



# Security Council

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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 [2574 \(2021\)](#), by which the Council extended and expanded 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 present report covers the period from 26 June 2021 to 24 September 2021.

#### Major developments

2. As the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) approaches, coinciding with President Iván Duque's last year in office and with the last year of congressional sessions of the 2018–2022 term, a major milestone in its implementation was reached in August 2021. Following submission by Congress pursuant to a Constitutional Court ruling, President Duque enacted the law creating the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. These new seats in the House of Representatives are intended to allow for the participation of historically excluded populations in conflict-affected regions. The transitional electoral districts will be in force for the 2022–2026 and 2026–2030 congressional periods.

3. The reporting period was marked by an increase in the preparations for the 2022 congressional and presidential elections, which will be the second national elections held since the signing of the Final Agreement. State entities have begun working on their areas of responsibility to ensure a smooth electoral process.

4. The Government's priorities for its last legislative period include a new tax reform, which was enacted in September, and changes to the National Police. Other key legislation for the implementation of the Final Agreement and related issues are still to be presented to, and enacted by, Congress, including the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Escazú Agreement, which has been signed but not ratified. Opposition parties have presented draft bills related to the recent national strike, on issues such as economic reactivation, an emergency basic income, guarantees for peaceful protest and police reforms. Different political parties



also filed several draft bills that would implement pending provisions of the Final Agreement, including one that previously failed to pass in Congress, on a dedicated judicial mechanism for the resolution of land-related disputes. Parties within the Government coalition have presented draft bills seeking to reform the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the land restitution process and citizen participation.

5. The Government's draft national budget for 2022 presented to Congress in August, to be approved in October, includes an annex on peacebuilding expenditures. According to the proposal, peace-related funding would increase by 3.8 per cent compared with 2021. However, funding would decrease for parts of the Final Agreement, including the solution to the problem of illicit drugs, and for elements related to the Office of the Attorney General and the National Protection Unit. Cuts would also affect public entities with key peace implementation responsibilities, such as the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the National Land Agency, and the Territorial Renewal Agency. The draft budget provides increases for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed Missing in the context of and due to the armed conflict, while funds for the Truth Commission were not included, pending a decision on the extension of its mandate (see para. 68).

6. In August, the Office of the Comptroller General presented to Congress its fifth report on the use of funding in the implementation of the Final Agreement, from signing and until March 2021. In the report, it was highlighted that peace-related expenditures have grown, on average, by 5 per cent annually since the signing of the Final Agreement, and that from 2017 to 2020, an average of 65 per cent of allocated resources were spent. Nevertheless, in the report it was also noted that the allocated resources have never been fully spent and, at the current pace, it is estimated that implementation of the Final Agreement would take 26 years, as opposed to 15 years as originally planned.

7. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to make progress in cases under its jurisdiction. During the reporting period, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first two indictments on Case 03, on killings and forced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by State agents, against 25 former and active members of the public security forces (including one former general and four former colonels) and one civilian third party. Charges include war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace found that crimes were carried out systematically in the Catatumbo region, and in Cesar and La Guajira Departments. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has identified 271 victims in those regions and the impact of the crimes has disproportionately affected indigenous communities. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace gave the indicted parties 30 working days to acknowledge their responsibility or present their observations and ordered them to present a plan to help locate missing persons.

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

#### *Regional dynamics of violence*

8. Disputes between illegal armed groups, including different FARC-EP dissident groups, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia), over territorial control and strategic illicit trafficking routes have intensified, further aggravating violence, particularly in areas affected by the conflict and prioritized for the implementation of the Final Agreement. This includes several attacks against public security forces. Affected areas include most of the regions covered by the development programmes with a territorial focus and by the newly created special electoral districts. The killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders continue to be

concentrated in the 25 municipalities highlighted in previous reports, 20 of which are municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus.

9. The persistent violence continued to generate mass displacements and confinements, especially in the Departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba and Nariño. During the reporting period, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs registered the forced mass displacement of close to 15,200 persons (44 per cent of which are from ethnic communities), bringing the total for 2021 to 57,420 displaced persons. In addition, 46,321 persons have been forcibly confined in 2021, 96 per cent of which are indigenous and Afro-Colombian.

10. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 11 large-scale killings resulting in 38 victims during the reporting period. Another 16 killings are under verification.

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

11. The Mission verified the killings of 14 former FARC-EP combatants during the reporting period (all men), bringing the total since the signing of the Final Agreement to 292 (283 men and 9 women). Although killings of former combatants decreased during 2021 (44) compared with the same period in 2020 (53), risks, including threats, continue to affect their reintegration, as some former combatants have been forced to relocate. The Mission has registered 67 attempted homicides (3 during the reporting period) and 22 disappearances (all men), since the signing of the Final Agreement. Relatives of former combatants killed also continue to be vulnerable and lack specific support mechanisms.

12. The Mission observed a significant deterioration in security for former combatants in southwest Colombia. Over a third of the killings since the signing of the Final Agreement have taken place in Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments. Former FARC-EP members have reported an increase in attacks by illegal armed groups against leaders and members of their cooperatives and productive projects in this region. In Buenos Aires, Cauca Department, two former combatants belonging to a cooperative have been killed in recent months. Threats, killings, and the subsequent displacement of cooperative members, are having disruptive effects on reintegration initiatives and have led to a temporary suspension in several municipalities of Cauca and Valle del Cauca. In August, hundreds of former combatants from these departments gathered for a three-day event in Popayán to bring further attention to the dire security situation they face and demand more effective security guarantees.

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

13. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace held two public hearings, in Cauca and Meta Departments, in follow-up to the precautionary measures it issued in 2020 for the protection of former combatants. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace ordered additional region-specific measures to be taken by national and regional-level authorities. The measures include the creation of an interinstitutional working group to develop a security strategy for new reintegration areas and cooperatives, along with a specific road map for former combatants who have left former territorial areas for training and reintegration owing to insecurity, as well as the development of a pilot plan for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement in Argelia, Cauca Department. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also ordered the Ministry of Defence to create indicators to measure progress on establishing State territorial control and the dismantling of illegal armed groups, as well as to put in place measures to prevent stigmatization and to follow-up on recommendations from the early warnings of the Office of the Ombudsman. In September, working groups co-chaired by the offices

of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation and the Inspector-General met in Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca to advance in the design of the measures ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

14. Regarding the National Protection Unit, progress continued with the adoption of new protection measures, and the resolution of pending protection requests. Since 1 January 2021, 78 per cent of pending requests have been assessed and 597 have been approved, including 86 for women and 29 collective protection measures. Although 470 of the 686 additional bodyguards ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in July 2020 have been hired, budget shortcuts are affecting protection schemes' funds for travel and per diems, hindering the ability of former combatants to fully develop their economic, social and political reintegration activities across the country.

15. The technical committee on security and protection, created for the parties to jointly design arrangements for former combatants' security, met once. However, differences between the parties on the content and legal status of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants announced by the Government in March 2021 remain unaddressed.

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

16. The Special Investigations Unit reported three new convictions, and 30 persons were arrested related to attacks against former combatants. In total, of the 334 attacks investigated by the Unit, 44 cases have led to convictions (including four against those who ordered the attacks). Additionally, 46 cases are in trial phase, 25 are under investigation, and 51 arrest warrants have been issued. Another 132 arrest warrants are pending execution, including 39 against those who ordered the attacks.

17. The tripartite working group on investigations, a key space for the Special Investigations Unit, the Comunes party and the Mission to jointly follow up on potential threats and investigations, has been reactivated and has begun work at the national level and in seven departments. The working group in Cauca was prioritized for reactivation considering that this Department has the highest number of killings of former combatants (47), but only two perpetrators have been convicted.

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

18. Preventive security deployments of police and army units continue to guarantee former combatants' security in the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Owing to reports of reductions of these security schemes in some former territorial areas for training and reintegration, especially in Arauca and Cauca Departments, the Mission is following up with the leadership of the security forces to guarantee that those mechanisms remain unchanged in order to ensure the protection of former combatants, and maintain trust between them and security forces.

#### *Security for Comunes and other political parties*

19. As the date for the upcoming electoral process approaches, threats and attacks against members of political parties from across the spectrum continue. According to a report published by the non-governmental organization Electoral Observation Mission, violence against political leaders through the first half of 2021 increased by 15.7 per cent compared with the same period in 2020 and 54 per cent of the killings of social and political leaders have occurred in areas where the special transitional electoral districts for peace have been established. The Government has reported that the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, created in 2017, is

conducting technical discussions, including on gender mainstreaming and internal regulations. However, the high-level unit of the System has not been convened.

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

20. During the reporting period, OHCHR received information about the killings of 43 human rights defenders (3 cases were verified, 25 cases are under verification and 15 cases were inconclusive or not verifiable). Of the 43 allegations received, 7 victims were women, including one indigenous leader, 2 male Afro-Colombian leaders and 12 male indigenous leaders. A total of 158 killings have been reported to OHCHR in 2021 (53 verified, 37 under verification and 68 cases were inconclusive or not verifiable). The 53 verified cases (48 men and 5 women) included five indigenous leaders and five Afro-Colombian leaders.

21. The situation in Tibú, Norte de Santander Department, is particularly concerning. During the reporting period, the Mission received reports of more than 60 threats and 10 killings of women by illegal armed groups in this municipality. Victims include women social leaders, former combatants, a prosecutor and civilians, including Venezuelan migrants.

22. Work on the comprehensive programme for women social leaders and human rights defenders at the regional level continues. During the reporting period, the Office of the Governor of Putumayo appointed a person responsible for the implementation of the programme.

*National Commission on Security Guarantees*

23. While the Final Agreement stipulates for the plenary of the Commission to meet on a monthly basis, it has not met for the past six months. Two technical sessions were held, but no progress was made regarding the development of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks. Challenges persist for the Government and civil society members of the Commission to engage in more constructive dialogue and reach consensus on the functioning of the Commission. Civil society representatives have emphasized the need for a road map for the period until August 2022, so as to ensure progress in the development of the public policy.

*Early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman*

24. During the reporting period, the Office of the Ombudsman issued nine early warnings for 23 municipalities in six departments. It also updated the risks identified in Bojayá, Chocó Department, and Maguí Payán, Nariño Department, owing to the continued presence of illegal armed groups and the occurrence of forced displacements, confinements, selective homicides, sexual violence, forced recruitment and landmine incidents.

25. The Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings held two sessions, one in Algeciras, Huila Department and another in Medellín, Antioquia Department, to address former combatants' risks, as ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in its precautionary measures.

**Sustainability of the reintegration process**

26. Four years after the laying down of arms by the former FARC-EP, much has been achieved in the early stages of the reintegration process. Efforts by the Government and thousands of former combatants have yielded positive results, and with support from several partners, including those from the international community,

the process continues. However, there are also significant challenges, including the deterioration of the security situation in various regions.

#### *Access to land and housing*

27. Differences persist between the parties regarding access to land and housing, in part owing to limited dialogue and divergent views on how to address the needs of former combatants. With support from the Mission, the parties are discussing options to overcome those obstacles and move forward with clear timetables and mutually agreed approaches.

28. The working group on land did not meet during the reporting period. The Government purchased land for two additional former territorial areas for training and reintegration in La Guajira and Caquetá Departments. To date, the Government has purchased land for 9 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration and aims at purchasing land for eight additional in 2021. Two of these plots have yet to be formally handed over to former combatants, generating uncertainty among them. Additionally, four former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Buenos Aires and Miranda, Cauca Department; La Macarena, Meta Department; and Puerto Asís, Putumayo Department, are pending urgent relocation amid persistent insecurity facing former combatants.

29. In its latest report to Congress on the implementation of the Final Agreement (April 2020–March 2021), the Office of the Inspector General called on State institutions to accelerate efforts to grant access to land for former combatants for housing and productive projects, regardless of their location. In its hearing on precautionary measures in Cauca Department, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace requested that the Government present a plan to access land for the relocation of former combatants and their productive projects in Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments.

30. Although a comprehensive strategy to guide the provision of housing to former combatants is pending, the Ministry of Housing and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization have made efforts in this regard. Nevertheless, the number of projected housing beneficiaries remains low compared with the demand. In addition, former combatants are requesting to be active participants in the process. In September, the parties agreed to establish a dedicated working group within the National Reintegration Council.

31. The Government maintains its goal of building 150 houses in two former territorial areas for training and reintegration by the end of the year. Necessary technical studies have been concluded in five former territorial areas for training and reintegration and are ongoing in another eight. Former combatants continue to express concerns about the Government's approach to housing projects and subsidies, claiming they are not being consulted and differences regarding the number of beneficiaries.

32. In 2021, the Government plans to provide housing solutions to approximately 320 former combatants living in urban areas; to date, only two have accessed housing in those settings.

#### *Productive projects*

33. During the reporting period, the National Reintegration Council approved nine new collective productive projects involving 113 former combatants (77 men and 36 women). The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization approved 481 additional individual projects benefitting 574 former combatants (429 men and 145 women). To date, 54 per cent of accredited former combatants are benefiting from productive

projects. This includes 99 collective projects benefitting 3,478 former combatants (2,512 men and 966 women) and 3,190 individual projects benefitting 3,849 people (2,968 men and 881 women). Funds for 15 collective projects previously approved have yet to be disbursed.

34. Land tenure remains a key aspect for the sustainability of productive projects, especially those related mainly to agriculture, 79 per cent of which were being implemented on leased land.

35. Based on the mutual understanding of the importance of ensuring sustainability of productive projects, the parties have agreed, within the National Reintegration Council, to define a strategy in this regard. With support from the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme and the Mission, the parties are working to define sustainability criteria to be mainstreamed throughout the design, implementation and monitoring of the projects.

36. Currently, there are 155 former combatants' cooperatives nationwide, 31 of which are led by women, and 13 are exclusively comprised of women former combatants. These productive associations have received technical assistance from a wide range of actors, including national and international entities. Nevertheless, 80 per cent of them operate in remote rural areas, which makes them particularly vulnerable to insecurity. Leaders of the former combatants' national-level cooperative have insisted on the need to strengthen security, noting that collective efforts are essential for the success of the reintegration process.

37. Almost 59 per cent of women former combatants are part of productive projects, and all collective productive projects approved by the National Reintegration Council are designed with a gender perspective. However, women continue to face challenges related to dealing with competing care tasks and access to decision-making.

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

38. Almost 10,500 of the more than 13,000 accredited former combatants reside outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, carrying out their reintegration both individually and collectively. One-third live in urban settings and two-thirds remain in rural areas. Seventy-five new reintegration areas host around 3,500. These former combatants remain vulnerable and require targeted support, among others to ensure security and access to land, housing, and public services.

39. The National Reintegration Council has approved 46 collective productive projects involving former combatants residing outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including in approximately 25 new reintegration areas. Despite difficulties, former combatants in those areas have demonstrated resilience and have taken on the challenge of finding markets for their products, formalizing their cooperatives and accessing land in Departments such as Antioquia, Bolívar, Chocó, Meta, Risaralda and Sucre. For instance, while their project is pending approval by the National Reintegration Council, some 30 former combatants in a new reintegration area in Risaralda are in the process of purchasing a plot of land with their own funds. They are also working on subsistence crops alongside their families and the host community.

*Regional sessions of the National Reintegration Council*

40. In August, the National Reintegration Council met in Medellín with spokespersons of the former combatants' Pilgrimage for Life and Peace, to review the commitments made last November. Ten months after the Pilgrimage, only one of seven agreed decentralized sessions of the National Reintegration Council has been

held, missing opportunities to adopt context-specific measures to address reintegration challenges, including with regards to access to land, housing and security.

#### *Health*

41. The Working Group on Health of the National Reintegration Council met six times during the reporting period. According to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, to date 275 former combatants (190 men and 85 women) have tested positive for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), 9 of whom died (all men). Health visits to former territorial areas for training and reintegration have been carried out as planned and included vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 in some former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

42. Out of approximately 1,222 former combatants living with disabilities, 1,081 have received certification for their disability, and about 100 have received rehabilitation support.

43. Since April 2021, there have been persistent delays in the provision of food to all 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration owing to increased food prices and a change in the service provider. The Government is working to find a durable solution to the problem, which affects around 2,500 former combatants residing in those areas.

#### *Reintegration policies and institutions*

44. On a positive note, in July the Government issued a resolution extending the flexible conditions to access the monthly allowance for former combatants until 31 January 2022, as well as the transitional phase to implement the reintegration road map. During the reporting period, the Government and Comunes worked jointly on the design of the National Reintegration System, which is expected to be finalized this year. Differences persist concerning the objectives and the legal status of the System.

45. Continuing its programme of regional visits, the Working Group on Gender of the National Reintegration Council visited Antioquia Department, to discuss gender actions included in the national reintegration policy with local authorities. As a result, the Office of the Governor committed to reactivating the Departmental Reintegration Council and its working group on gender, and the parties agreed on a local implementation plan for gender actions in line with the national reintegration policy, including strengthening planning and capacity-building for public officials. In its report, the Office of the Inspector General acknowledged the working group's progress in the implementation of the gender-specific actions of the policy, while noting that the limited budget and staff allocation for those purposes remain a challenge.

#### *Role of municipal and departmental authorities and community-based reintegration*

46. A regional Reintegration Working Group was established in Córdoba, bringing the total to 18 mechanisms nationwide that reinforce ownership and foster actions by local authorities to support reintegration. In Antioquia and Huila Departments, departmental governments allocated over \$480,000 and \$370,000, respectively, for former combatants' productive and housing projects. In Bogotá, the Office of the Mayor finished a census of former combatants living in the city, which will inform responses tailored to their needs. In August, the District Council for Peace, Reconciliation, Coexistence and Conflict Transformation, an advisory body comprised of authorities and civil society representatives, was established in Bogotá with the participation of former FARC-EP combatants, underscoring their role in broader peacebuilding efforts.

47. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has allocated around \$3.8 million to fund the implementation of the joint community-based reintegration strategy in 35 municipalities. Former combatants, United Nations agencies and the Mission have been actively promoting and implementing community-based initiatives.

#### *Political reintegration*

48. On 20 July, the Comunes party representative for Valle del Cauca Department was elected second vice-president of the steering committee of the House of Representatives.

49. Since the opening of the congressional sessions on 20 July, Comunes has proposed 12 draft bills, several of them related to the implementation of the different sections of the Final Agreement.

50. In addition, in September, the Comunes party held an oversight hearing for the Government to report on the implementation of the Final Agreement. Comunes expressed concern about the status of implementation, while the Government reiterated its commitment to it.

51. On 10 August, a group of members of Comunes, including two senators, formally requested their separation from the party, as they intend to create a new movement. A final decision on the matter is to be made by the party in accordance with its statutes.

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

52. Consolidating the integrated presence of State institutions and services is instrumental to disabling the dynamics that underpin the violence caused by illegal armed actors who thrive in areas characterized by the absence of an effective State presence. To that end, a holistic approach to implementation is crucial to ensure that all programmes devised in the Final Agreement achieve sustainable results, ultimately leading to improving the living conditions in areas affected by conflict and poverty.

#### *Comprehensive rural reform*

53. In a part of the Final Agreement expected to extend through the full 15-year time frame for implementation, the Government has reported results within the comprehensive rural reform, including that some 220,000 people now have access to drinking water and sanitation, 50,000 people have electricity, 1,400 km of new roads have been built and more than 5,000 rural houses have been handed over to vulnerable families. A total of 18 new projects were approved under the “works for taxes” programme, and 64 new projects were approved for approximately \$230 million, with resources from royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation, for areas such as roads, housing and rural development. Nevertheless, the Office of the Comptroller General recently warned about risks in the management of resources coming from royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation, and recommended strengthening oversight of their use. Importantly, the newly approved tax reform includes a provision widening the areas where the “works for taxes” programme can be implemented, going beyond conflict-affected regions. This change may have an impact in the availability of resources in areas prioritized by the Final Agreement.

54. According to the Government, over 1.3 million hectares have been added to the Land Fund, out of the goal of three million set in the Final Agreement, to provide land for peasants and conflict-affected communities. So far, 232,539 hectares have been handed over to 9,335 families. In its report, the Office of the Inspector General stated that despite the progress made, the objective of equitable redistribution of land, as

included in the Final Agreement, is not being achieved, owing to titling disputes and other legal issues.

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

55. Modest progress was reported in two of the four components of the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories. The pilot project prioritized for Algeciras, Huila Department, which includes a focus on former FARC-EP members, has concluded its diagnostic stage and comprehensive protection measures were approved for a local former combatants' cooperative. In September, 16 peace promoters (3 men and 13 women) were certified to begin field work in prioritized regions and tasked with promoting alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, human rights and coexistence; the Ministry of Justice issued a resolution declaring the formal start of this key element of the programme. Another 40 are expected to be certified by the end of September 2021.

*Illicit crop substitution*

56. The implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, intended to create the conditions for sustainable legal economic opportunities for vulnerable communities, continues in 56 municipalities across the country. The Government reported that as at 31 July a total of 44,294 hectares of illicit crops have been voluntarily eradicated by almost 100,000 participating families and that cumulative investments in the programme amount to \$369 million.

57. The Office of the Inspector General recently acknowledged the progress of the programme and highlighted the challenges it faces, including those resulting from budgetary limitations. The Office also called for additional efforts to improve resource management, expenditure efficiency and interinstitutional cooperation to ensure successful implementation. It further called for prioritizing expenditures, especially for productive projects, so as to honour the commitments made to thousands of families who continue to bet on voluntary substitution as the solution to their dependence on illicit crops.

**Reinforce constructive dialogue between the parties**

58. With the fifth anniversary of the Final Agreement approaching, its implementation has shown that, regardless of their differences, when the parties resort to dialogue at the technical and political levels, they can jointly devise solutions to overcome challenges and preserve achievements.

59. During the reporting period, representatives of the Government and of former combatants met several times to discuss the scope and functioning of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. Although proposals from both sides were presented and actively discussed, no agreement was reached. Following a request by the parties, the Mission is working to help them overcome differences and reach an understanding that would allow to strengthen the Commission's work. Additionally, technical-level meetings were held in the framework on the Commission, including discussions regarding victims.

60. Work within the tripartite working group on mines continued with momentum. With support from the Mine Action Service and the Mission, former FARC-EP members continue to provide valuable information to locate anti-personnel mines, as stipulated in the Final Agreement. During the reporting period, 22 former combatants provided information on the location of explosive ordnance in Antioquia, Bolívar,

Santander and Tolima Departments. As part of these activities, the working group has identified 71 locations where anti-personnel mines are believed to remain. The Government and former combatants are defining the next steps to conduct demining in these areas. This collective effort is crucial to ensure more communities live free from the effects of anti-personnel mines.

61. The tripartite working group on transit to legality met three times during the reporting period, while important issues regarding the accreditation of former FARC-EP members remain pending. The High Commissioner for Peace reported that it accredited 19 (3 women) of the 28 individuals identified and located in April. The total number of accredited former combatants now stands at 13,608 (3,139 women). An additional 165 (133 men and 32 women) remain to be located and accredited, and 530 (331 men and 199 women) have yet to be notified of their accreditation. The working group has launched an outreach plan for both groups.

### **Strengthening conditions for reconciliation**

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

62. In addition to the major developments regarding Case 03, in August the Special Jurisdiction for Peace presented its strategy for Case 07 on forced recruitment and use of children in conflict. It has prioritized the investigation of cases from 1996 to 2016, noting that most of the 18,677 estimated cases of child recruitment by the FARC-EP took place during that period. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace will also investigate related conducts that may constitute international crimes, including sexual and gender-based violence, forced disappearance, homicide and torture. In addition, it summoned 26 former members of the FARC-EP eastern bloc to provide their versions of events. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also continues to investigate cases related to the use of children by the public security forces.

63. Upon deciding on the admission and permanence of civilian third parties and non-combatant State agents under its jurisdiction, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace emphasized that all actors involved in the conflict must demonstrate genuine commitment with victims' rights in order to remain within its jurisdiction.

64. To date, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has received 429 reports and has accredited 325,339 victims. In view of the increasing number of accredited victims and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their ability to present reports, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace extended the deadline for civil society and victims' organizations to submit reports regarding crimes committed during the conflict until March 2022.

65. In preparation for the implementation of the Mission's mandate regarding verification of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace's restorative sentences, and as envisaged in my recommendations to the Security Council (see [S/2021/186](#)), the Mission has been working with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to fine-tune a system of monitoring and verification devised for this purpose. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is advancing in the certification of 77 potential "tasks, works and activities with reparatory and restorative content" in 16 departments, most of them carried out by former FARC-EP combatants. If certified, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will determine whether and how these activities could be counted as early progress in compliance with restorative sentences. The Mission has facilitated workshops, with the participation of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, to raise awareness among former FARC-EP members on the importance of the restorative nature of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace proceedings and its centrality for the peace process.

66. The Truth Commission has organized seven national and regional meetings on truth and recognition of responsibilities for crimes committed by former members of the FARC-EP and the paramilitary group formerly known as Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia). The former top commanders of these groups, Rodrigo Londoño and Salvatore Mancuso, as well as mid-level commanders, acknowledged their responsibilities and asked for forgiveness. Several events included face-to-face meetings between victims and perpetrators.

67. The Truth Commission also held dialogues with former presidents of Colombia Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) and Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002). The Commission has now received the views on the armed conflict from all five living former presidents and has stated that their testimonies will be taken into account for its Final Report.

68. The Constitutional Court is reviewing a request by victims' organizations for the extension of the mandate of the Truth Commission, set to expire on 28 November, which posits that the pandemic affected the implementation of its mandate, thus hindering victims' rights. As part of the Court's assessment, the Commission asked that its mandate be extended for seven months. The proposed extension has received favourable opinions from the Office of the Inspector General, the Council of State, as well as the support of members of Congress from parties across the spectrum and a large group of social leaders and victims' representatives. The Government has stated that the Commission's mandate should be modified by Congress.

69. In coordination with the Office of the Attorney General and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed as Missing handed over 10 bodies of forcibly disappeared persons to their families in Bolívar, Chocó and Sucre Departments. It also recovered 52 bodies of potential victims of forced disappearance from cemeteries in Arauca, Caldas and Caquetá Departments. In August, the Unit reunited a woman who disappeared over 20 years ago, when she was 12, with her family. Since it began in 2017, the Unit has recovered 193 bodies, returned 123 of them to their families, and reunited four victims, who had been declared missing, with their families.

70. In August, members of an unidentified illegal armed group violently hijacked a vehicle belonging to the Unit in Arauca Department.

#### *National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence*

71. No plenary sessions of the Council were held during the reporting period despite requests by most of its members to the Government to hold sessions. While the Council and the Ministry of Interior have made progress in the final draft of the public policy on reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization, budgetary constraints have prevented the holding of consultations with local communities and have delayed essential communication and outreach strategies.

#### **Cross-cutting considerations**

##### *Gender*

72. The Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation and the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equity continued to implement the 51 gender indicators of the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Peace Agreement, with 17.6 per cent of the indicators completed. Nevertheless, challenges continue especially in terms of resource allocation for the implementation of the 100 gender provisions of the Final Agreement, particularly those related to security guarantees and reintegration.

73. The Special Forum on Gender completed 32 regional forums covering all of Colombia's departments for the election of its eight new members, with a wide

participation of youth and women. Appropriate funding is crucial to its continued functioning. The recent launch of the Women's Committee of Montes de Maria to follow up on the gender provisions of the Final Agreement is a welcome development, as women leaders in this region continue to face security issues that hinder their participation in peacebuilding efforts.

74. Despite progress in the allocation of protection measures to women former combatants, challenges remain. In several regions, women at risk have been asked to avail themselves of their partners' protection schemes, which highlights unequal access to protection, compared with male former combatants.

#### *Ethnic affairs*

75. In August, the Office of the Inspector General warned the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization of possible delays in the implementation of the ethnic approach of the national reintegration policy and urged the Agency to update its registry and implement specific measures for the economic and social reintegration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants.

76. The insecurity facing ethnic communities remains of concern, especially on the Pacific Coast, where several events of mass displacement and confinements of both indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been recently reported. In addition, two former Afro-Colombian combatants were killed in Cauca and Chocó Departments. Of all former combatants killed since the signing of the Final Agreement, 22.8 per cent have been of ethnic origin, 22 indigenous and 44 Afro-Colombian. According to the Government, in the past three years, alleged perpetrators were indicted in less than 1 per cent of the cases prioritized for investigation by the Attorney General's Office Special Investigations Unit related to former combatants and social leaders of ethnic origin.

77. The National Protection Unit provided equipment to indigenous guards in Tolima and an Afro-Colombian community in Chocó Department, ranging from basic tools to means of transportation. In August, the Constitutional Court set a precedent ordering the National Protection Unit and the Ministry of the Interior to coordinate with ethnic authorities regarding the establishment of emergency collective protection measures.

78. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is preparing a strategy for the participation of ethnic peoples in the design and implementation of restorative sentences.

#### *Children*

79. Since its reactivation in May, the Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council has proven its value to collectively address child protection issues. The Working Group met weekly and initiated an assessment of the programme "A Different Path of Life". The working group also met in Caquetá, Cesar and Valle del Cauca Departments with 44 participants (16 men and 28 women) to identify achievements and shortcomings of the programme. An additional meeting with some 20 participants was held in September.

80. In July, a former combatant who was recognized in 2020 as a child at the moment of accreditation, was killed in Guaviare Department. The Mission is following-up with four members of "A different path of life" who are waiting for the disbursement of their reparations by the Victims' Unit. This highlights the importance of continued efforts to accelerate the tracing and notification of these young people to mitigate security risks and provide clear orientations on their inclusion in the programme and in the victims' registry for reparations.

81. Significant progress was made regarding children of former combatants in several former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including the improvement of facilities in three former territorial areas for training and reintegration in La Guajira, Meta and Tolima Departments. The provision of psychosocial and educational support for children in four former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Antioquia, Cesar, Guaviare and Meta Departments is also a welcome step. No major advances were registered regarding cases of former combatants, mostly women, seeking to regularize legal guardianship of their children, an issue that remains to be addressed within the Working Group.

#### *Youth*

82. As at 31 August, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization reported that there were 2,230 former combatants between 18 and 28 years old (1,457 men and 773 women). Forty-five per cent of them are involved in productive projects (more than half of them in individual projects), and 80 per cent reside outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

83. In August, President Duque presented the results of the Pact for youth initiative, launched in May in the context of the national strike, to gather the views of youth through workshops held across the country on education, culture and sports; economic inclusion; health; democracy and participation; and rural development, peacebuilding and sustainability. The Government also announced a public policy on youth, contemplating investments of over \$8 billion within the next decade on youth-related issues. Some participants and other youth representatives have claimed that the initiative has limited representation, as it did not include youth engaged in protests during the national strike nor the issues they had put forward. Regarding peace implementation, the policy required the Government to inform on progress in the allocation of monthly allowances to young former combatants, and to support policies designed by youth councils in municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus.

84. Also in August, upon the request of political parties and youth organizations, the National Civil Registry rescheduled the elections to the municipal youth councils, initially planned for 28 November, to 5 December 2021. The National Registry has reported over 39,000 registered candidates (including some 17,000 women). The Comunes party has registered 71 candidates (36 men and 35 women) in 17 municipalities of eight departments and in Bogotá. There is limited awareness among youth about the election process and the councils' functions and operation, which could affect their participation.

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

85. Communities in areas with presence of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), such as those in the Departments of Cauca, Chocó and Catatumbo, as well as the south of Bolívar Department, are suffering the consequences of clashes between this group and State security forces, as well as between the ELN and other illegal armed actors. As a means to put an end to forced displacement, the placement of anti-personnel mines, killings of social leaders and other serious effects on civilian populations, leaders and civil society organizations continue to call upon the Government and the ELN to resume peace talks.

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

86. With extrabudgetary financing from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Mission and the United Nations country team continue to support small-scale projects on reintegration and reconciliation. Twenty initiatives in

new reintegration areas and three community-based projects in 11 departments have recently been selected for support.

87. The country team and the Mission jointly contributed to enhance women's participation in productive projects, including through supporting childcare centres in the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Caldono, Cauca Department, which combine indigenous parenthood practices and institutional childhood assistance requirements. Additionally, the country team provided training to some 7,000 members of 300 municipal peace councils to develop peacebuilding initiatives, and supported community-based initiatives to mitigate the risk of child recruitment in 86 municipalities.

88. Through the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, the country team is providing assistance to 58 collective and 1,038 individual productive projects involving 2,524 former combatants who have received training on marketing. Additionally, the country team is supporting technical studies for housing solutions for former combatants and their families. The Fund also provided support to 11 civil society organizations to enhance self-protection mechanisms and emergency funds for human rights defenders.

89. During the reporting period, the fund allocated \$5.9 million to projects in areas, including support to the regional search plans of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing; support to the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement; and support to green investments in municipalities historically affected by the armed conflict, involving the private sector through blended finance mechanisms. The fund has been extended to allow the full implementation of its projects until December 2023.

### **Mission support**

90. As at 31 July, women represented 44 per cent of Professional and Field Service staff, 59 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 31 per cent of international observers.

91. The Mission has been supporting the COVID-19 vaccination campaign by the United Nations system in Colombia. To date, 94 per cent of Mission personnel have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

### **Safety and security**

92. During the reporting period, there were 27 incidents affecting United Nations personnel, ranging from robbery and theft to harassment, intimidation and threats. United Nations personnel were also affected by movement restrictions due to actions of illegal armed actors in Chocó and Norte de Santander Departments, as well as in Bogotá in the context of protests. There were also incidents of burglary, facility intrusion and a landslide affecting operations in the Departments of Guaviare, Cauca, and Antioquia, respectively. No United Nations personnel were reported injured.

### **Conduct and discipline**

93. During the reporting period, there was one alleged case of sexual assault, which has been referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services for assessment.

94. Regarding cases mentioned in the previous report, administrative action was taken in the case of conflict of interest, while investigations remain ongoing in the case of physical assault. A meeting in August with the Mission's 17 conduct and discipline focal points discussed the strategy to ensure prevention and assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

**Observations**

95. The approaching fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement should be an opportune moment to take stock of its major achievements and to renew a collective commitment to build upon these, while working to overcome the outstanding challenges to its implementation. The gains that have steadily accumulated over this period would not have been possible without the perseverance of the people of Colombia and the parties themselves in the face of significant obstacles, not least the ongoing difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

96. There is no question that the Final Agreement has yielded many dividends. It put an end to conflict itself, but also laid the foundations for lasting peace through a robust and interconnected set of programmes, norms and institutions aimed at overcoming its root causes and healing the wounds it caused. The Final Agreement led to a successful ceasefire; allowed for thousands of former combatants to lay down their arms and take part in democracy; enabled spaces for communities to work with the Government in the design of development plans and alternatives to illicit economies; incorporated an unprecedented approach to gender-related matters in peace processes; provided for historically excluded communities and victims to have their voices heard in Congress; and created a novel transitional justice system that upholds the rights of victims and demonstrates that peace and justice need not be in conflict.

97. Indeed, while the Colombian peace process continues to be a source of inspiration to the world, the parties, Colombian society and the international community should not neglect the daunting challenges and risk factors still facing its long-term consolidation. Chief among them is the violence that continues to take the lives of Colombian men and women in conflict-affected areas in which the full and comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement is most urgently needed. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories characterized by poverty and a limited State presence are disproportionately impacted. It is in such areas where implementation of the comprehensive rural reform, and actions to strengthen the integrated presence of state institutions would make the biggest difference in disrupting the violence.

98. The Final Agreement's various provisions on security guarantees are unevenly implemented, leading to actions that fall short in curbing violence. If implemented in a coordinated manner, mechanisms such as the National Commission on Security Guarantees and the programmes on security and protection for women leaders, communities and organizations in the territories, have the potential to prevent and respond to what remains the biggest threat to the rule of law. To this end, I reiterate my call to all institutions to act upon the recommendations of the early warnings from the Office of the Ombudsman. This is all the more urgent as we quickly approach a new campaign in which the regions most affected by conflict will be the epicentre of an electoral process with unprecedented new aspects intended to widen and deepen Colombia's democracy, after the approval of the bill creating the special transitional electoral districts for peace.

99. In addition to the necessary efforts by State entities to ensure safe and inclusive elections, which I trust will include utilizing the programmes established in the Final Agreement for that purpose, all citizens and political actors, especially those with leadership roles on all sides of the political spectrum, have a responsibility to promote their ideas and interests in an environment of mutual respect. I encourage all Colombians to engage actively in this new electoral process and make use of the broader spaces for political participation opened by the Final Agreement. I invite all parties to join efforts, as they have done in the past, in support of initiatives such as the pact for non-violence promoted by the Catholic Church.

100. The reintegration process continues to move forward despite challenges. Owing to the parties' resolve and mutual understanding of the importance of properly setting the foundations of the process, today we are witnessing outcomes worth preserving and building upon. Efforts to consolidate former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including through the purchase of land, are a step forward, and I call for the parties to jointly devise solutions so that all former combatants, be they in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, new reintegration areas or urban settings, have timely access to the necessary opportunities to ensure that their transition into civilian life takes root. I urge the Government to spare no efforts to accelerate former combatants' access to land and housing, and to enable a safe environment in the areas in which their individual and collective reintegration is taking place. In doing so, I encourage both parties to ensure that women former combatants and former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin have a say in decision-making processes so that equal access to income-generating opportunities and protection measures is guaranteed.

101. The transitional justice system continues demonstrating its fundamental role in Colombia's transition. I particularly commend the work of the Truth Commission during the reporting period. Its efforts to take into account the voices of victims and of all those involved in the conflict are a reminder that genuinely contributing to the truth by replacing justifications with empathy and mutual recognition is a moral imperative in a society that strives to overcome decades of conflict.

102. The Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing is also implementing its mandate decisively. I strongly condemn the violent incident against its personnel and call on all armed actors to respect the Unit and allow it to conduct its critical work. The wait of thousands of families of victims of enforced disappearance should not be prolonged.

103. Similarly, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has made significant progress in determining crimes committed during the conflict and the responsibilities of the different actors, while reiterating through its decisions that a serious commitment with victims' rights is non-negotiable. For the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and the Comprehensive System more broadly, to continue its work, I reiterate my call to all Colombians to extend their support, to respect and to contribute to its efforts, and I urge the Government to provide the necessary resources.

104. While discussions regarding the 2022 budget are ongoing, I trust that the Government and political forces in Congress will do their part to ensure that investments in peace are not in jeopardy. The importance of guaranteeing adequate resources for all sections of the Final Agreement cannot be overstated. In this crucial year, ownership and reinforced commitment by the parties and all relevant stakeholders will be instrumental to continue moving forward, preserving hard-fought gains, and ensuring continuity.

105. The foundations on which the coming stages of the Final Agreement's implementation are to be built will only be as strong as the commitment of the parties, political and civil society actors to constructive dialogue and to protecting peace from the political fray. I encourage the parties to make full use of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the National Reintegration Council, the National Commission on Security Guarantees, and all other institutions derived from the Agreement and tripartite mechanisms to jointly tackle implementation issues, to continue to meet their obligations, and ultimately to fulfil the expectations of victims and Colombian society. Their example would send an important signal to all Colombians that it is time, finally, to unify behind peace.

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

Verification Mission Geospatial 

