the forced displacement of 486 additional civilians, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Emberá indigenous people are especially affected including due to the continuous use of antipersonnel mines in their territories. In neighbouring Murindó, Antioquia Department, Emberá authorities reported the confinement of 2,107 people and the displacement of 140 people.

Children

82. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization notified 188 individuals, who were recognized in 2020 as children at the moment of accreditation. There was marginal progress in the payment of administrative reparations for 38 members of the programme “A Different Path of Life”. Only 22 participants out of 121 have received resources for productive projects.

83. Programmes for children in most of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration have been gradually resuming since January, but delays persist in the establishment of child-friendly spaces in Carrizal, Miravalle and Pondoies, and in the new reintegration area in Uribe, Meta Department. Nutritional support and virtual programmes, including training and recreational activities, continue. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and other institutions carried out an assessment on child protection needs in Uribe. Similar exercises would help identify attention requirements for children in other areas.

84. The Mission verified the deaths of three members of the programme “A Different Path of Life”, between November and December 2020 in Antioquia, Córdoba and Nariño Departments. According to authorities, two of the cases are considered killings in combat and one death was the result of a traffic accident. The Mission is liaising with the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General regarding the circumstances of the alleged killings in combat. The Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council and the local committees to follow up the implementation of the programme are still pending reactivation.

Youth

85. Young former combatants and young members of conflict-affected communities continue to be plagued by violence. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, around 18 per cent (48) of former combatants killed have been under 29 years old. In February, young leaders from Buenaventura and other regions affected by violence met with members of the peace commissions of Congress to discuss the persisting threats in their regions. Young leaders called for a reinvigorated and comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement.

Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional

86. Conflict dynamics involving the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), including clashes with other illegal armed actors and with the public security forces, continue in certain Departments, such as Cauca and Chocó. Communities and civil society organizations in those and other Departments including Nariño and Norte de Santander have asked the Government and ELN to resume peace talks on humanitarian grounds. Similar calls have been made by political actors, including by members of the Senate Peace Commission. The Government insists that the possibility of resuming talks is contingent upon ELN ceasing violent actions, including kidnapping, the recruitment of children and the laying of mines. ELN maintains its position that any such request by the Government must be addressed at the negotiating table.

Coordination with the United Nations country team

87. The United Nations country team continues lending its support to the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. During 2020, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes delivered \$175 million in support of reintegration, development programmes with a territorial focus, illicit crop substitution, reparations and transitional justice. Approximately \$25 million were invested in reintegration alone, including direct support to productive projects. Almost 4,000 former combatants (40 per cent women) benefited from these initiatives in 2020.

88. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia approved its priorities for the 2021–2022 period, focusing on economic recovery, crop substitution and community infrastructure in five regions with development programmes with a territorial focus; support to productive projects and housing for former combatants; preparing the dissemination of the Truth Commission's final report; and continuing support to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and reparations to victims. Security of social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants has been established as a cross-cutting priority.

89. The trust fund recently approved various projects in support of advancing 2021 implementation priorities of different sections of the Final Agreement. These include support to the development programmes with a territorial focus in Chocó Department; a project for alternative livelihoods for women involved in coca-leaf processing; and assistance to strengthen institutional and local capacities on prevention and protection, and on investigations of violence against social leaders and human rights defenders. The Fund will further reinforce the capacities of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace for the implementation of restorative sentences including tasks, works or activities with reparatory and restorative content, and will support 16 grass-roots civil society projects to strengthen victims' participation in the transitional justice system.

Mission support

90. Mission teams deployed in February to Yarumal, Antioquia Department, and Colinas, Guaviare Department, after preparatory infrastructure and security works were completed. Similar works to open the Mission's new regional office in Cali were completed.

91. As at 1 March 2021, women represented 43 per cent of Professional and Field Service staff; 57 per cent of United Nations Volunteers; and 29 per cent of international observers.

Safety and security

92. The reconfiguration of the multiple illegal armed actors in various Departments and disputes over territorial control fuelled by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a negative impact in the operations of the United Nations system. The Department of Safety and Security registered 19 security incidents affecting United Nations personnel, ranging from robbery to threats and movement restrictions.

Conduct and discipline

93. The Mission received one allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse involving Mission personnel. The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services is following up. The Mission has implemented strong measures to ensure that personnel is aware of prohibited conduct and to prevent misconduct, including messages from the Special Representative on the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Observations

94. The reporting period coincides with the onset of the fifth year of implementation of Colombia's landmark Peace Agreement. The developments described previously attest to the significance of the results attained, as well as of the sizeable challenges facing implementation. I welcome the constructive spirit of the recent meeting between President Duque and former FARC-EP leaders. I call upon the parties to continue to work jointly with great commitment in the months ahead so as to protect and expand upon those gains over a crucial window for progress. The resilience displayed by Colombians in conflict-affected areas who still await the promise of peace is an inspiration and a call to action, and every effort in 2021 will be determinant for the country to move forward.

95. The urgency of curbing violence against former combatants, conflict-affected communities, social leaders and human rights defenders cannot be overstated. I am aware of the multiple measures undertaken by authorities, yet I remain gravely concerned to see these heinous crimes continue to be perpetrated against Colombians working to build a better future, including youth, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. I once more urge all State entities to mobilize resolutely to enhance prevention, protection and response to these threats.

96. After the presentation of the Government's proposal within the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the approval and implementation of the long-awaited public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups is an opportunity for the State and civil society to jointly devise actions to deactivate these threats. The deployment of public security forces in the most critical areas, in tandem with efforts to accelerate the presence of civilian institutions, should progressively translate into greater control of the territories and better protection for communities. The increased engagement of the Minister of Interior within the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warning is a positive step, which I hope will lead to effective responses to risks identified in the early warnings.

97. I take note of the progress made by the National Protection Unit regarding the recruitment of analysts and bodyguards to fulfil pending protection requests, and to make protection schemes for former combatants fully operational. Ensuring the appropriate resources for the Unit remains essential. The creation of subregional offices of the Unit with specialized analysts could result in more context-relevant protection measures. I encourage the Unit and civil society representatives to jointly review the protocol for gender-sensitive risk analysis to address women leaders' specific risks, and to enhance its capacity to respond to risks facing women former

combatants. It is also urgent to approve and implement the specific protection strategy for women former combatants provided for in the national reintegration policy.

98. The role of the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General in prosecuting perpetrators and intellectual authors of crimes against former combatants and social leaders is critical. I trust that the Government and the Office of the Attorney-General will ensure the necessary support and resources for the Unit to deliver on its mandate. Combating impunity also requires additional capacities at the local level, underscoring the need for more prosecutors and specialized judges in the regions with the highest numbers of crimes. Reinvigorating the tripartite work of the Unit, former combatants' representatives and the Mission could help improve analysis and response to violence against former combatants.

99. Ensuring the sustainability of the reintegration process remains a priority and guaranteeing former combatants' access to livelihoods is essential. Access to land for productive projects is key to sustainability, as most of them are related to agriculture and livestock. I therefore urge the parties to accelerate the approval of productive projects so that, by the end of this year, the great majority of former combatants are involved in income-generating activities. Similarly, I welcome progress made by the Government in facilitating former combatants' access to land for productive projects, as well as for the consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration. With the increased pace, we could see significantly more results in the coming months. Additionally, efforts by local administrations to include these areas into their municipalities, with support from national entities, would strengthen the long-term sustainability of the reintegration process.

100. Despite progress in the construction of housing projects in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, timelines and funding remain a challenge. These and other issues regarding housing could be addressed by strengthening the dialogue between relevant stakeholders at the technical level, including by setting up a working group within the National Reintegration Council.

101. Former combatants living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration face specific problems, ranging from insufficient access to services to acute security issues. There is growing consensus on the need to devise tailored solutions. I encourage the Government to act upon the calls from the Inspector-General's Office in this regard. The lack of specific measures on productive projects and housing for former combatants of ethnic origin continues to hinder their reintegration, affecting access to benefits of the Final Agreement. I once more call on the National Reintegration Council to consider the recommendations of the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples to address the issues facing former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin.

102. The first of the seven territorial sessions of the National Reintegration Council agreed by President Duque and former FARC-EP combatants last November and held in Villavicencio is a positive development. I trust that upcoming meetings will also be planned and conducted with the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including former combatants' representatives from inside and outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, and that they will lead to the adoption of workplans to accelerate the process, including clear timelines and resources for implementation. As the process moves forward, the Verification Mission will continue working alongside the diverse group of accredited former combatants, regardless of their location, both within and outside the Comunes party.

103. Realizing the promise of lasting peace requires the consolidation of an integrated State presence throughout the country. The Final Agreement created interrelated mechanisms to allow State institutions to reach communities in regions historically affected by violence and poverty, and opened spaces for these

communities to take ownership and participate in the design of tailored solutions to their problems. To this end, finalizing the 13 remaining roadmaps for stabilization, with due consideration to the priorities identified by communities, is instrumental to build upon progress made in the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus. Further progress in the allocation of land to peasants is also necessary to fulfil the Final Agreement's goal of transforming rural Colombia. Similarly, all efforts to ensure that more families involved in the National Comprehensive Programme for Substitution of Illicit Crops, which has shown itself to be worth protecting and building upon, have access to sustainable productive opportunities are essential to prevent reseeding and relapsing into the cycle of illegal economies fuelling violence. Decisive steps in the implementation of the pilots of the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories are necessary to make full use of the capacities of the State and communities to prevent and respond to insecurity. Finally, adequate implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for the Safeguards of Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders is also of the essence to ensure that they can continue to play their vital roles in peacebuilding efforts.

104. I welcome the joint decision by the parties to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement until next year. Substantive and constructive dialogue between them within the Commission and other fora will strengthen implementation across the Final Agreement in 2021, and help them to devise joint solutions to common problems. In that spirit, I encourage the parties to reach consensus regarding the National Reintegration System as the process moves forward.

105. Adding to the inherent difficulties of a transition from violent conflict to peace, Colombia will be immersed in the coming months in a political campaign that coincides with a complex environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These unprecedented circumstances call for all political actors and Colombian society at large to turn to dialogue and democratic means to resolve their differences, if the country is to maintain the milestone achieved in 2018, when the most peaceful and inclusive elections in decades took place. In this context, the adoption of the policy on reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization could prove essential, and the regular convening and effective work of peace and reconciliation councils at the national, regional and local levels can also be decisive in the implementation of political pacts and fostering a climate of trust and tolerance amidst growing polarization.

106. 2021 will be a decisive year for the work of Colombia's transitional justice system. I am encouraged by the progress in shedding light on painful chapters of the armed conflict. For the system to be successful in upholding the rights of victims and in setting the foundations of reconciliation, it is necessary for former combatants, members of the public security forces and third parties to the conflict to provide exhaustive and truthful accounts of the crimes committed, recognize their responsibilities and contribute to reparations. It is also essential that all actors respect the autonomy and independence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace so it can carry on its work; and that those who can provide information on the whereabouts of missing persons collaborate with the Unit for the Search of Persons Deemed as Missing. As the Truth Commission works tirelessly on its final report, it is also vital for Colombian society to lend it its full backing. I reiterate the United Nations firm support to the three components of the Comprehensive System, especially as they face not only the challenges inherent to their complex mandates, but also the actions of illegal armed actors that hinder their essential work and which I condemn in the strongest terms.

107. In societies emerging from conflict, the prospects for sustainable and lasting peace depend on the strength of the gains reached in the early stages of the transition. By the end of this year, one-third of the time frame envisioned for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement will have passed. With the commitment of the parties, the active engagement of Colombian society, and the firm support of the international community, including the United Nations, I am confident that the foundations of the Colombian peace process will be strong enough to withstand the challenges.

108. In conclusion, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the steadfast dedication of all the members of the Verification Mission, under the leadership of my Special Representative, during an exceedingly challenging period.

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

Verification Mission
Geospatial


