



# 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 [2655 \(2022\)](#), 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 27 September 2022 to 26 December 2022.

#### II. Major developments

2. During its first four months, the Government has taken important steps to halt violence and consolidate peace. In particular, the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, has reiterated his Administration's commitment to the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace as a core element of his Government's "total peace" policy, including during events commemorating the sixth anniversary of the Final Agreement in November. During the reporting period, the President also chaired sessions of key implementation mechanisms, namely the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (see para. 24 below) and the National Commission on Security Guarantees (see para. 68 below). Furthermore, the Government announced that the coordination of the implementation of the Final Agreement will fall under the responsibility of a new unit, led by Gloria Cuartas, within the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

3. Under the leadership of the High Commissioner for Peace, Danilo Rueda, the Government has moved forward with other key elements of its "total peace" policy, such as resuming negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), among others. A first round of negotiations was carried out successfully during the reporting period (see paras. 100–102 below).

4. In addition, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace held exploratory talks with over a dozen armed groups, which have expressed their interest in taking part in efforts to end violence. In regions particularly affected by violence, such as the city of Buenaventura, in Valle del Cauca Department, illegal armed actors have



responded positively to the call by the Government to halt violence, leading to a significant decrease in the homicide rate.

5. President Petro signed into law the bill reforming the Law on Public Order, which provides a legal framework for the “total peace” policy, authorizing the President to carry out peace negotiations with armed groups, such as ELN, and approaches to other illegal armed structures geared towards their submission to justice. It also enables the President to authorize the holding of peace talks at the regional level, the establishment of zones for disarmament and transition to legality, the appointment of regional peace commissioners and the possibility of implementing partial agreements as negotiations move forward.

6. Under a process launched by the Government to ensure participatory dialogue to inform the design of the National Development Plan for 2022–2026, some 140,000 citizens provided their proposals at over 50 Government-led gatherings. Congress should begin discussing the Plan’s draft next February.

7. In addition, Congress discussed and approved key legislation, including elements related to peace consolidation. Congress approved the national budget for 2023 and a tax reform presented by the Government, and ratified the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), which includes provisions for the protection of environmental leaders. Congress also recently approved the creation of the Ministry of Equality, which will be led by the Vice-President of Colombia, Francia Márquez.

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

8. Six years after the signing of the Final Agreement, crucial sections have been unevenly implemented, despite their potential to address the underlying causes of the conflict and redress historic inequalities. Therefore, efforts to ensure its comprehensive implementation remain paramount.

9. Further to the request by the parties to the Security Council that the mandate of the Mission be expanded to include section 1 and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement in its verification tasks, the Secretary-General highlighted the importance of these provisions for the consolidation of peace in his response of 9 December to the Council’s request for detailed recommendations on how the Mission would carry out this additional task and the implications for its configuration.

#### **Comprehensive rural reform**

10. The Government has reiterated the importance of rural reform to consolidate peace. During the first National Peasant Convention, held in December, President Petro reaffirmed the commitment by his administration to close the gap between urban and rural Colombia. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, underscored the importance of guaranteeing equitable access to land in rural areas as a key step to address one of the root causes of conflict.

11. In a welcome development, the Government increased resources for the agricultural sector in the 2023 budget by over 62 per cent, reaching some \$860 million. Also of note, the Government and the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers recently signed an unprecedented agreement for the purchase of 3 million hectares of land to be distributed to peasants without land through the Land Fund stipulated in section 1 of the Final Agreement.

12. In addition, the Government reported that 94,246 hectares had been placed in the Land Fund, and that 800,600 hectares had been formalized within that quarter. The Government has pledged to provide technical and financial support to peasants benefiting from these efforts; to accelerate land restitution; and to further the implementation of the 16 national plans for rural reform established under the Final Agreement.

13. Furthermore, the Government has reiterated its commitment to strengthen the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus. A national-level meeting with 300 community representatives, including leaders of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, was held to, among other things, gather proposals to inform the National Development Plan. Guaranteeing funds, developing clear indicators and follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus, and maximizing synergies between them, local development plans and the national plans for rural reform are essential to achieve progress.

14. Meanwhile, important legislation related to section 1 of the Final Agreement is under discussion in Congress, including a draft bill expected to be approved in early 2023 for the creation of the agrarian jurisdiction, and another bill to incorporate into the Constitution the recognition of peasants' rights, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

#### **Political participation**

15. Congress also began voting on other legislation for the implementation of section 2 of the Final Agreement, notably the draft political reform. Key provisions of this bill, such as mandatory gender parity in candidate lists and the public funding of campaigns, have so far received significant support, including from the Comunes party. The bill is expected to be approved during the first half of 2023.

16. The 16 representatives of the special transitional electoral districts for peace have participated in the drafting of 28 bills, most of them related to the implementation of the Final Agreement. Working together as a peace and victims caucus, they have also conducted advocacy efforts, including with President Petro, for enhanced Government attention to their regions. The caucus has expressed satisfaction at the inclusion of several of its proposals in the recently approved tax reform, including a provision to prioritize rural road construction in municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus, and the allocation of resources for the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops.

#### **Solution to the illicit drugs problem**

17. Illicit economies continue fuelling much of the persistent violence in conflict-affected regions. A recent study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) showed record-high levels of coca crops, rising by 43 per cent in 2021 to 204,000 hectares, and of potential cocaine production. Crops are concentrated mostly in areas characterized by poverty and a limited State presence, including in the Departments of Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo. The Government has emphasized the importance of addressing this issue in order to consolidate peace, especially by following the road map established in the Final Agreement.

18. The National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops remains an important instrument to that end whose full potential has yet to be realized. UNODC recently highlighted positive results in respect of the number of hectares voluntarily eradicated (46,008); technical assistance provided to over 77,000 families; high levels of compliance by participating families (98 per cent); high

participation of women (36.2 per cent) and members of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (21.4 per cent); and low levels of reseeded (5.4 per cent).

19. Despite these results and in view of persistent challenges, UNODC and communities, among other actors, have recommended adjusting the Programme to the evolving contexts where it is implemented, improving inter-institutional coordination and strengthening participation by communities, with a view to boosting trust and legitimacy.

### **Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repitition**

20. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace elected Justice Roberto Vidal as its new president and Justice Belkis Izquierdo, an Indigenous woman, as vice-president.

21. During the reporting period, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace signed agreements with the offices of the Attorney General and the Inspector General. The former aims to foster cooperation in fighting impunity and in granting greater protection to victims and to persons under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction. The latter seeks to foster cooperation in the definition of the legal situation of those under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction. Representatives of former combatants have expressed their concern over this agreement, claiming that it contradicts the Final Agreement and arguing that only the Special Jurisdiction can define such legal situations.

22. The Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing has recovered 611 bodies since its creation, handed over 167 bodies to families and taken 7,548 genetic samples from 3,744 relatives. During the reporting period, the Unit recovered, in Cesar and Santander Departments, 40 bodies of persons missing for over 20 years and handed them over to forensic authorities for identification. The Unit also handed over to their families the remains of three victims from Caquetá and Caldas Departments. In addition, the Unit took 160 genetic samples from relatives of victims living in Colombia and abroad.

23. The committee for follow-up on the recommendations of the Truth Commission is developing a system to monitor their implementation. The committee has also continued to raise awareness and foster ownership among State institutions and civil society of the recommendations and has advocated with the Government to ensure that they are included in the National Development Plan.

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

24. During the first session of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement under this Administration, President Petro emphasized his intent to empower the Commission so that it fulfils its role in propelling implementation of the Final Agreement. Five sessions were held during the reporting period, focusing on resuming the interaction of the Commission with key forums, including the Special Forum on Gender and the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples, and on the inclusion of provisions of the Final Agreement in the National Development Plan. One session brought together all mechanisms created by the Final Agreement and entities with implementation responsibilities to discuss progress attained and plans for the year ahead.

25. Recently, the Special Assets Administration, tasked with managing resources from the inventory of assets of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), auctioned several of those assets, raising some \$568,000, which will be used for victims' reparations. This welcome progress could be reinforced through collaboration within the working group on FARC-EP

assets, which has not been convened since June 2020, which could help redress the damage caused to victims.

26. The working group on mines has continued to conduct its essential work, with the technical assistance of the Mine Action Service of the United Nations. The commitment of the Government and the former FARC-EP, and the constant support of the international community, permitted the extension of the pilot project on data collection regarding the location of mines. Ensuring continued support for demining activities is essential.

## IV. Mission tasks

### Reintegration

27. The comprehensive approach to peace implementation by the Government should be a boost to the reintegration process for the over 13,000 men and women former combatants who remain committed to peace, for example, by ensuring linkages with the comprehensive rural reform, the political reform and crop substitution efforts. With a view to harnessing their support to reintegration, the Mission is engaging with key ministries, including those of Agriculture, Labour, Environment and Culture, as well as with the Unit for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement within the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

28. In a welcome development, the National Reintegration Council resumed its meetings in November with the participation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. In addition, in December President Petro designated Alejandra Miller as Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization.

### *Access to land and housing*

29. Acknowledging the importance of land and housing for former combatants, the National Land Agency has pledged to allocate funding to purchase land for former territorial areas for training and reintegration and explore alternatives to accelerate land delivery. The total number of former territorial areas with purchased land remains at 10 out of 24. Former territorial areas in the Departments of Cauca, Putumayo and Antioquia, which require urgent relocation due to insecurity, are still awaiting the purchase of land on which to be relocated.

30. During the reporting period, the Government purchased a plot for a productive project by former combatants from the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Pandores, La Guajira Department. In addition, the Special Assets Administration transferred a plot to the productive project of former combatants in Cundinamarca, for a total of three such plots transferred to former combatants through the Special Assets Administration.

31. The Ministry of Housing has reaffirmed its commitment to support access to housing for former combatants. Housing projects are under way in the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Caldono, Cauca (145 houses), Arauquita, Arauca (187 houses) and El Doncello, Caquetá (106 houses). Construction has begun in Arauca and Cauca. Funding has not yet been identified for housing projects elsewhere.

32. Enabling viable housing solutions for former combatants in rural and urban areas, especially outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, remains a major challenge.

33. Despite its potential to help overcome obstacles regarding land and housing, joint work by the parties within the working groups of the National Reintegration Council on these matters is yet to resume.

#### **Socioeconomic reintegration**

34. Given their importance for income generation, the implementation of productive projects has been a top priority within the National Reintegration Council, and significant progress has been attained since the signing of the Final Agreement. To date, 121 collective projects have been approved, 118 of which have had funds disbursed, benefiting 3,898 former combatants (1,087 women). In addition, 5,227 individual projects, involving 6,295 former combatants (1,542 women), have also been approved. As such, 75 per cent of accredited former combatants participate in productive initiatives, half of which are individual projects. Nonetheless, the rate of approval decreased during the reporting period, with 395 individual projects approved by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, and no additional collective initiatives approved within the National Reintegration Council.

35. Although 84 per cent of women are involved in productive projects, many continue facing challenges to taking active part in decision-making. As recently pointed out by the Office of the Inspector-General, only about half of the children of former combatants receive support from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, leading to an excessive burden of care tasks, which fall primarily on women.

36. Some 6,700 former combatants are members of 181 cooperatives around the country, including around 1,800 women former combatants. However, only 100 women are exercising a leadership role in 35 cooperatives. During the reporting period, the working group on the strengthening of cooperatives presented inputs to the Government to inform the National Development Plan, including the creation of indicators regarding cooperatives in the framework plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement. The Ministry of Labour recently launched a strategy to support former combatants and their cooperatives by strengthening ties with broader local and regional networks of cooperatives.

37. The working group on productive projects is analysing the results of a joint assessment, based on the perceptions of former combatants, which showed that only around one third of the 81 collective projects assessed were on track to become sustainable, while the remaining two thirds still required additional support, including on access to markets, land and security. This underscores the need for the parties to discuss sustainability plans for all collective projects and for a joint mechanism to follow up on individual ones.

38. The working group on health of the National Reintegration Council met regularly during the reporting period. Health schemes continue to function in all former territorial areas for training and reintegration, providing essential health care to former combatants and surrounding communities, which underscores the importance of ensuring their permanence.

39. The education programme “Arando la educación” is reaching its final cycle after the graduation of over 14,770 people in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new reintegration areas. This includes 3,545 former combatants, as well as members of the surrounding communities.

40. The recent establishment of a working group on education within the National Reintegration Council can help address gaps in the access by former combatants to flexible and tailored education programmes.

*Former combatants outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration*

41. Currently, 10,566 former combatants (2,561 women) are pursuing their reintegration process outside the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, be it collectively or individually, including in 75 new reintegration areas. A tailored approach to address the needs of former combatants outside such former territorial areas is needed to ensure their access to housing, land and health, among other services.

42. Insecurity continues to affect at least 15 rural new reintegration areas located mostly in Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Meta, Nariño and Putumayo Departments. In the latter, the action plan of the National Reintegration Council has served to mitigate risks to the new reintegration area of Puerto Guzmán through the engagement of national and local authorities. Recently, the Council held meetings in Villavicencio and Bogotá to define actions to support 138 former combatants and their families who had been forced to relocate from Arauca due to insecurity.

*Reintegration policies and institutions*

43. As the design of the National Development Plan moved forward, the parties presented a joint proposal, crafted within the National Reintegration Council, focusing on two main priorities: the establishment of a national reintegration system, as provided for in the national reintegration policy; and the design of a comprehensive reintegration programme, which would be aimed at strengthening the capacities of former combatants; ensuring a rights-based approach to reintegration; and guaranteeing access to services offered by State entities. Both proposals have been included in a first draft of the National Development Plan.

44. In December, the working group on gender presented an assessment on the implementation of gender actions related to reintegration to newly appointed Government officials, to raise awareness about the specific needs of women former combatants. The working group highlighted the importance of ensuring resources and follow-up for the 18 gender actions of the national reintegration policy.

45. The National Reintegration Council is currently reviewing a proposed strategy to enhance the reintegration of young former combatants, jointly developed by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and representatives of Comunes.

46. A group of former FARC-EP combatants, known as the Autonomous Working Group on Reintegration, who do not belong to the Comunes party has asked the Government to allow it to participate in the National Reintegration Council and other mechanisms to follow up on the Final Agreement.

*Role of regional authorities and community-based reintegration*

47. Local actors continue showing support to the reintegration process, for instance in Cesar and Magdalena Departments, where authorities have committed to provide financial support for two collective projects. In Antioquia, Arauca and Norte de Santander Departments, universities continue providing much-needed technical assistance to bolster former combatants' initiatives. Efforts to strengthen support from local authorities and ensure coordination with the national Government remain fundamental to decentralize and reinforce reintegration. Two new reintegration working groups were created during the reporting period at the municipal level. The continued creation and strengthening of those working groups can help engage actors in advancing reintegration.

48. Currently, approximately 458 former combatants and 2,104 community members are benefiting directly from the joint Agency for Reintegration and

Normalization-Comunes community-based reintegration strategy, and approximately 43,000 community members, including ethnic peoples and women, are benefiting indirectly. The strategy is under way in 65 municipalities, promoting coexistence, preventing stigmatization and developing mostly local infrastructure initiatives jointly agreed by host communities and former combatants.

#### *Political reintegration*

49. The 10 Comunes members of Congress (two women), who are part of the Government coalition, met with President Petro to discuss the legislative agenda and supported the administration's legislative initiatives. Since Congress was installed in July, Comunes has presented 66 draft bills, including 37 in coalition with other parties, most of them aimed at furthering the implementation of the Final Agreement. In addition, representatives of Comunes took the lead in the establishment of an ad hoc commission in the House of Representatives, formed by nine members of Congress from different parties, to promote and follow up on bills related to the implementation of the Final Agreement.

#### **Security guarantees**

##### *Regional dynamics of violence*

50. Regions historically affected by a limited presence of the State, such as Arauca, southern Bolívar, Chocó and Putumayo, continued to suffer the violent actions of illegal armed actors. For instance, 18 combatants were killed in November during a single clash between two dissident groups of the former FARC-EP in Putumayo, which also led to the displacement of dozens of members of local communities. Attacks against the public security forces also continued, as demonstrated by the killing in December of six soldiers in Cauca by a dissident group of the former FARC-EP.

51. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between January and November 2022, 78,154 persons were forcibly displaced and some 108,665 were confined, a 65 per cent increase from 2021. Throughout the year, the Departments of Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca, located along the Pacific coast, had the most civilians affected, with particularly high numbers of victims from Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Nonetheless, the Office also reported a 31 per cent decrease in the number of civilians displaced (11,966) and confined (12,634) during September and October, which coincides with dialogue efforts by the Government with different armed actors, compared with the over 35,800 victims registered between July and August.

52. Colombia remains one of the countries most affected by the presence of explosive ordnance. Between January and November 2022, the National Mine Action Authority recorded 104 victims (98 survivors and 6 fatalities), including eight children and 26 members of ethnic minorities, compared with 157 in 2021.

53. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered 17 large-scale killings (seven verified, eight under verification and two inconclusive), for a total of 127 reported in 2022 (81 verified, 17 under verification and 29 inconclusive). Verified cases in 2022 left 282 dead (28 women), 27 of them from ethnic communities (23 Indigenous and 4 Afro-Colombian). Most cases were registered in Antioquia, Atlántico, Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments.

##### *Security and protection for former combatants*

54. The Mission recorded the killing of 12 former combatants (all men), down from 16 cases in the previous quarter. Overall, 50 former combatants (one woman) were

killed in 2022, a decrease of 7.4 per cent compared with 2021. Most killings this year were concentrated in Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca and Putumayo Departments, reaffirming the urgency of targeted actions in these regions, which the Government has prioritized as part of its security efforts.

55. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, the Mission has verified 355 killings of former combatants (11 women, 48 Afro-Colombian and 33 Indigenous), 110 victims of attempted homicide (eight women) and 27 deemed as missing (all men). Despite the decreasing number of killings for the third consecutive year, the situation of threats against former combatants remains acute, as shown by the number of emergency relocations supported by the National Protection Unit, which increased by 65 per cent, from 125 in 2021 to 206 in 2022.

56. Violence against women former combatants remains a major concern. In October, former combatant and former Senate candidate of the Comunes party, Luz Marina Giraldo, and her family were forced to leave Meta due to threats against them and acts of intimidation against her close protection. Ms. Giraldo is the widow of Alexander Parra, a former FARC-EP leader killed in that department in 2019.

57. In view of the persistent challenges facing the National Protection Unit with regard to approving and implementing pending protection measures, including issues with providers of vehicles for close protection schemes, the Unit is currently implementing measures to improve its security and protection model, in line with the human security approach prioritized by the Government.

*Precautionary measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace*

58. Regarding the precautionary measures ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in May 2022 for the protection of the surviving children and families of former combatants killed, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization indicated that, to date, 69 of them have received life insurance settlements and 70 have received funerary expenses. Another 103 families have not been located.

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

59. The Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Defence have improved coordination, with a view to tackling criminal organizations. The newly installed unified command posts for life have improved coordination between the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Interior as they follow up the emergency plan for social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants and immediate responses to critical situations. Greater and sustained efforts are needed to effectively dismantle criminal structures responsible for much of the violence against social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants, as well a larger deployment of prosecutors and judicial police, especially in isolated regions where most cases are registered and authorities face greater difficulties in accessing crime scenes, such as Caquetá, Cauca, Meta and Nariño Departments.

60. The Special Investigations Unit reported three new convictions, for a total of 60 of the 418 cases under its purview. In addition, a total of 57 cases are in the trial phase and 391 arrest warrants have been issued, including 82 against those who ordered the attacks. A total of 142 arrest warrants are pending execution.

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

61. Violence targeting civilians, social leaders and human rights defenders remained of great concern, especially in departments prioritized for the implementation of the Final Agreement. During the reporting period, OHCHR received allegations of 53

killings of human rights defenders (14 verified, 24 under verification and 15 inconclusive). Throughout the year, OHCHR received reports of 244 alleged killings of human rights defenders (101 verified, 25 under verification and 118 deemed inconclusive). Victims in cases verified and under verification include 8 women, 26 Indigenous, 14 Afro-Colombian and 1 LGBTI leader. Arauca, Cauca, Nariño and Putumayo Departments had the highest numbers of killings. According to OHCHR, in 2022, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, as well as members of local administrative boards, were the most targeted leaders.

*Security for political parties*

62. Violence against members of political parties occurred during the reporting period. Four members of the Government's Pacto Histórico coalition were killed in Antioquia, Bolívar and Sucre Departments. In view of the intensified political activity prior to the October 2023 local elections, the reactivation and full use of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics is key to ensure security for members of all political parties.

*Emergency protection plan for social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants*

63. In the light of the persistent violence in regions prioritized for the implementation of the Final Agreement, the emergency plan of the Government has led to several actions to enhance security. As part of its implementation, 202 unified command posts for life have been established in 15 departments and 105 municipalities, leading to the identification of 500 protection measures, including specific responses for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and former combatants in Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Norte de Santander Departments.

64. In the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Vice-President Márquez chaired the installation of a unified command post for women's life in Quibdó, Chocó Department, a region with a large Indigenous and Afro-Colombian population. During the event, the Government announced a significant increase in funds for the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, as well as a coordinated road map to strengthen women's security.

65. During these initial months of the new Administration, the emergency plan and the unified command posts for life have helped strengthen coordination between the Government and local authorities to implement prevention and protection initiatives, and to include the beneficiaries' perspectives in institutional plans.

66. In order to harmonize fragmented institutional efforts and strengthen context-specific responses, the Government announced adjustments to the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories and the early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman. The Government also announced its decision to increase police personnel dedicated to the prevention, protection and investigation of cases of attacks against former combatants and social leaders. In addition, the Ministries of Interior and Defence have incorporated into the emergency plan measures to strengthen the deployment of public security forces in new reintegration areas outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The Mission is accompanying the Government and following up on the implementation of these crucial measures.

*National Commission on Security Guarantees*

67. In October, President Petro led a session of the National Commission on Security Guarantees and instructed it to meet monthly to expedite the design and

implementation of the much-needed public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, as stipulated in the Final Agreement. This was also emphasized by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in a recent order to the High Commissioner for Peace to move forward with the public policy and with an action plan for its implementation.

68. Several technical-level sessions of the Commission were held in an environment of improved coordination between the Government and civil society representatives. The draft policy was discussed in a plenary session chaired by President Petro on 13 December. In line with provisions of the Final Agreement, the President emphasized the need to act against support networks and illegal funding sources linked to armed groups and criminal organizations, and to ensure that the draft public policy was included in the National Development Plan.

69. Coherence between this policy and approaches with armed actors towards their submission to justice as part of the “total peace” policy is key to ensure effectiveness in reducing violence in conflict-affected regions.

#### *Early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman*

70. During 2022, the Office of the Ombudsman issued 34 early warnings, most of them related to the actions of illegal armed actors and their effects on communities, including displacement, confinement and forced recruitment, mostly in Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments. This included eight early warnings issued during the reporting period.

### **Restorative sentences**

#### *Progress on cases of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace*

71. In a step towards the issuance of restorative sentences, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace recently presented concluding resolutions for Cases 01 (on hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and concurrent crimes committed by FARC-EP) and 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents regarding crimes committed in the Norte de Santander Department and the Caribbean region ), concluding the investigative phase. The Special Jurisdiction has a time frame of six months from those resolutions to issue a final ruling – subject to appeals – which will be the first of its restorative sentences in each case.

72. The resolutions determined that seven former top commanders of FARC-EP, 22 members of the Army (including one former general and five colonels) and one civilian are eligible for restorative sentences, having acknowledged truth and responsibility in an exhaustive, complete and detailed manner, as required by the Final Agreement.

73. Furthermore, the resolutions include several proposals of tasks, works and activities with reparative and restorative content designed through participatory processes in which the indicted made proposals and received observations from victims and the Office of the Inspector-General. In Case 03, the restorative proposals include the construction of memorial parks; measures to vindicate victims’ reputations, as well as that of their communities, including Indigenous communities, and to strengthen victims’ organizations; and reforestation and watershed recovery actions to redress ecological damage to Indigenous territories. In Case 01, the proposals related to the search for persons deemed missing, mine action, environmental restoration and activities to preserve historical memory. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace will now have to consider whether to include these proposals in the restorative component of its sentences.

74. Importantly, the recommendations in the resolutions focused mostly on the restorative component of the sentences. Some references were made to their retributive component, namely the restriction of the rights and liberties of indicted individuals. While these aspects are still to be decided, the resolution on Case 01, for instance, recommended that sentences should take into account the ongoing reintegration process, including political participation, of the indicted individuals. It also highlighted that adequate security conditions are paramount. As for Case 03, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will have to determine whether to take into account in its sentencing time already served in prison by members of public security forces, who were convicted for the same crimes under ordinary justice.

75. Within the frameworks of Cases 03 and 04 (on the situation of the Urabá region), 28 members of the Army (including one former major general and three colonels), two civilians and one non-combatant State agent recognized their responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Dabeiba, Antioquia Department, and in Casanare Department. These individuals will have to appear in public hearings of acknowledgement of truth and responsibility in 2023. Another four former colonels charged with the same crimes did not acknowledge truth and responsibility and were referred to the adversarial process.

*Preparations to verify restorative sentences*

76. Mindful of the importance of adequate resources, conditions and inter-institutional coordination for the implementation of restorative sentences, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace recently held a hearing with relevant State entities aimed at inquiring about the availability of resources and public policies needed to implement sentences. Following the hearing, which was also attended by the Special Representative, the Special Jurisdiction requested each entity to develop detailed action plans to be presented in a follow-up hearing scheduled for February 2023.

77. The Mission supported visits to former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Cauca and Caquetá Departments by judges of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace responsible for determining sentences, and by members of its executive secretariat. The visits sought to have members of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace witness first-hand the reintegration process and the security challenges facing former combatants. The judges met with former combatants under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, community and Indigenous leaders, members of academia and local authorities. Likewise, judges visited two military detention facilities in Bogotá and Antioquia Department to meet with members of public security forces under the Special Jurisdiction. Special Jurisdiction judges considered these visits as key to informing the crafting of restorative sentences.

78. The Mission has continued engaging with the Ministry of Defence, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and other stakeholders to promote awareness and institutional coordination regarding members of the public security forces under the authority of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. This engagement has helped identify challenges such as the lack of psychosocial attention and support to perform restorative activities. The Government has shown openness to increasing support to these individuals.

79. Security for former combatants and members of the public security forces under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace remains a major concern. In addition to the precautionary measures the Special Jurisdiction has issued for the protection of former FARC-EP combatants, its Investigation and Accusation Unit has reported 25 cases of threats against members of the public security forces appearing before the Special Jurisdiction, 15 of whom have received close protection. The Mission is working alongside authorities to strengthen prevention and response.

80. In addition, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues working to enhance mainstreaming of the ethnic and gender approaches in its procedures. Within Case 09 (on crimes against ethnic communities and their territories), the Special Jurisdiction held hearings in Cesar, Chocó and Vichada Departments to discuss this new case with Indigenous leaders and to enhance coordination with the special Indigenous justice.

81. Furthermore, in September, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Mission organized a round table with representatives of victims and civil society and United Nations entities, aimed at underscoring the importance of including a gender perspective in the restorative sentences. The Gender Commission of the Special Jurisdiction stressed the importance of creating a common methodology to approach gender-based violence and to identify the specific impact of the conflict on women and LGBTI persons.

## V. Cross-cutting considerations

### Gender

82. The eight new members of the Special Forum on Gender, including a representative of women former combatants, formally took office. They have begun developing a workplan for their two-year term, including through meetings with the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples and State entities with implementation responsibilities, and have highlighted the need for adequate resources to conduct their work.

83. Progress has been made in promoting women's participation in key forums such as the regional dialogues for the design of the National Development Plan, the first draft of which includes the creation of a national care system and measures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence.

84. Sexual and gender-based violence in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and in communities where reintegration is taking place is of concern, including recent allegations that former combatants working as National Protection Unit bodyguards were involved in violence against women and girls in former territorial areas. This underscores the need for coordinated action to improve prevention measures, reporting mechanisms and the prosecution of cases. The Mission is working closely with the Office of the Ombudsman to ensure that assistance is available and to urge the National Protection Unit to address the cases.

85. Violence against women leaders and defenders threatens their crucial leadership. The new participatory action plan for the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, recently announced by the Government, is expected to help address this issue.

86. In a welcome development, in October the Government presented a road map for the design of a national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security after years of advocacy by women's organizations, which will participate in the process.

### Ethnic affairs

87. Vice-President Márquez has taken the lead in efforts to further the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement. A working group between her Office and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace has been established to coordinate actions to that end. The group is currently assessing the

status of implementation of ethnic provisions of the Agreement with a view to prioritizing quick-impact actions.

88. In October and November, respectively, the Governments of the United States of America and Mexico announced that they would accompany the implementation of the ethnic chapter. International accompaniment was a longstanding request by the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples and ethnic organizations and has the potential to boost implementation of the ethnic chapter.

89. The reintegration process for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants continued to face significant challenges. For instance, in Chocó and Nariño Departments, over 45 per cent of such former combatants are not involved in productive projects. Meanwhile, actions related to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants within the national reintegration policy continue to be delayed, hindering the sustainability of their reintegration and underscoring the urgent need for actions tailored to their specific needs.

90. Despite efforts by the Government, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict-related violence, including in Chocó and Nariño Departments. Ethnic leaders also continue to be targeted. In November in Cauca, members of an illegal armed group shot at the convoy of Indigenous Senator Aida Quilcué of the Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social (MAIS) party, who is a member of the Government coalition. This grave attack was widely condemned by State entities, civil society and political actors.

91. Since the launch of the emergency plan for the protection of social leaders and former combatants, 29 unified command posts for life have been installed in municipalities with significant Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. While the command posts provide a space for the State to approach historically neglected communities, they have so far shown mixed results in reducing violence in ethnic territories.

92. In October, the Comunes component of the National Reintegration Council withdrew from the process related to the harmonization programme for the reintegration of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants, provided for in section 5 of the Final Agreement and led by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, arguing that it was not inclusive enough of former combatants and conditioning their reengagement upon guarantees for their effective participation.

### **Children**

93. The number of former combatants recognized as children at the time of accreditation stands at 412 (190 women), most of whom reside in Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca, Guaviare and Meta Departments.

94. Progress was made regarding the socioeconomic reintegration of children formerly associated with FARC-EP who are part of the programme “A different path of life”. Eighty-one participants (49 women) have received resources for productive projects. Regarding the 288 former combatants recognized, between 2020 and 2021, as children at the time of accreditation, 18 are deceased and 207 have been recognized as victims, which gives them access to reparations. While no security incidents were registered during the reporting period, insecurity remains of concern. From 2016 to 2022, 49 members of the programme have been forced to relocate and 9 have received threats. Out of the 124 children initially included in the “A different path of life” programme for children formerly associated with FARC-EP, 108 remain in the programme, 6 are deceased and 10 have been identified as absent or separated.

95. The working group on children of the National Reintegration Council continues working to overcome persistent challenges facing the programme. Nonetheless,

limited progress has been made regarding prevention and protection, the investigation of cases of violence and the adoption of a binding instrument to guarantee sustainability.

96. In November, Colombia signed the Safe Schools Declaration. This was praised by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, who visited the country in December and met with representatives from the Government, civil society and the international community to discuss protection of children and prevention of grave violations against them.

### **Youth**

97. Young people continue to actively participate in peacebuilding efforts. In October, with support from the Mission, young men and women from Meta Department, including former combatants, gathered to discuss the implementation of the Final Agreement and environmental challenges facing the region. In Norte de Santander Department, the Mission facilitated a partnership between young former combatants, young community members and a local university to form a cooperative seeking to develop income-generating initiatives as an alternative to illicit crops.

98. In the context of preparations for upcoming restorative sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Mission and the Special Jurisdiction met in Arauca with members of youth councils and platforms to brief them on both entities' mandates and on progress regarding Special Jurisdiction cases, and to seek their views about recruitment prevention so as to inform the design of proposals related to tasks, works and activities with reparative and restorative content within Case 07 (on the recruitment and use of children in conflict).

99. Regrettably, young people continued to be affected by violence. In October, an Afro-Colombian female leader, member of the youth council of Santander de Quilichao, Cauca Department, reported new threats while on a visit to that municipality after having relocated to Cali, Valle del Cauca Department, due to prior threats.

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

100. On 21 November, the Government and ELN officially reinitiated negotiations in Caracas; they have described the atmosphere as one of trust and optimism. The first round of talks were held with the presence of guarantor countries, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and a representative of the Catholic Church. The Government delegation comprises individuals from different sectors of Colombian society and is led by Otty Patiño, a former member of the M-19 guerrilla group, which demobilized in 1990. The delegation of ELN is led by Pablo Beltrán, the group's second-in-command. Women are strongly represented in both delegations.

101. The parties confirmed Cuba, Norway and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) as guarantor countries and invited Brazil, Chile and Mexico to also play that role. They further requested the permanent accompaniment of the Secretary-General through his Special Representative in Colombia, and of the Colombian Episcopal Conference. They invited Germany, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland to participate as members of a group of countries for accompaniment, support and cooperation. The Secretary-General responded positively to the invitation and reiterated the firm support of the United Nations to the process. The Catholic Church, Chile, Mexico, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland have also agreed to assume their respective roles.

102. On 12 December, at the end of the first round of negotiations, the parties indicated that they had reached agreements on adjustments and updates to the agenda established in 2016, on the architecture of the process and on pedagogy and communications. They further announced the decision to conduct, starting in January 2023, urgent actions to alleviate the humanitarian situation due to violence in Bajo Calima, Valle del Cauca Department, and Medio San Juan, Chocó Department, stating that those would be initial actions that could provide a road map for actions in other conflict-affected regions. Similarly, acknowledging the difficult conditions in prisons, the parties agreed to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to a group of political prisoners of ELN.

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

103. As part of preparations for a possible expansion of the Mission's verification mandate following the request by the parties, the Mission held several meetings with the country team to exchange views on comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement. The meetings were key to inform the recommendations of the Secretary-General to the Security Council.

104. The multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia approved its priority investment plan for 2023, for \$55 million, after consultations with the Government, donors, the country team and civil society. While maintaining an emphasis on reintegration and transitional justice, the priority investment plan will include support to comprehensive rural reform, security guarantees and the prevention of child recruitment, including by strengthening the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace at the local level.

105. In the context of the commemoration of the anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, the country team, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-United Nations Development Programme Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and the Mission held a regional exchange which brought together 36 women leaders and peacemakers from throughout Latin America. Participants in the event highlighted the importance of strengthening the women and peace and security agenda in the region, and of including capacity-building for peace mediation in urban contexts to prevent conflict-related violence, as well as gender-based violence during protests.

## **VIII. Mission structures**

### **Mission support**

106. As at 30 November 2022, 52 per cent of all civilian personnel and 39 per cent of international observers were women.

107. The Mission continues making adjustments, especially in the field, to guarantee better working conditions for staff and additional space owing to new Mission requirements. Premises in Neiva, Huila; Sincelejo, Sucre; Planadas, Tolima; and Vista Hermosa, Meta, were relocated.

### **Safety and security**

108. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security registered 44 incidents affecting the United Nations system. Most incidents were related to ordinary crime, and Bogotá was the city with the largest number of incidents (17).

There were also four incidents involving illegal armed groups affecting United Nations operations.

109. The Mission is grieving the tragic loss of an international observer from El Salvador who died in an accident during a sporting activity in Huila Department in November. Colombian authorities assisted in search and recovery efforts.

### **Conduct and discipline**

110. The Mission continued to prioritize a strong misconduct prevention programme with training and awareness-raising for all staff. The Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse visited Colombia in October, which provided opportunities for strengthened partnerships with local women's networks and communities and the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse network through the United Nations country team.

111. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse had been reported as at 30 November. Nonetheless, four allegations of prohibited conduct, including one case of sexual harassment, had been received. All cases have been handled in accordance with established procedures.

## **IX. Observations**

112. With over 100 days of the new administration now concluded, several developments described in the present report speak to its determination to advance towards the consolidation of peace in Colombia. I am pleased that the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement is at the core of its efforts. A clear reflection of this is the recent bold actions by the Government to strengthen the implementation of sections of the Agreement with the greatest potential to positively transform the reality in regions that have, for decades, endured the hardship of the conflict.

113. In this sense, I am encouraged by the outreach of the Government towards rural populations and the agreement it reached with the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers for the purchase of land intended for the comprehensive rural reform. This is a clear demonstration that all sectors within Colombian society can and should contribute meaningfully to the implementation of the Final Agreement. I also welcome the fact that the Government and Congress increased resources in the national budget for 2023 for areas such as the comprehensive rural reform and the substitution of illicit crops. I further salute efforts in Congress to approve key pending peace-related legislation.

114. Communities across the country, including those affected by conflict, women's organizations, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Peoples, and former FARC-EP members, participated actively in Government-led dialogue spaces to inform the design of the National Development Plan. I trust that such a participatory process will help ensure that this instrument, which will guide public policy for the coming four years, incorporates concrete measures geared towards meeting their expectations for peace and development, and towards the implementation of the Final Agreement.

115. Constructive dialogue remains of the essence to move forward in the implementation of the Final Agreement. I therefore welcome recent demonstrations of the parties' commitment to work together towards that end. The resumption of sessions of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and other forums created by the Final Agreement to address key issues, such as the implementation of its gender and ethnic provisions, is a good sign. I am confident that the parties will make full use of those mechanisms.

116. Over the past six years, the reintegration process has demonstrated how important it is for the parties to work hand in hand to fulfil their respective obligations and meet common objectives. I therefore welcome the recent reactivation of the National Reintegration Council and look forward to the cooperation between the Government and representatives of former combatants to act upon their shared responsibility to ensure the long-term success of the reintegration process. The recent designation by the Government of a new head of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is another positive step; the Mission stands ready to work alongside the new director and to continue supporting the reintegration process.

117. However, as positive as some of the recent developments may be, the violence described in the present report remains, undeniably, the greatest threat to the consolidation of peace in Colombia. Decisions and actions taken by the Government in its first four months incorporate much-needed steps and new approaches aimed at halting the suffering of conflict-affected communities. Given the complexity of ongoing violence, the Government's "total peace" policy appropriately includes differentiated paths to engage with the numerous actors perpetrating violence across the country. We have already witnessed positive results, which must be sustained, in some of the most critical regions, such as Buenaventura. Such dialogue efforts, combined with the implementation of key provisions of the Final Agreement, can significantly reduce violence. Another meaningful step in that direction would be the swift approval and implementation of the long-awaited public policy on dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations being formulated within the National Commission on Security Guarantees.

118. The resumption of negotiations between the Government and ELN is encouraging. I have reiterated my support for this process through my Special Representative and will keep the Security Council abreast of relevant developments as these important talks move forward.

119. The recent issuance of concluding resolutions by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is proof that it is working decisively to bring justice for grave crimes committed during the conflict. The mechanisms created to ensure that victims are at the centre of the process, including in the definition of measures by which perpetrators will be able to demonstrate their commitment to redress harm through reparations, are essential to fulfilling the goals of the country's cutting-edge transitional justice system. Furthermore, they are clear evidence of the mutually reinforcing linkages between justice and peace.

120. The peace process in Colombia is in a dynamic new phase that deserves strong international support. I am heartened by the parties' resolve to reinvigorate implementation and by the relentless efforts displayed across Colombian society to that end. The United Nations is honoured to continue to work alongside Colombians in this encouraging moment of opportunity for consolidating peace.

Map

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

Verification Mission Geospatial 

