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United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2603 \(2021\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The present report covers the period from 28 June 2022 to 26 September 2022.

II. Major developments

2. On 7 August, Gustavo Petro Urrego was sworn in as President of Colombia and Francia Márquez was sworn in as Vice-President. In his inaugural speech, President Petro reiterated his call upon political parties and Colombian society to build a national agreement in support of urgent changes. He has outlined his main priorities, notably his commitments to peace, including the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace; to reducing inequality; to governing with and for women; to ensuring zero tolerance for corruption; and to holding regional dialogues for local authorities and communities to contribute to policymaking. He has also pledged to transition towards clean energy and to protect the Amazon while also promoting a new global approach to illicit drugs. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has met with President Petro and Vice-President Márquez, affirming the support of the United Nations for their efforts towards peace.

3. President Petro has already visited several of the Colombian regions most affected by conflict and announced his intention to pursue what he has called “total peace” and to urgently strengthen protection for vulnerable social leaders and communities. He appointed Álvaro Leyva as Minister of Foreign Affairs, entrusting him with supporting peace-related efforts. President Petro also appointed Danilo Rueda as High Commissioner for Peace, underscoring Mr. Rueda’s experience working with conflict-affected communities. According to the Government, the concept of “total peace” encompasses the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the resumption of



negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which has expressed its willingness to engage in talks. The Government has taken steps in that direction, including through a meeting in Havana between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the High Commissioner for Peace and the ELN delegation in August (see paragraph 98).

4. The “total peace” policy also includes exploring submission to justice agreements, through which other illegal actors cease violence in exchange for legal benefits. The new Administration has called on all illegal armed actors to express their intention to be part of the “total peace” and has assured that these efforts will place the rights to truth, justice and reparation at their centre. The Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) and some dissident groups of the former FARC-EP have expressed willingness to engage in talks. President Petro has asked these actors to demonstrate their will for peace through concrete actions, and recently called for a multilateral ceasefire to create the most propitious environment for exploring dialogue. In this context, with a view to exploring the possibility of initiating talks, the High Commissioner for Peace recently held a meeting with representatives of a dissident group of the former FARC-EP that did not sign the Final Agreement. Representatives of the Mission and Norway were in attendance, at the Government’s request.

5. On 20 July, a new Congress convened for the 2022–2026 period. In their inaugural speeches, the Chairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, both from the Government’s coalition, stated that Congress would focus its work on major reforms, including those related to the “total peace” policy, social justice and environmental issues.

6. This more diverse new Congress includes, for the first time, the participation of the 16 representatives from conflict-affected areas, elected through the special transitional electoral districts created by the Final Agreement. It also features the highest number of women legislators in Colombian history, with women accounting for 29.4 per cent of the Congress, compared to 18.9 per cent in 2018. Over 60 per cent of the 295 members of Congress are new. Eight members are indigenous and thirty-one are Afro-Colombian. Pursuant to the statute of the opposition, political parties have defined their stance vis-à-vis the Government: 75 per cent of legislators have joined the Government coalition, including legislators from the Comunes party; 12 per cent have announced their opposition; and 13 per cent have declared themselves as independent.

7. The new Government has presented several draft bills to Congress, including a tax reform bill; a bill granting peasants special constitutional protection; a bill on the creation of the agrarian jurisdiction provided for in section 1 of the Final Agreement, and a bill to reform the law on public order to facilitate engagement with illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. The latter reform would also give priority to peace-related matters in development plans and allow regional and local authorities to engage in humanitarian dialogues with illegal actors, among others. Other initiatives that have been announced include a bill for the submission of criminal organizations to justice. In addition, discussions in Congress are ongoing regarding the draft budget for 2023, which includes adjustments by the new administration to approve greater funding for the implementation of the Final Agreement.

III. Comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement

8. The comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement’s interrelated elements represents an opportunity for the new Government to address long-standing inequalities and the factors underpinning persistent violence in Colombia.

Comprehensive rural reform

9. President Petro's administration has emphasized that agrarian reform is one of its key priorities, noting that the implementation of section 1 of the Final Agreement, on the comprehensive rural reform, will be instrumental. The Government announced its intention to review which properties managed by the Special Assets Administration are available to be handed over to citizens without land, and to accelerate the implementation of certain aspects of the Final Agreement, such as the multipurpose cadastre and the adjudication and titling of land.

10. The Constitutional Court recently urged the Government and Congress to adopt the necessary measures to promote the implementation of elements of the Final Agreement regarding access to and use of land. Among other things, the Court called for the strengthening of the National Land Agency, the creation of the special agrarian jurisdiction, the consolidation of the multipurpose cadastre and the updating of the registry of rural properties. Similarly, in a report issued during the reporting period, the Office of the Comptroller General expressed concerns related to the comprehensive rural reform, highlighting, among other things, limited progress in the allocation of land through the Land Fund.

11. President Petro has also affirmed that the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus will continue. President Petro has noted that the programmes will go hand-in-hand with the comprehensive implementation of other aspects of the Final Agreement and will include citizen participation and funds for the necessary investments.

12. Judicial and oversight bodies are conducting investigations into the alleged misuse of royalties from hydrocarbon exploitation that are allocated for the implementation of projects within the development programmes with a territorial focus. In addition, a group of members of Congress conducted an oversight hearing on the matter.

Political participation

13. Soon after its inauguration, Congress approved the participation of the 16 representatives of the special electoral districts for peace in the commissions of the House of Representatives. Since then, the 16 representatives (three women) of the "peace and victims caucus" have worked on legislation related to the implementation of the Final Agreement and to development in conflict-affected territories. Initiatives presented by the caucus include one to formally constitute the congressional peace commissions, which until now have operated on an ad hoc basis. The 16 representatives have also joined other parties in support of different bills, such as a bill revindicating the rights of Afro-Colombian communities, which was put forward by the Office of the Ombudsman. They also met with the Minister of Finance to ensure that the draft national budget for 2023 guarantees resources for conflict-affected regions.

14. The Government presented a draft political reform aimed at ensuring, among other things, gender parity in Congress and political campaigns funded exclusively through public funds. The Government also presented, together with electoral institutions, a draft bill to reform the electoral code. These draft bills include pending provisions of the chapter of the Final Agreement on political participation.

Solution to the illicit drugs problem

15. Among his administration's priorities, the need for a revised approach to the issue of illicit drugs, both within Colombia and internationally, is one that President Petro has discussed. He has committed to prioritizing voluntary substitution over

forced eradication, as envisioned in the Final Agreement, and to strengthening the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops. The Programme is under way in 56 municipalities, benefiting 99,097 families (35.7 per cent headed by women). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 46,008 hectares have been voluntarily eradicated, with 98 per cent the families having complied with their commitments under the Programme. Recent monitoring by UNODC in four municipalities showed a replanting rate of only 5.4 per cent, which underscores the effectiveness of voluntary substitution.

16. However, the Programme continues to face significant challenges, including insecurity. The Office of the Comptroller General has highlighted persistent gaps in productive projects, especially long-term initiatives, risking the sustainability of the Programme. In addition, members of Congress and civil society actors have called for broadening the Programme's focus to transcend the current family-based approach and to strengthen linkages with other elements of the Final Agreement, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus. Furthermore, they have pointed out the need to secure funding, to ensure that beneficiaries have clarity regarding next steps and to consider the situation of thousands of additional families willing to join the Programme.

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

17. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace opened three new cases in response to victims' requests and based on nearly one thousand reports from civil society and State entities. One case will focus on war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the former FARC-EP that are currently not being investigated within other cases. A second case will investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the public security forces and other State agents in association with paramilitary groups and third parties. A third case will address crimes against ethnic communities and their territories allegedly perpetrated by former FARC-EP, public security forces, State agents and third parties. One additional case will be opened addressing crimes related to gender-based and sexual violence, a long-standing request by victims' and women's organizations.

18. Prior to the end of its mandate in August, the Truth Commission held over 50 events across the country and undertook several visits abroad to present its final report. The report, built upon thousands of victims' testimonies, contains a description of the Commission's findings on the history of the conflict, regional dynamics, human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, as well as the impact on indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples, children, adolescents and youth, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, and persons exiled owing to the conflict.

19. The President of the Commission, Francisco de Roux, has stressed that the report carries a message of hope and charts a path towards reconciliation, and he has underscored that it reflects different testimonies from across Colombian society, as opposed to a single and incontrovertible version of the conflict. He has also noted that implementing the Commission's recommendations, several of which are related to the Final Agreement's implementation, will require "ethical and political decisions" from State institutions, communities, political parties, the private sector and the international community, among others. Notably, President Petro has committed to implementing the Commission's recommendations.

20. In August, the Commission announced the establishment of the committee for follow-up and monitoring of its recommendations, comprising four women and three men from different sectors, including victims', women's, ethnic and LGBTI organizations, academia and the private sector. With a seven-year mandate, the

committee will develop a monitoring system and a strategy for dialogue with State institutions and civil society. The committee noted that victims will be at the centre of its work and that it will include territorial, ethnic and gender approaches.

21. The Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed Missing has recovered the remains of 511 bodies in total, including 28 during the reporting period. It has also returned a total of 155 bodies to victims' families, including 5 during the reporting period. Among the bodies returned were those of four young persons who had been missing for over 18 years and were located through information provided by former FARC-EP combatants and civil society organizations. The Unit also recently reunited three persons deemed missing for over 20 years with their families. There have been eight such cases since the Unit began operating.

22. The Unit has also reached welcome agreements with indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities on protocols and plans to expedite the search for missing people in their territories.

Mechanisms for dialogue on implementation

23. While the parties have yet to meet for the first time within the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement under the new administration, the Government has stated its commitment to implementation, and former combatants' representatives have expressed their readiness to work hand in hand within the mechanisms created by the Final Agreement and other ad hoc working groups addressing key thematic issues.

24. The working group on FARC-EP assets was last convened in June 2020, hindering progress regarding the handover of such assets for victims' reparations. In August, the Office of the Comptroller General reported ineffective management by the Special Assets Administration of resources from the inventory of goods and assets handed over by the former FARC-EP. Making full use of the working group would help the parties to meet their obligations in the interest of providing reparations for the victims.

25. Owing to the parties' commitment and with support from the international community, the working group on mines completed its pilot project on data collection in 10 municipalities of Antioquia, Córdoba, Nariño and Tolima. Forty-six former combatants (6 women) provided information regarding over 100 possible minefields where thousands of landmines may have been set. The working group is now preparing to begin activities in southern Colombia.

26. To date, collaboration within the working group on transit to legality has led to the accreditation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of 13,623 former FARC-EP members (3,143 women). The continuity of this working group is key to providing former combatants with legal certainty and addressing pending issues, as there are 157 individuals yet to be properly identified and another 137 individuals awaiting a determination concerning their accreditation.

IV. Mission tasks

Reintegration

27. The commitment of the over 13,000 former combatants who continue pursuing their reintegration, and the government support received during the early stages of the process, have been essential to the progress achieved thus far. However, significant challenges, especially insecurity, continue to jeopardize reintegration. The long-term success of the process is contingent on former combatants' security

guarantees and on continued efforts to ensure the sustainability and comprehensiveness of reintegration, including by strengthening the linkages with other elements of the Final Agreement, such as the rural and political reforms.

Access to land and housing

28. Access to land and housing remains a key condition for former combatants to be able to settle permanently and build a new life alongside their host communities. To date, the Government has purchased land for 10 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, although land titles have yet to be granted to former combatants. It is necessary to hold dialogue through the working groups on these key issues within the National Reintegration Council to continue making progress.

29. Four former territorial areas for training and reintegration (two in Cauca, one in Putumayo and one in Antioquia) awaiting the purchase of land since 2020 are still pending urgent relocation owing to insecurity.

30. To date, efforts by authorities to provide land and housing to former combatants have focused mostly on those living in former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Only two plots of land managed by the Special Assets Administration have been allocated to former combatants for productive projects outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in Valle del Cauca. Given that at least two thirds of all former FARC-EP members reside outside these areas, it is essential that the parties work together to expand access to land according to existing needs.

31. Regarding access to housing, feasibility studies in 13 former territorial areas for training and reintegration have been completed or are in the final stages. Housing projects are moving forward in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Arauquita, Arauca (187 houses), El Doncello, Caquetá (106 houses) and Caldon, Cauca (145 houses), the latter of which is the only area where housing construction has begun.

32. Access to housing in urban and rural areas outside territorial areas for training and reintegration remains a major challenge. Twenty-three former combatants have received their one-time reintegration allowance of approximately \$2,000 provided for in the Final Agreement, with the purpose of investing in housing improvement or purchase. Access to housing subsidies in urban settings, where thousands of former combatants reside, has been very limited, as most such former combatants do not meet the required criteria, highlighting the need for measures that adapt to their needs.

Productive projects

33. Owing to significant efforts by the parties and the support of the international community, to date, 72 per cent of accredited former combatants are participating in productive projects. The National Reintegration Council has thus far approved 121 collective projects, benefiting 3,963 former combatants (1,105 women), while the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has approved 4,832 individual projects, benefiting 5,828 former combatants (1,402 women). During the reporting period, the Council approved one new collective project for 34 former combatants (5 women), and the Agency approved 466 individual projects for 544 former combatants (95 women).

34. Despite progress in the approval of income-generating initiatives, access to markets and technical assistance remains a significant challenge to ensuring the initiatives' long-term sustainability. With a view to designing tailored plans, a joint assessment is under way by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, former combatants, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

on the sustainability of collective productive projects. Preliminary results show that only one third of the projects are on track to become sustainable. To ensure the long-term sustainability of productive projects, the parties could agree on a binding sustainability strategy for collective projects and develop a more comprehensive mechanism to follow-up on individual projects.

35. Almost 80 per cent of accredited women former combatants (2,507) participate in individual and collective productive projects. In addition, women lead 13 of the 121 collective projects. However, their meaningful participation in decision-making remains limited, as does the mainstreaming of gender matters in income-generating activities, including equitable access to resources and technical assistance. The Government has made efforts to reinforce 12 of 16 women's cooperatives through the development of strategies for access to markets and technical assistance. Nevertheless, a more comprehensive effort and greater financial resources are required to enhance the participation and leadership of women and to identify alternative solutions in order to overcome competing care tasks.

36. To date, there are 177 cooperatives of former combatants, 45 of which are represented by women. Continued support for these collective efforts, including by ensuring their security, is essential.

37. Around 15 per cent of all former combatants are formally employed, including nearly one fifth of women former combatants. The new Minister of Labour recently announced the Government's intention to support former combatants' cooperatives and explore employment options, especially for women.

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

38. To date, 10,502 former combatants (2,547 women) live outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration across 611 municipalities. Approximately one third of these former combatants live in approximately 75 new reintegration areas in both rural and urban settings. The technical team delegated by the new administration to oversee the transition has recommended that new reintegration areas and former territorial areas for training and reintegration be identified and formally recognized through a decree.

Health

39. Health-care schemes in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, which provide care to former combatants and host communities alike, continue, despite challenges in coordination and the timely implementation of allocated resources. With the participation of local health authorities and former combatants, the working group on health of the National Reintegration Council held sessions to assess the implementation of health-care schemes in each of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

40. Greater efforts are required to implement health-related aspects of the national policy on reintegration to ensure that pregnant and lactating women former combatants, elderly former combatants and former combatants with disabilities and high-cost illnesses receive necessary care, and to promote the sexual and reproductive rights of women and LGBTI former combatants.

Reintegration policies and institutions

41. The National Reintegration Council remains the key mechanism for dialogue and coordination of reintegration matters. The participation of key ministries and the holding of decentralized sessions to target specific issues would help to ensure a more

comprehensive approach to reintegration. Discussions about the scope of the reintegration road map and the National Reintegration System are on hold pending the resumption of the work of the Council. The appointment of a new Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and of Government delegates to the Council is fundamental in order to move forward with reintegration policies and allow dialogue to resume.

42. In August, the new administration extended the flexible conditions for former combatants to access the monthly stipend until 31 December 2022.

43. Despite persistent violence, reintegration action plans led by the Council in Arauca, Putumayo and Caquetá, where insecurity has disrupted the hard-fought gains of former combatants working alongside local authorities and communities, have helped to boost support from State institutions, for example by helping productive projects to obtain permits and certifications, improving infrastructure and accelerating housing construction.

44. The working group on gender visited Tolima in August to raise awareness among local authorities about the gender-related actions of the national reintegration policy. The working group and the Office of the Inspector General, with support from the Mission, have been following up on the commitments made by local authorities during such field visits. Progress varies across regions, with Medellín leading implementation by coordinating with departmental entities to mainstream the gender approach and provide women former combatants with access to available programmes.

45. The parties continue to discuss at a technical level a strategy for 1,712 young former combatants (656 women). The strategy focuses on enabling economic opportunities as well as enhancing their leadership and active participation in peacebuilding. The results of ongoing pilots in the Caquetá, Nariño and Putumayo departments and in Bogotá, accompanied by the Mission, will inform the strategy's final draft, to be presented for approval by the Council.

Role of regional authorities and community-based reintegration

46. The role of regional authorities in support of reintegration remains essential. While the number of reintegration working groups at the departmental (20), municipal (12) and local levels (24) remains unchanged, examples of their influence indicate the importance of supporting them. During the reporting period, in Tuluá, Valle del Cauca, the Office of the Mayor provided a shop that was needed in order to expand a coffee-producing project led by former combatants, and in Arauca, a local university and the National Vocational Training Service provided technical assistance to former combatants whose productive projects have been affected by violence.

47. Community-based reintegration efforts provide dividends to former combatants and communities alike and contribute to coexistence and reconciliation. Such initiatives are ongoing in 77 municipalities, in line with a strategy developed jointly by the parties within the Council. In the municipality of Ovejas, Sucre, a warehouse was built for the productive initiatives by former combatants and community members, and works were carried out to improve local roads and a cultural centre, benefiting over 2,000 persons.

Political reintegration

48. On 20 July, the five senators (two women) and five representatives of the Comunes party were sworn into Congress, two of them for the first time. As per the terms of the Final Agreement, this is the second and last legislative period in which

the party, formed after the FARC-EP laydown of arms, will have guaranteed seats in Congress.

49. The Comunes party has submitted on its own 30 pieces of draft legislation related to the implementation of the Final Agreement's sections on rural reform and political participation, among others, and another 19 draft bills alongside other parties and representatives from the special districts for peace.

50. Following a challenge by former combatants distanced from the Comunes party, the Council of State recently confirmed the lawfulness of decisions made during the second national assembly of the Comunes party in January 2021, including regarding the composition of decision-making bodies. Claiming differences with the party's leadership, in July, two former Comunes senators and one former FARC-EP commander resigned from the party, with the alleged support of several other former combatants, while still reaffirming their adherence to the peace process. This group has also requested participation in the mechanisms established by the Final Agreement, including the National Reintegration Council.

Security guarantees

51. The new administration has taken the first steps towards addressing the persistent violence in several regions. President Petro appointed Iván Velásquez as Minister of Defence and new military and police leadership, tasking them with contributing to "total peace", in part by actively engaging and building trust with communities. Soon after taking office, President Petro chaired a meeting in Chocó and highlighted that his Government's security policy would be based on a human security approach and a comprehensive response by State institutions.

52. In August, human rights and civil society organizations and members of Congress presented an emergency protection plan for human rights defenders and former combatants to President Petro. The plan, developed with support from the United Nations, prioritizes 65 municipalities in 14 departments and includes the activation of security guarantee instruments created under the Final Agreement. It also includes proposed actions for the first 100 days of the new administration, such as the creation in each of these municipalities of inter-institutional mechanisms to coordinate preventive responses with the participation of State entities, local authorities and civil society, and accompanied by international actors, referring to them as "unified command posts for life".

53. President Petro and members of his cabinet have installed 23 such command posts in Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Caquetá, Chocó, Córdoba, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca. The Special Representative has taken part in the installation of some of these command posts, highlighting their importance in promoting an integrated State response to persistent violence in conflict-affected areas. The Government recently presented its strategy of unified command posts to the mayors and governors of those areas.

Regional dynamics of violence

54. Actions by illegal armed groups and disputes over territorial control and illicit economies continue in areas with limited State presence, underscoring the importance of the new peace and security initiatives now getting under way. Recently, both civilians and public security forces have been targeted, especially in the Arauca, Antioquia, Cauca and Nariño departments. Several members of the Awa indigenous community were killed in municipalities in the Nariño and Putumayo departments. In July and early August, the Clan del Golfo carried out several attacks against the national police in its areas of operation, killing over 20 officers. In addition, in September, seven members of the police were killed during an attack in the Huila

department, allegedly by a FARC-EP dissident group. President Petro condemned the attack and travelled to Huila to review the security situation and install a unified command post.

55. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered 39 large-scale killings (12 verified, 26 under verification and 1 inconclusive). Cases verified to date involved 39 victims, including 7 children and 7 indigenous persons. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that, since 27 June, 8,100 persons have been forcibly confined and 13,700 have been forcibly displaced. Over 60 per cent of victims of displacement and confinement are indigenous and Afro-Colombian and an estimated 30 per cent are under the age of 18. The Office has monitored new displacement emergencies taking place in departments where such events had not occurred in many years, such as Bolívar.

56. In this context, the Constitutional Court determined in June that the unconstitutional state of affairs that it had declared in 2004 regarding the prevention and protection of forcibly displaced persons persists. Consequently, the Court ordered the Government to take urgent action in areas with recurrent humanitarian emergencies, in Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca.

National Commission on Security Guarantees

57. The establishment of a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations is one of the most important security guarantee provisions of the Final Agreement still pending implementation. Since its inception in 2017, the Commission has only approved its internal regulations, and the action plan ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in February is due by 10 October.

Security and protection for former combatants

58. Fifteen former FARC-EP combatants were killed (all men), 11 of them in July alone, making it the deadliest month for former combatants since 2019. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, the Mission has registered the killing of 342 former combatants (11 women, 48 Afro-Colombian persons and 28 indigenous persons). There have been 105 victims of attempted homicide (8 women), and 27 former combatants are deemed as missing (all men). Over 80 per cent of the killings are concentrated in Cauca, Nariño, Antioquia, Caquetá, Meta, Putumayo, Norte de Santander, Valle del Cauca and Chocó, highlighting the urgency of targeted actions in these regions, which are among those prioritized by the new administration.

Precautionary measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace

59. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is reviewing an action plan by the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General to improve its methodology for investigating the killings of former combatants and to better fight criminal organizations. The implementation of other precautionary measures, such as the ones ordered for the south-west region and Meta department, remains significantly limited.

60. In complying with the orders of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is taking steps to implement a resolution, adopted in June, by which it was established that the children of former combatants that have been killed can receive their deceased parents' monthly allowance. If implemented, this and other benefits would be provided to surviving relatives for up to 36 months, and funerary expenses would also be covered. To date, 90 families have received benefits, while several others have reported difficulties accessing support due to the requirements established by the Agency.

61. Also in response to the orders of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the National Protection Unit has accelerated the approval of new protection measures for former combatants. However, the measures' timely implementation remains constrained by insufficient resources, and challenges persist with regard to women having equal access to protection measures. Since January, 399 protection measures have been approved, including 90 for women and 56 collective measures. To date, only 85 have been implemented.

Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General

62. The Special Investigations Unit reported 2 new convictions, for a total of 57, of the 401 cases of attacks against former combatants under its investigation. In addition, a total of 63 cases are in the trial phase and 374 arrest warrants have been issued, including 82 against those who ordered the attacks. A total of 169 arrest warrants are pending execution.

63. The challenges in the Unit's work continue, for instance regarding access to crime scenes in insecure locations, especially in Caquetá, Cauca, Meta and Nariño, which account for 187 of the 401 cases. Enhanced coordination within the Office of the Attorney-General, as well as between the Office and the Ministry of Defence would significantly improve the Unit's ability to dismantle criminal organizations, prevent these crimes and prosecute those behind them.

64. Modest progress has been made in the six gender-specific actions of the Unit under the Final Agreement, in particular in terms of improving investigative capacities by taking a gender-sensitive approach in the field.

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

65. No significant security incidents were registered within former territorial areas for training and reintegration. Changes in the preventive military deployments in these areas from fixed units to mixed or mobile patrols were reported in three such areas in Cauca, Norte de Santander and Guaviare. In addition, owing to inadequate facilities in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration of Anorí, Antioquia, police units have redeployed to the urban centre. These changes are making former combatants feel less secure. The Mission is in contact with the Ministry of Defence regarding the matter.

66. Increased deployment of women officers and continued specialized trainings on gender-based violence would further enhance the security of former combatants and nearby communities.

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

67. During this reporting period, OHCHR received allegations of homicides committed against 45 human rights defenders, including 7 women (8 verified, 27 under verification and 10 inconclusive). The situation in Bolívar and Cesar has deteriorated sharply. In August, José Quiñones, leader of the dialogue commission of southern Bolívar and central and southern Cesar, was killed, the fourth leader of the dialogue commission killed in less than a year.

68. Two recently elected representatives of the special districts for peace and members of their teams have received threats from illegal armed actors. Likewise, women candidates who were not elected during the special districts' elections held last March in several departments have also reported threats. Making full use of the

Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics is key to guarantee security for all political organizations.

69. Attacks against women human rights defenders have persisted during the reporting period. In Bolívar, social leader Yirley Velasco continues to be stigmatized and receive threats despite having the protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The full implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders under the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior could help to address these challenges.

Early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman

70. The Office of the Ombudsman issued 12 early warnings (4 characterized as imminent) of risks of violence covering 39 municipalities in Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Huila, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Tolima, Vaupés and Valle del Cauca. In August, the new Minister of the Interior, Alfonso Prada, chaired a session of the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings in El Bordo, Cauca, during which he emphasized the importance of a comprehensive State response and announced increased security deployments.

71. In August, after the early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman received threats, the United Nations system in Colombia expressed its support for the Office and called for respect for its essential work.

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

72. Ten new organizations, including women's organizations, were prioritized to receive comprehensive prevention and protection measures under the programme in Arauca, Cesar, Chocó, Magdalena, Putumayo and Santander, with the support of OHCHR. Two additional initiatives for former combatants were prioritized in Arauca and Putumayo.

Restorative sentences

73. In August, the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Special Representative signed a protocol establishing the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and regulating its functioning. The Mechanism, composed of the section for cases of acknowledgement of truth and responsibility and the Executive Secretariat of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as well as the Mission, will support the implementation of and compliance with restorative sentences by fostering information exchange and coordination with State institutions, civil society organizations, ethnic communities, victims, individuals subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and international organizations.

74. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to advance towards the issuance of its first restorative sentences, including by holding public hearings aimed at responding to victims' demands for reparation and non-repetition and at fostering reconciliation.

75. In July, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace held a public hearing of acknowledgement of truth and responsibility within Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by State agents) focused on crimes committed in the Caribbean region. Twelve indicted former members of the Army acknowledged responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity that had victimized 127 people (including 12 indigenous people). The indicted described their collaboration with paramilitary groups and explained how victims had been selected,

murdered and falsely presented as members of guerrilla groups. Some of the indicted also asked for forgiveness. Victims were able to inquire about the fate of their missing loved ones, appeal for the truth and call for reparations.

76. Three former colonels and commanders indicted within Case 03 who did not acknowledge responsibility prior to the hearing have been referred to the adversarial process, where they could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

77. In July, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace indicted 32 members of the army (including a major general, six colonels, and three lieutenant colonels), one non-combatant State agent and two civilians within Case 03 and Case 04 (on the situation of the Urabá region) for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Casanare department and in Dabeiba, Antioquia. In Casanare, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace identified 303 victims (9 women, 6 adolescents, 1 LGBTI person and 1 person with cognitive disabilities). For the first time, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has included the accusation of the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds and the war crime of the use of children to participate actively in hostilities. In Dabeiba, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace registered 43 victims of killing and disappearance (1 woman and 2 adolescents), among whom the remains of 11 have been exhumed and handed over to their families.

78. In July, 35 former middle-ranking FARC-EP members provided their individual and collective versions during hearings within Case 01 (on hostage-taking, other serious deprivations of liberty and other concurrent crimes committed by the FARC-EP). Also within Case 01, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace asked the indicted former top commanders who have already acknowledged responsibility to submit their proposal of restorative projects and to report on the tasks, works or activities with reparatory and restorative content that they have already carried out.

79. While the Special Jurisdiction for Peace advances towards issuing the first sentences, some individuals who are subject thereto continue to express concerns, including regarding security and legal certainty. In July, the Mission participated in a workshop in Medellín for the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and several former members of the public security forces subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace aimed at contributing to the design of the support route for this group, which had been announced in April by then-President Iván Duque. Participants put forward their needs and concerns regarding their economic conditions, training and employment opportunities, and stigmatization. Former combatants and their lawyers have also continued to point out the need to guarantee their security and preserve ongoing reintegration efforts in the design of restorative sentences.

80. The Final Agreement provides that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace can acknowledge restorative works and activities carried out to provide reparations to victims prior to sentencing. To date, the Executive Secretariat of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has received 185 requests for tasks, works or activities with reparatory and restorative content certification (183 from former FARC-EP members and 2 from members of the public security forces). The Executive Secretariat has certified 138 tasks, works or activities with reparatory and restorative content involving some 1,839 former combatants in 11 departments.

V. Cross-cutting considerations

Gender

81. President Petro has appointed a gender parity cabinet and announced the creation of a Ministry of Equality, under the leadership of Vice-President Márquez, to address issues related to gender, ethnic communities, and young people and

children, among others. In addition, President Petro recently appointed Clemencia Carabalí, a woman and Afro-Colombian leader, as Presidential Counsellor for Women's Equality. Women's organizations have called for greater representation of women and inclusion of the women, peace and security agenda in discussions regarding "total peace", for adequate resourcing of the new Ministry of Equality and for anchoring women's rights and gender equality within its agenda.

82. Invigorating the implementation of the Final Agreement's gender provisions is a key demand of women's organizations and peace advocates. The security and protection of women and girls continues to be an issue of major concern, as threats of sexual violence related to the presence of illegal armed groups in various regions persist. A recent report of the Office of the Ombudsman on risks facing women leaders and human rights defenders in Nariño, underscored the use of sexual violence as a control and domination mechanism and the stigma and discrimination facing women leaders, particularly Afro-Colombians.

83. Women's organizations are actively advocating the implementation of the recommendations of the final report of the Truth Commission regarding women and the LGBTI community. In particular, they are calling for progress in the allocation of individual and collective protection routes and schemes, the creation of effective mechanisms to respond to gender-based violence, and the strengthening of a gender and differential approach in all Special Jurisdiction for Peace cases.

Ethnic affairs

84. Since taking office, President Petro has appointed several Afro-Colombian and indigenous men and women to key government positions, including Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Leonor Zalabata, and the directors of the Victims' Unit and the Land Restitution Unit.

85. The humanitarian situation in ethnic territories across the country remains critical, and communities continue to call for negotiated solutions with their participation. In September, Vice-President Márquez and the High Commissioner for Peace chaired the first humanitarian and peacebuilding working group meeting in Chocó, to jointly devise comprehensive responses for the region.

86. Especially concerning is the situation facing indigenous peoples, with some expressing fears of physical and cultural extermination in the Orinoco and Amazon River Basins. Indigenous communities across the country are also facing increasing risks of losing their territories owing to the expansion of agriculture, energy and extractive industries and the presence of illegal armed groups. Following a recent joint field visit to Nariño, the Mission, OHCHR and the European Union called on authorities to urgently address the situation of the Awa indigenous people.

87. The situation of indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants (16 per cent of all former FARC-EP members) remains of concern, including the sustainability of their income-generating initiatives. Prioritizing these initiatives in the assessments of the National Reintegration Council on this matter and making use of its working group on ethnic issues could help to devise tailored assistance, as stipulated in the national reintegration policy.

88. In its first such agreement with Afro-Colombian traditional judicial authorities, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will work alongside the Afro-Colombian Ancestral Justice of Cauca on Case 05 to deliver justice and uphold communities' rights within their judicial autonomy.

Children

89. To date, of the 124 children initially included in the programme “A different path of life” for children formerly associated with the FARC-EP, 108 remain active, 6 are deceased and 9 have been identified as absent or separated from the programme. Seventy beneficiaries (43 women and 27 men) have received resources for productive projects, while 29 are still awaiting administrative reparations. In July, a member of the programme was killed in Antioquia.

90. In August, the Mission verified the forced displacement, due to security reasons, of a member of the programme in February in Arauca. The working group on children of the National Reintegration Council met with the working groups on gender and education to discuss individual cases and enhance coordination. To date, 151 of the 288 former combatants considered children at the time of accreditation, between 2020 and 2021, have been recognized as victims, which gives them access to reparations; another 18 are deceased.

91. During a hearing within Case 07 (on recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict) of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which also involves investigation of sexual and gender-based violence against recruited children, 21 former members of the guerrilla’s eastern bloc rendered their accounts in the presence of over 260 victims. The former combatants were questioned about their recruitment tactics and their treatment of children within the group and were compelled to draft a plan to locate victims who remain missing.

Youth

92. In July, the National Youth Council, comprising 49 young men and women, was inaugurated. This was highlighted by the Government as a landmark for youth participation. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court recently indicated that there were issues, including the lack of sufficient polling stations in rural areas, which had affected the effective participation in the municipal youth council elections in December 2021. In addition, the Office of the Inspector-General has warned of delays and limited support from authorities for the operation of several of these councils.

93. Youth council members have expressed their willingness to work closely with the new administration, while highlighting, together with several youth organizations, the need to promote broader dialogue with and participation by young people. Two council members from Valle del Cauca have reported threats, underscoring the persistent risks facing young leaders.

94. In August, a 30-member delegation from the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students visited Colombia to observe the reintegration process and provide recommendations. The Mission also carried out initiatives with young people around the country, such as the provision of leadership training in Cesar, awareness-raising sessions on the Final Agreement with members of youth councils in Cauca and an event, in collaboration with the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the Office of the Mayor of Medellín, which brought together youth council members and young former combatants from Antioquia to exchange experiences on peacebuilding and youth participation.

VI. Coordination with the United Nations country team

95. During the first weeks of President Petro’s administration, cooperation between the United Nations and the Government has been reinforced in several priority areas related to peacebuilding, such as reintegration, security guarantees and human rights. This includes collaboration between the Mission and the United Nations country team

to assist authorities in designing the methodology for the holding of regional dialogues.

96. The country team has supported the dissemination of the final report of the Truth Commission, including through public events in several departments and preparatory work with victims, communities and civil society organizations. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, the country team is supporting the roll-out of the committee for follow-up and monitoring of the Commission's recommendations.

97. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace allocated \$3.8 million to support four key issues to further the implementation of the Final Agreement. In Norte de Santander, the multi-partner trust fund is supporting development programmes with a territorial focus through the review and updating of land use planning instruments. It is also providing capacity-building for the newly elected representatives from the special districts for peace. At the same time, the fund is strengthening the participation of the Comunes party at the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and supporting 17 civil society organizations that will disseminate the final report.

VII. Developments related to ELN

98. In August, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the High Commissioner for Peace and the President of the Senate's Peace Commission, Senator Iván Cepeda, travelled to Cuba to meet with ELN. The meeting was attended by the Special Representative and representatives of the Catholic Church and Norway. At the conclusion of the meeting, the High Commissioner for Peace stated that the Government recognized the legitimacy of the ELN delegation and would adopt all political and legal measures necessary for the resumption of talks. Subsequently, the Government issued a decree whereby he reinstated the protocols signed in 2016 during the negotiation between the administration of then-President Juan Manuel Santos and ELN and suspended the arrest warrants and extradition orders against the members of the ELN delegation. Contact with ELN on the ground may now resume.

99. Subsequently, the Attorney-General announced the three-month suspension of the arrest warrants. In turn, the most senior ELN commander, Antonio García, welcomed President Petro's actions to create the conditions for the resumption of peace talks.

VIII. Mission structures

Mission Support

100. As of 31 August 2022, 48 per cent of all civilian personnel and 39 percent of international observers were women.

Safety and security

101. There were 37 incidents affecting the United Nations system, a significant increase compared to the previous quarter. Most incidents related to ordinary crime, with 15 incidents of robbery, theft, and burglary, some of which involved violence. In addition, although the number of incidents affecting the United Nations system involving illegal armed actors during the reporting period was lower, several serious events were registered. For instance, in August, two United Nations staff members had to take shelter for five hours while caught in cross-fire in Norte de Santander. There were also five movement restrictions affecting official missions due to actions by illegal armed groups.

Conduct and discipline

102. Misconduct prevention efforts across the Mission continued through mandatory trainings to new personnel, refresher trainings, re-training of conduct and discipline focal points, a town hall presentation on sexual exploitation and abuse, and targeted trainings for subcontracted personnel.

103. Although no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported, one allegation of serious misconduct is under investigation by the Mission.

IX. Observations

104. Developments during the period reflect renewed momentum and sharpened focus on consolidating peace. President Petro has clearly stated that he intends to pursue “total peace”. I am encouraged by the new Government’s approach to peace and security, which prioritizes dialogue as the foremost recourse to resolving social and armed conflict; emphasizes that security strategies should be focused on the protection of vulnerable communities and human rights; and links durable solutions to violence to overcoming long-standing inequalities through deeper transformations, especially in rural and impoverished areas.

105. This approach represents an opportunity to further the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement, and the Government’s commitment in this regard is cause for optimism. Should the instruments of the Final Agreement be utilized to their potential, they can help to decisively put an end to the lingering expressions of violence in the country while contributing to the broader goal of creating conditions and opportunities for all in Colombia to live in peace and dignity. To that end, ensuring the necessary funds for implementation in the 2023 budget is instrumental.

106. I commend efforts already under way to enhance peacebuilding by meaningfully engaging with local authorities, civil society representatives and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. I trust that they will translate as soon as possible into improved security and well-being for the people of these regions.

107. I am also encouraged by the mutual reassurances by the new administration and former combatants’ representatives, stressing their willingness to work jointly in carrying forward the Final Agreement’s full implementation. I trust that the parties will soon engage in constructive dialogue within the Final Agreement’s architecture to build upon the hard-fought gains of more than five years of implementation and to overcome pending and emerging obstacles.

108. I trust that the new Government will strengthen the support for the thousands of men and women former combatants who remain committed to peace. It is of special importance to go beyond the early gains of reintegration through a greater emphasis on its sustainability in the long term. It is crucial that reintegration leave no one behind and that efforts reach all former FARC-EP members, both inside and outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, and consider the specific needs of women, indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants.

109. The steady advances of the country’s transitional justice system show that Colombian society and institutions are on the path to reconciliation. The final report of the Truth Commission is another landmark in the peace process. Similarly commendable is progress within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including the opening of new cases to address egregious crimes committed by all parties to the conflict, and the continued efforts by the Unit for the Search of Persons Deemed as Missing in its crucial work. Importantly, the Government has also pledged to support

and respect the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. As the System continues to make progress to uphold victims' rights, sustained support for its efforts from all sectors of society will be essential.

110. Nevertheless, violence continues to pervasively affect communities, social leaders, and former combatants, with a disproportionate impact on women, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians. Plans and measures announced so far incorporate elements of the security guarantees provisions of the Final Agreement. I welcome these plans and measures and trust that they will be used to their full potential in the months to come, with a view to progressively strengthening the State's presence and capacities to protect vulnerable groups and to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations.

111. I welcome recent efforts to reinitiate dialogues with ELN. In addition, I salute President Petro's call for a ceasefire by all armed actors, and I urge armed actors to respond positively, to place humanitarian principles above any other consideration and to seize the opportunity to bring an end to violence through dialogue. In the face of persistent violence and the unfulfilled expectations of conflict-affected communities, the way forward is to keep striving to attain peace through the full implementation of the Final Agreement and through additional peace initiatives aimed at ending this suffering. As ever, the United Nations stands ready to assist Colombians as they strive for peace.

Map

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

Verification Mission
Geospatial

