



# Security Council

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## United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2655 \(2022\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The present report covers the period from 27 March to 26 June 2023.

#### II. Major developments

2. The period was marked by continued efforts to advance peace by Colombian authorities and civil society, as reflected in actions to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the approval of key policies and legislation and the continuation of dialogue initiatives to address ongoing conflict-related violence. A key development with important peace-related implications was the approval by Congress of the Government's National Development Plan, which sets out public policy priorities for the next four years. The Plan includes obligations related to the implementation of the Final Agreement in almost 50 of its 373 articles, including key elements of the comprehensive rural reform, the reintegration of former combatants, the substitution of illicit crops and transitional justice. Notably, the Plan includes a specific chapter on peace implementation and an investment plan for peace for approximately \$11.2 billion, 36 per cent more than in the previous national development plan.

3. As part of the Government's total peace policy, dialogue efforts with various armed groups continued under the leadership of the High Commissioner for Peace.

4. In a welcome development, the third round of peace talks with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), held in Cuba, culminated on 9 June with agreements on a six-month national bilateral ceasefire and a mechanism to define the methodology for the participation of Colombian society in the peace process (see paras. 108 and 109).

5. Dialogues continued at varying stages with a range of illegal armed groups and criminal structures with a presence in conflict-affected regions. The High Commissioner for Peace recently announced the beginning of talks with such



organizations in Medellín, Antioquia Department, and reported that six additional dialogues would soon be formally installed.

6. In April, the Government and the dissident group of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) that identifies itself as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP) announced the establishment of a monitoring and verification mechanism for a ceasefire that entered into effect in January, as well as plans to initiate peace dialogues. In May, the Government suspended the ceasefire in four departments following the killing by EMC FARC-EP of three children (two of whom were Indigenous children), although it reaffirmed its intention to proceed with peace talks. International actors and grass-roots civil society organizations in the affected regions urged the parties to prioritize dialogue and strengthen ceasefire arrangements. The parties have maintained effective dialogue towards the continuation of the ceasefire. In June, the Office of the Attorney-General lifted the arrest warrants for 19 EMC FARC-EP representatives to become part of the monitoring and verification mechanism.

7. Following the request by the Government of Colombia on 14 February to expand the mandate of the Mission to support its efforts regarding dialogue with armed groups in the framework of its total peace policy, in particular in the verification of ceasefires, the Secretary-General submitted detailed recommendations to the Security Council on 13 June on how the Mission could carry out that additional task and the implications for its configuration.

8. In April, the Ministry of Defence adopted a new public policy on security and defence, with a focus on human security, strengthening territorial control and dismantling criminal structures. The policy also provides for the enhancement of mechanisms of the Final Agreement relating to security guarantees, such as the Elite Corps of the National Police and the Police Unit for Peacebuilding.

9. With regard to peace-related legislation, thanks to the consensus reached among several parties, two central bills to materialize commitments of the Final Agreement on comprehensive rural reform were approved by Congress and submitted for enactment by the President, Gustavo Petro: one bill to create the agrarian jurisdiction, which is essential for the resolution of agrarian and rural controversies, and another bill to incorporate into the Constitution the recognition of peasants' rights, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. A government-proposed draft bill for the submission to justice of "high-impact" criminal organizations under the total peace policy did not advance in this congressional period, but the Government announced that it would reintroduce the bill in the coming period, starting on 20 July.

10. In line with principles enshrined in the Final Agreement, bills were approved establishing measures to address violence against women in politics and stipulating that 50 per cent of positions in public entities should be occupied by women, up from 30 per cent. This is especially important in view of the departmental and municipal elections to be held on 29 October 2023.

11. In April, the President made changes in 7 of the 18 Cabinet ministries and in the Administrative Department of the Presidency. This included the appointment of new ministers with significant peace-related responsibilities, including the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Finance and Public Credit and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Despite the announcement by the President in March, a decree to formally create a dedicated entity within the Presidency in charge of implementing the Final Agreement has yet to be issued.

12. Authorities and political parties began preparations ahead of a new electoral cycle, including inter-institutional coordination and the selection of candidates. Civil society organizations cautioned against growing political violence, including against former combatants seeking to participate in the elections, and electoral management bodies and regional authorities called for increased security.

### III. Mission tasks

#### Comprehensive rural reform

13. The pace of implementation of the comprehensive rural reform chapter of the Final Agreement continued to accelerate owing to government-promoted institutional adjustments and the allocation of necessary funding in the National Development Plan. The newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development pledged to ensure that rural reform efforts were accelerated and carried out in a participatory manner. She met with peasant and rural women's organizations and private sector representatives to explain the Government's priorities and exchange views.

14. The National Development Plan established mechanisms to accelerate the purchase of land for rural reform purposes, the multipurpose cadastre and the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus. It also reactivated the national agrarian reform system, a key inter-institutional coordination mechanism. Furthermore, it establishes a dialogue mechanism with peasant organizations and reiterates the goals that the Government aims to attain during its four-year term: 3 million hectares delivered to landless peasants and 3.9 million hectares with formalized land tenure.

#### *Access to land*

15. While the Government has made progress in the purchase of land for landless peasants, the delivery of land and the definition of beneficiaries have yet to take place. In a significant step, during an event in Sucre Department in May, the President announced the purchase of over 2,300 hectares, 811 of which were offered by the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers, marking the first purchase within the framework of the agreement between the Federation and the Government signed in October 2022. Beneficiaries have yet to be identified. Other private citizens have expressed their willingness to sell more than 1 million hectares of land to the Government. Around one third of that land area was deemed viable by the National Land Agency. The rest did not meet viability requirements, which include being fertile and not being subject to restitution claims by victims of the conflict.

16. Since the new Administration took office, the National Land Agency has purchased over 13,800 hectares of land, yet the Government is still far from its goal of 500,000 hectares for 2023. During the same period, the Agency formalized land tenure for over 1 million hectares, of which 118,000 hectares is for peasants (57 per cent of the 118,000 hectares being held by women).

17. Following the establishment of four new peasant reserve zones in December 2022, peasant organizations have requested the establishment of additional reserve zones, including in Antioquia, Cesar and Norte de Santander Departments. The Government reiterated its commitment to the creation of new peasant reserve zones.

18. The Government is also working to accelerate land restitution. Steps in this regard include a new geographical prioritization, reviewing procedures to address the backlog of approximately 6 million hectares for which the legal situation has yet to be determined and improving access to housing and productive projects in restituted

land. The Land Restitution Unit set a goal of resolving 36,000 claims for land restitution by 2026.

19. In northern Cauca Department, land issues continue to fuel conflicts among Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, peasants and landowners. In May, the Vice-President, Francia Márquez, visited the area to address land requests and offered over 20 land plots in the municipalities of Corinto and Caloto to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. This highlights the need for sustained efforts to resolve land-related disputes.

#### *Development programmes with a territorial focus*

20. In several outreach activities conducted by the Agency for Territorial Renewal with local actors in the 16 regions with development programmes with a territorial focus, community leaders emphasized the need for greater participation in decision-making and oversight mechanisms. They also requested that the implementation of initiatives related to gender and ethnic communities be accelerated, and underscored the insecurity facing them. Communities and relevant authorities also jointly reviewed the status of implementation of 3,241 initiatives, with 834 identified as being at risk of failing. Some 2,700 initiatives were prioritized as catalytic.

21. As stipulated in the approved National Development Plan, the Government aims during its tenure to reduce by 10 percentage points the multidimensional poverty index in municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus, which was measured at 28.7 per cent in 2021. This would represent a significant closing of long-standing gaps, considering that the index stood at 12.9 per cent for the rest of the country in 2022. The Government also aims to launch the implementation of 24 umbrella projects in 12 regions and more than 19,000 initiatives relating to development programmes with a territorial focus.

#### *National plans for rural reform*

22. The inclusion in the National Development Plan of national plans for rural reform that address a comprehensive set of basic goods and services, including access to health and education, electrification and connectivity, represents an opportunity to close long-standing urban-rural gaps. The Plan requires institutions to establish goals to implement rural reform plans and creates a national system for the progressive guarantee of the right to food, as envisioned in the Final Agreement, with the participation of civil society organizations. The implementation of the plans could significantly benefit from the identification or establishment of an institution to coordinate their implementation.

### **Reintegration**

23. The Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has set four priorities for the reintegration process: community-based reintegration with an emphasis on reconciliation; sustainability of economic reintegration; access to land; and gender and women's empowerment. The establishment of the national reintegration system and the comprehensive reintegration programme in the approved National Development Plan will be key to ensuring institutional coordination.

24. Notwithstanding efforts to further the reintegration of former FARC-EP members, persistent violence continues to jeopardize the process, as evidenced by the urgent relocation of the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Mesetas, Meta Department. Acting on former combatants' reports of imminent threats in March, the Government responded swiftly to address their situation, taking into consideration land, housing and the sustainability of productive initiatives. In June, in a welcome development, the Government purchased and handed over a 1,400-

hectare productive plot to former combatants in Acacías, Meta Department. A nearby former territorial area for training and reintegration in Vista Hermosa faces similar security risks, and the authorities have agreed to a relocation in the coming weeks.

#### *Access to land and housing*

25. Importantly, the Government has expedited procedures related to access to land, broadened the scope to include former combatants within and outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration and allocated approximately \$54 million to purchase land, especially for productive projects, for 2022–2024.

26. The Government purchased land for two former territorial areas for training and reintegration in Caquetá and Meta Departments. Half of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration are now located on purchased land. In June, in another welcome development, for the first time a former combatants' cooperative in a former territorial area for training and reintegration in Antioquia Department received land titles for plots previously purchased by the National Land Agency.

27. Access to housing for former combatants is vital to help the reintegration process to take root. However, progress has been limited. Construction continued in four former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in Antioquia, Arauca, Caquetá and Cauca Departments, although the Ministry of Housing has yet to allocate resources and define the strategy to grant access to housing for former combatants.

#### *Socioeconomic reintegration*

28. In May, in yet another welcome development, the National Reintegration Council approved a much-needed sustainability strategy for collective projects, which looks at the following eight factors: security; access to land; marketing and commercialization; integration in local dynamics; technical and financial stability; managerial and organizational capabilities of cooperatives; an environmental focus; and bridging inequality gaps (including gender and ethnic-related gaps).

29. The Government announced the creation of a sustainability fund worth approximately \$4.4 million to boost collective projects on the basis of the aforementioned criteria. The fund will offer alternatives to participants in projects not considered viable, including support to find employment. A strategy to support individual projects, which account for the majority of former combatants, remains to be defined.

30. No new collective projects were approved during the reporting period. As at 10 June, 128 collective projects had been approved by the National Reintegration Council: 124 projects, implemented by 93 cooperatives, had received financial support, benefiting 3,972 people, including 1,106 women. Only 13 of the projects were led by women. In addition, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization had approved 5,424 individual projects (48 during the current reporting period), involving 6,525 former combatants, including 1,606 women.

31. So far, 77 per cent of accredited former combatants participate in productive projects, 62 per cent of which are individual projects. The percentage female former combatants participating in productive projects stands at 86 per cent.

32. The Ministry of Health allocated resources for the functioning of health schemes in all 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration. These remain a key service in remote rural areas, benefiting former combatants and communities alike.

*Community-based reintegration*

33. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization is developing a strategy on community-based reintegration and reconciliation in 60 municipalities most affected by conflict, with ongoing reintegration and implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus and anticipated tasks, works and activities with reparative and restorative content.

34. The active engagement of local authorities, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and former combatants in 21 departmental, 15 municipal and 24 local reintegration working groups continued to bring solutions to reintegration challenges. The departmental working group in Chocó Department resumed activities with renewed commitment from the Office of the Governor, the Agency and former combatants. In addition, the Governor of Tolima allocated funds to a productive project for Indigenous former combatants, with land provided by the reservation on which it will be implemented. The private sector in Antioquia Department also helped former combatants with access to land.

35. To date, 10,564 former combatants, including 2,575 women, pursue their individual and collective reintegration processes outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in 605 municipalities and 75 collective reintegration areas. Security threats continued to affect former combatants outside such areas, including in Tolima, Huila and Putumayo Departments.

36. The National Reintegration Council approved a new food voucher scheme for all former combatants regardless of their location, thereby expanding support for food security beyond former territorial areas for training and reintegration. This measure, starting in June 2023, is expected to benefit thousands of former combatants who were not previously covered. In addition, 35 collective areas that would benefit from institutional support have been identified by the Mission in nine departments, prioritized on the basis of security and reintegration assessments.

*Reintegration policies and institutions*

37. The National Reintegration Council met once during the reporting period. The session included discussions with various groups of former combatants on strategic reintegration topics. The Comunes party appointed two new delegates to the Council. One of its former delegates, Pastor Alape, a former commander of FARC-EP, announced his intention to seek election as mayor of Puerto Berrio, Antioquia Department.

38. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization reported that it would activate local action plans in 18 municipalities located in nine departments, in order to implement the gender provisions of the reintegration policy. The plans were informed by field visits conducted in the past two years by the working group on gender of the National Reintegration Council to gather information on the specific needs of female former combatants. Particular attention is being paid to strengthening women's leadership, by allocating resources and reactivating the Council's working group on gender.

*Political reintegration*

39. The Comunes party is reviewing potential candidates for endorsement ahead of the departmental and municipal elections. The candidates would seek election in one of the following ways: under the party's banner, as in Antioquia Department, where 42 candidates, including 18 women, are expected to run; under the Government's Pacto Histórico coalition; or by joining other parties and coalitions. Some 500 former combatants are expected to run countrywide.

40. There have been attacks and threats against former combatants seeking to participate in the elections in departments such as Antioquia, Caquetá and Meta, leading to calls for greater institutional efforts to guarantee their fair and secure political participation, a key element of their transition to civilian life. Specific efforts to protect and promote the political participation of female former combatants are essential.

41. The Comunes party continued to work actively in Congress as part of the Government's coalition, with several of its senators and representatives acting as rapporteurs of key draft legislation.

### **Security guarantees**

#### *Regional dynamics of the violence*

42. Persistent violence by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations continues to disrupt the lives of civilians and undermine peacebuilding in various regions, underscoring the importance of peace initiatives and expanded efforts to extend State presence in a way that protects vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas. Persistent risks included gender-based and sexual violence and the use of landmines. Communities are suffering as such actors seek to expand territorial and social control in departments such as Antioquia, Atlántico, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Nariño and Putumayo.

43. The ceasefires in effect since January have been observed largely without defined protocols or verification mechanisms, making them more fragile, with compliance and results more difficult to assess. However, various State entities and civil society organizations have highlighted a drop in confrontations between illegal armed groups and the public security forces, while noting the continuation of clashes between armed groups in various areas as well as other forms of violence affecting civilians. For example, the Investigation and Accusation Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reported a 48 per cent reduction in confrontations between illegal armed groups and the public security forces between January and 30 April, compared with the same period in 2022. The Unit also reported a significant decrease in the impact of such clashes on civilians in Chocó, Norte de Santander and Putumayo Departments. However, it also pointed to an increase in child recruitment and use during the first four months of 2023.

44. Between January and May 2023, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs registered 19,976 forcibly displaced persons and 18,789 confined persons in 14 departments and 38 municipalities, mainly in Arauca, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca Departments. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians continue to be disproportionately affected. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered 22 massacres, of which 7 were verified, 12 were under verification and 3 were inconclusive. The verified cases involved a total of 24 victims, including four women and five children.

45. The Office of the Ombudsman issued 12 early warnings for 33 municipalities in Antioquia, Amazonas, Arauca, Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Guaviare, Vaupés and Vichada Departments. The risks identified include extortion, displacement and the recruitment and use of children and indicate an expansion of illegal armed groups towards the east and south of the country to regions characterized by the presence of peasants and Indigenous Peoples.

46. Humanitarian actors warned of an increase in access restrictions by illegal armed actors, with 134 cases reported from 1 January to 30 April 2023.

*Security and protection for former combatants*

47. Violence against former FARC-EP members continued in several regions in which illegal armed actors exercise social and territorial control. A total of 12 former combatants (all men) were killed in Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca Departments, compared with 11 during the same period in 2022 and up from 6 registered in the previous reporting period. In addition, four former combatants were reported missing in Antioquia, Cauca and Guaviare. Seven others, including one woman, survived attempted homicides in Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

48. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, the Mission has verified a total of 375 killings of former combatants (including 11 women, 54 Afro-Colombians and 35 Indigenous persons), 129 attempted homicides (including of 10 women) and 32 cases of former combatants deemed missing (all men).

49. The Government and former combatants are reviewing the security and protection needs of former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new areas of reintegration, with support from the Mission. Five former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in Antioquia, Cauca, Meta and Putumayo Departments, are facing security risks and require urgent support. As the Government develops a strategy to address those situations, due consideration should be given to the security of host communities in both the areas left behind and the new locations.

50. The Ministry of Defence announced that it would gradually reinforce preventive security deployments in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, starting in July. The police would enhance its presence in all 24 areas, while military forces would strengthen their presence mainly in areas of Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta and Putumayo Departments.

51. In June, the Technical Committee on Security and Protection presented the final draft of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection to former combatants in seven regions. The Plan is expected to be adopted in July.

*Violence against social leaders and conflict-affected communities*

52. The serious security situation facing social leaders and human rights defenders in several regions remains unchanged. OHCHR received 57 allegations of killings of human rights defenders, including eight women, nine Indigenous leaders, six Afro-Colombian leaders and one leader of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons (of which 13 were verified, 28 were under verification and 16 were inconclusive). Killings were reported in almost half of the country's 32 departments, with most cases registered in Cauca.

53. Highlighting the persistence of this phenomenon, the Office of the Ombudsman issued a national early warning on specific risks for social leaders and human rights defenders, including those related to conflict-related sexual violence. According to the Office, between September 2019 and December 2022, there were 2,974 incidents of violence against human rights defenders and social leaders, including killings, forced displacement and threats in 510 of the country's more than 1,100 municipalities. The early warning included specific recommendations to relevant authorities, including strengthening prevention and protection.

54. The Office of the Attorney-General has reported 153 convictions in its investigations into 765 killings of social leaders and human rights defenders since the signing of the Final Agreement. An additional 143 cases are in the trial phase.

55. Four months ahead of the elections, the Mission recorded the killing of six members of political parties, including one woman, from across the political spectrum



in Antioquia, Arauca, Bogotá, Cauca, Guaviare and Norte de Santander Departments. Four were members of the Pacto Histórico coalition, one of the Centro Democrático party and one of the Cambio Radical party.

*Judicial measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Constitutional Court*

56. Despite missing the deadline of 2 May ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the technical subcommittee of the National Commission on Security Guarantees made progress on a draft of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, expected to be presented to the Special Jurisdiction in June, in response to the judicial measures regarding security guarantees.

57. In May, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reiterated its orders to the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General to report in detail on progress in investigations into attacks against former FARC-EP members as well as in developing an action plan to improve investigations and efforts to dismantle criminal organizations.

58. The Constitutional Court held two hearings following up on its declaration in 2022 of an unconstitutional state of affairs regarding security guarantees for former combatants. The Court underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to human security to address the risks facing former combatants in former territorial areas for training and reintegration and new reintegration areas.

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

59. Notwithstanding its critical importance, progress in prosecuting perpetrators of attacks against former combatants remains limited, which is an argument in favour of increasing the deployment of prosecutors and specialized judges in the most affected regions, as well as enhancing collaboration with the police to execute arrest warrants. The Special Investigation Unit reported 2 new convictions, bringing the total to 67 (including 5 convictions against those who ordered the attacks), in the 453 cases of attacks against former combatants under its investigation. In addition, 62 cases are in the trial phase and 260 persons linked to the attacks have been arrested. A total of 198 arrest warrants are pending execution.

60. The Office of the Attorney-General requested that the judiciary hold a hearing to indict 25 members of the Army on charges of homicide and attempted homicide of protected persons, in relation to a military operation in Puerto Leguizamo, Putumayo Department, in March 2022, in which 11 persons were killed.

**Restorative sentences**

*Progress on cases of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace*

61. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to make progress in its cases. In March, within the framework of Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents), the Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction assumed jurisdiction over 12 former members of the public security forces, who acknowledged their responsibility for crimes committed in the Caribbean region. In May, the Mission accompanied the Tribunal to Cesar and La Guajira Department to report the decision to the Kankuamo and Wiwa Indigenous Peoples, who are accredited as individual and collective victims in the case, and to hear their expectations regarding restorative sentences. The visit, alongside the holding of interjurisdictional coordination sessions in all Special Jurisdiction cases, was aimed at giving Indigenous and Afro-Colombian victims, communities and authorities a voice in the transitional justice process.

62. Regarding Case 01 (on hostage-taking, other serious deprivations of liberty and other concurrent crimes committed by FARC-EP), 54 middle-ranking former combatants of the FARC-EP South and Caribbean blocs participated in two collective hearings, held in Bogotá and in Riohacha, La Guajira Department. Accredited victims participated remotely and were able to submit further questions through their lawyers, who were present at the hearings.

63. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace made progress in assessing the requests for submission under its authority by Rodrigo Tovar and Salvatore Mancuso, former leaders of the former paramilitary group known as Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia). In May, the Special Jurisdiction decided not to accept Mr. Tovar under its jurisdiction after concluding that he did not provide the full truth, thus failing to comply with the requirements to be under the Special Jurisdiction's authority. Also in May, Mr. Mancuso provided his version of events, highlighting alleged ties between public security forces, political actors and the private sector and the paramilitary forces during the conflict. The Special Jurisdiction requested that he provide, within 30 working days, additional evidence in that regard beyond the findings already available under ordinary justice. That evidence will be analysed and verified by the Special Jurisdiction to inform its final decision.

64. Notably, the Investigation and Accusation Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first indictment in May against Luis Almario, a former member of Congress who had been referred to the adversarial process after failing to recognize responsibility within Case 01. He was charged with the crime against humanity of persecution based on political grounds, murder, serious deprivation of liberty and forced displacement, in relation to his alleged alliance with the former FARC-EP, to eliminate his adversaries in Caquetá Department. The Unit identified 30 victims of these crimes, including three women. If found guilty, Mr. Almario faces up to 20 years in prison, as provided for in the Final Agreement.

65. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is preparing a public hearing to be held on 27 June in Dabeiba, Antioquia Department, focusing on extrajudicial executions in the Las Mercedes cemetery, within Case 03 and Case 04 (on the situation in the Urabá region). Former members of the public security forces are expected to acknowledge responsibility for the crimes during the hearing.

66. In this context, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued a statement in May condemning threats allegedly issued by the Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) against two magistrates working on the investigations in Dabeiba. The threats were widely denounced, including by the President and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the Mission. The armed group denied any involvement. Furthermore, the Mission received information that, since the start of investigations in Dabeiba, 13 individuals had been threatened, including magistrates, victims, attorneys and indictees, and that a witness had survived an assassination attempt.

67. In June, during a visit to Colombia, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace announced a work plan, which included close liaison and technical assistance, to implement the Cooperation Agreement of 2021 signed upon the conclusion of the Court's preliminary examination of the situation in Colombia. The Prosecutor reaffirmed his support for the Special Jurisdiction and underscored the importance of safeguarding its work and independence.

#### *Preparations to verify restorative sentences*

68. The Mission continues to monitor the State's preparedness to provide the conditions for the implementation of restorative sentences. Importantly, the National

Development Plan provided for the establishment of a coordination mechanism, which was installed in June, between the Government and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the sentences, led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. According to the Plan, government entities will also adapt and create plans, programmes or projects and will ensure conditions for the implementation of restorative sentences.

69. The National Development Plan provides that eligible former members of the public security forces under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace can obtain access to institutional support, through the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. This includes the allocation of a lump sum of approximately \$1,900 for livelihood projects and a monthly stipend equivalent to 90 per cent of the minimum wage for 24 months.

70. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace made progress in designing restorative projects funded by the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia. One project, designed by the United Nations Development Programme and the Mine Action Service in coordination with the Special Jurisdiction and national authorities, is focused on mine risk education and will be implemented in the Urabá region of Antioquia. A second project, designed by the Special Jurisdiction, will focus on environmental restoration in the Sumapaz region, including in rural areas of Bogotá. Around 50 individuals under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, both former FARC-EP combatants and members of the public security forces, are expected to participate in these projects.

### **Ethnic chapter**

71. The Government's commitment to the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement was reflected in several provisions included in the National Development Plan related to its implementation and broader issues regarding Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

72. The Office of the Vice-President, which has been tasked with coordinating actions to fulfil ethnic-related provisions, continues to work on a strategy to foster their implementation, including by prioritizing the needs of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians within the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus; access to land; demining and illicit crop substitution; collective reparation, land restitution and the return of ethnic peoples to their territories; and strengthening of the participation of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in such actions.

73. Importantly, several embassies and United Nations entities created a group in April to support the implementation of the ethnic chapter. Initial activities include a review of existing initiatives with international support and the identification of priority areas, which will be presented to the Government in July.

### *Land-related developments*

74. The Government's cartographic entity has adopted new internal regulations to ensure an ethnic approach to its work. The entity is also preparing consultations with ethnic peoples with a view to ensuring a differential and intercultural approach in its work regarding the multipurpose cadastre, as stipulated in the Final Agreement.

75. In a welcome development, the Agency for Territorial Renewal announced the allocation of 30 per cent of its resources for the implementation of the over 8,000 initiatives for development programmes with a territorial focus in ethnic territories, which are significantly delayed. The Government conducted a participatory process during which the Jiw and Nukak peoples in Meta and Guaviare identified 199

initiatives to be included in that region's development programme with a territorial focus.

76. There are differences between Indigenous representatives to the National Commission of Indigenous Territories and the Government regarding figures on land formalization in Indigenous territories. This highlights the need for continued engagement and constructive dialogue.

77. Indigenous communities in Córdoba have reported threats and harassment allegedly by the Clan del Golfo after receiving lands from the Special Assets Administration.

#### *Reintegration and security guarantees*

78. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has hired new staff to strengthen the ethnic approach in the reintegration process in 11 departments, including Cauca, Chocó and Nariño, which host a significant number of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants and where their reintegration has important delays. This could help to boost the implementation of the specific measures with an ethnic approach that are stipulated in the national reintegration policy.

79. Violence continues to affect Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. In Cauca, clashes between illegal armed groups continue to put Indigenous guards and communities at risk. Despite the difficult security situation, some 40 Indigenous former combatants established a new reintegration area in Jambaló, Cauca Department, and as part of their reintegration efforts former combatants are discussing with the host community the possible implementation of restorative activities.

80. In May, three children, including two Indigenous children, forcibly recruited by EMC FARC-EP were killed by the group in the border area of Caquetá and Putumayo for attempting to flee. The Indigenous children belonged to the Murui Muina people, which the Constitutional Court had deemed as at risk of extinction. The crime was widely condemned and led to the partial suspension of the ceasefire between the Government and the group in Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta and Putumayo Departments.

#### *Victims and transitional justice*

81. In May, the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing established a new coordination mechanism with the National Commission for Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples aimed at furthering search activities in Indigenous territories with a differentiated approach.

## **IV. Other developments related to the implementation of the Final Agreement**

#### *Political participation*

82. The representatives of the special transitional electoral districts for peace continued to follow up on bills related to the Final Agreement, especially on peace-related provisions in the National Development Plan, and successfully advocated for the inclusion of provisions related to access to productive land for the rural population, comprehensive care for victims, and security in municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus, among others.

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

83. Thousands of families that depend on illicit crops continue to face challenges including insecurity and the lack of development opportunities. In view of their dire

economic situation, the Government issued a resolution that allows for food security assistance to eligible families in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops.

84. The National Development Plan stipulates the allocation of funds necessary to comply with the Government's commitments vis-à-vis Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant families, and provides for the one-time renegotiation of agreements with families that have not benefited from productive projects.

85. The Government is taking steps to further the implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops and to include additional families in new crop substitution efforts. The long-term success of crop substitution efforts is contingent upon ensuring that changes to the Programme and new initiatives be devised in a concerted manner and that they respond adequately to emerging challenges.

#### *Recommendations of the Truth Commission*

86. The Truth Commission handed over to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the General Archive of the Nation its documentary archive, containing nearly 15,000 testimonies of victims and parties to the armed conflict collected in the country and abroad, and investigations into at least 730 cases and 1,195 reports of acts of violence during the conflict. The archive, which is open to the public, seeks to contribute to dignifying victims and can be used by decision-makers to inform public policies for peace and reconciliation.

87. The committee set up to follow up on and monitor the recommendations of the Truth Commission regretted that Congress had failed to include in the National Development Plan a provision on the implementation of the recommendations. Nonetheless, in a meeting held in May with government delegates, the committee discussed opportunities to ensure their implementation, considering that 72 of the 170 recommendations are related to measures contemplated in the Plan.

#### *Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing*

88. In April, Luz Janeth Forero was sworn in as the Director of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing for a five-year term lasting from 2023 to 2028, and pledged to broaden the participation of victims, to have greater territorial coverage and to strengthen coordination between the Unit and other State entities.

89. The Unit and civil society organizations welcomed the creation of the national search system in the National Development Plan. The system aims to improve inter-institutional coordination and develop a public policy on the search for missing persons.

90. The Unit continued to conduct massive DNA sampling in Colombia and abroad. In addition, during the reporting period, it recovered 86 bodies of missing persons found in 12 departments, 7 of which were handed over to their families, including that of a 21-year-old woman who disappeared 22 years ago after being forcibly recruited. Those findings were possible thanks to information provided by communities and individuals appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Since its establishment, the Unit has recovered 850 bodies and handed over 194.

91. On the basis of information provided to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace by the former paramilitary leader Mr. Mancuso on the existence of graves along the border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Unit is conducting search efforts in Norte de Santander and is defining a possible operational plan to conduct cross-border activities in the search for missing persons.

*Dialogue mechanisms for implementation*

92. The Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement held two sessions, including on the relocation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration owing to insecurity, and to discuss the status of implementation of the ethnic chapter with the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples.

93. The tripartite working group on mines continued to conduct activities including coordination, awareness-raising and data collection among former combatants, which provided valuable information on the potential location of minefields in Bolívar, Cesar, Huila, Magdalena, Santander and Quindío Departments, with the support of the Mine Action Service, and former combatants continued to provide the Government with information on areas in which landmines had been installed during the conflict. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is assessing a request by former combatants from a former territorial area for training and reintegration in Cesar participating in the pilot project on the gathering of information on mines in order to certify such efforts as restorative initiatives.

## V. Cross-cutting considerations

*Gender*

94. The Government continues to work on the participatory design of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Some 800 women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, including former FARC-EP members, participated in regional and local forums in Antioquia, Arauca, Meta and Santander Departments. The United Nations country team and the Mission provided methodological and logistical support. Participants highlighted the need to update the public policy on the protection of women leaders and to strengthen the advocacy capacity of women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex organizations within peacebuilding efforts.

95. In addition, the National Development Plan establishes a programme for delivering land to rural women, in line with their prioritization within the Final Agreement.

96. Furthermore, with a view to updating, by September 2023, the Action Plan of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, the Ministry of the Interior is conducting a series of consultative workshops to include the views of women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex organizations. Participants, including State institutions and United Nations entities, highlighted the need for dedicated funding and measurable indicators for the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme.

97. Nevertheless, overall implementation of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement continues to face challenges. As the country prepares for local and regional elections, women's organizations and the Special Forum on Gender have expressed concerns about persistent security risks for the political participation of women.

98. Threats, killings and conflict-related sexual violence have also persisted against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex leaders, female former combatants and girls. With regard to sexual violence against minors registered in former territorial areas for training and reintegration, authorities have made arrests in relation to only three of the eight cases registered by the Mission since 2021.

99. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, visited Colombia in May. She met with government and civil society stakeholders to discuss issues including the need to address sexual and gender-based violence considerations in ongoing and future peace initiatives, emphasizing the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons and victims' platforms.

100. Civil society organizations and institutions, including the Office of the Inspector General, continued to call for the opening by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace of Case 11 on sexual and gender-based violence. In this context, on 16, June, in response to a judicial request by victims and the Inspector General, the Review Section of the Special Jurisdiction gave the Recognition Chamber 30 working days to decide on the opening of the case.

### *Children*

101. Months after the finalization of its drafting, the technical working group on children of the National Reintegration Council resumed implementation of the action plan for the programme "A different path of life". The working group is also working on the inclusion of a child protection approach within the comprehensive reintegration programme.

102. The working group is also addressing individual cases of beneficiaries of "A different path of life" facing security threats. One of its female members was forcibly displaced from Norte de Santander Department owing to threats by an illegal armed group, and another female member, who was forcibly displaced from Norte de Santander during the previous reporting period, was threatened again at her new location.

103. Social and productive reintegration for the members of the programme continued to show progress as the number of participants with resources for productive projects reached 89, including 55 women, up from 85 in the previous reporting period.

104. The Mission received several reports of cases of forced recruitment and use of children in Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca and Norte de Santander Departments. In April, the Intersectoral Commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children, comprising 22 entities, was convened for the first time under the current Administration.

### *Youth*

105. Young Colombians continue to participate actively in peacebuilding efforts. In May, over 300 young men and women from Antioquia Department, including members of youth councils, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons' organizations and young people from the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Dabeiba, participated in an international summit on non-violence led by the departmental government.

106. Nevertheless, young peacebuilders' efforts continue to be hindered by violence in several regions. For instance, in May, Generación V+, a youth platform focused on raising awareness of the final report of the Truth Commission, condemned an attack in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department, by unidentified individuals who shot at several young people, including two Afro-Colombian members of the platform.

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

107. On 9 June, the Government and ELN concluded the third cycle of peace talks, in Havana.

108. At a ceremony attended by the President and the First Commander of ELN, Eliecer Herlinto Chamorro (alias Antonio García), the parties signed agreements on a 180-day national, bilateral, temporary ceasefire, renewable by mutual agreement, and on the establishment of a commission to define the methodology for the participation of Colombian society in the peace process.

109. In his letter of 13 June to the Security Council, the Secretary-General reported on the details of the ceasefire agreement, which is to take full effect on 3 August 2023, including on the potential role of the Mission in the proposed mechanism of monitoring and verification. The parties requested that my Special Representative for Colombia and the Catholic Church support them in the coordination necessary to convene the national commission on participation. The parties agreed that, in the coming weeks, they would focus on the preparatory work for the implementation of both agreements and announced that they would hold the next round of talks in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 14 August to 4 September.

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

110. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia reaffirmed its commitment to peace in the country with the approval of a third phase of the fund that would allow for continued support for the implementation of the Final Agreement and broader peace-related efforts.

111. The Immediate Response Facility of the Peacebuilding Fund allocated \$3 million for a project to be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme and OHCHR, which is aimed at supporting negotiations and promoting peacebuilding processes at the national and local levels, in the context of ongoing dialogue between the Government and ELN and dialogue with other armed groups. The Special Representative will also support the project through good offices.

## **VIII. Mission structures**

### *Mission support*

112. As at 31 May, 46 per cent of all civilian personnel and 38 per cent of international observers were women.

### *Safety and security*

113. The Department of Security and Safety registered 31 incidents affecting the United Nations system. They included two movement restrictions by illegal armed groups in Chocó Department and three incidents of hostile surveillance in Antioquia, Chocó and Nariño Departments. Other incidents related to criminal acts, including robberies involving violence, one of which resulted in a United Nations staff member being injured by a knife. The Department is conducting risk management workshops and training sessions in the most affected regions to prevent and mitigate such events.

### *Conduct and discipline*

114. The Mission continues to implement a strong misconduct prevention programme with continuous training and awareness-raising, risk assessments and



messaging on zero tolerance for fraud and corruption. Promoting the use of informal conflict resolution mechanisms, the Mission benefited from a visit by the Office of Mediation Services, during which eight training sessions were conducted in Bogotá and Meta and online, with the participation of 130 personnel.

115. One allegation of serious misconduct and no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported from 1 March to 31 May.

## **IX. Observations**

116. As Colombian society and institutions continue their efforts to consolidate peace, the reporting period saw the adoption of key policies and important steps forward in the implementation of critical aspects of the Final Agreement. Similarly, the Government's engagement with different illegal armed actors continued to be an encouraging reflection of its commitment to tackling violence through dialogue. I salute the progress made and encourage the authorities to continue to strive to advance, especially in the light of the urgent need to improve security for vulnerable populations.

117. I welcome, for example, the fact that peace in general and the Final Agreement in particular stand out as major priorities in the National Development Plan, which was crafted with the broad participation of Colombian society. I hope that the announced appointment of a dedicated senior official within the Presidency to lead the implementation of the Agreement will be made without further delay, as it would undoubtedly help to accelerate progress.

118. In addition to the prominent importance of various elements of the comprehensive rural reform in the National Development Plan, concrete results attained with regard to the purchase and formalization of land are also noteworthy. Particularly encouraging was the first purchase of land within the framework of the agreement between the Government and the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers, which showcased the potential of combining efforts to achieve common interests.

119. I trust that land made available so far for rural reform purposes will soon be handed over to its intended beneficiaries, including victims and rural women, along with the support necessary to ensure long-term success, such as access to credit and technical assistance. This would allow for rural communities, including peasants, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians, to grasp new opportunities with their own hands, while also contributing to set in motion the long-awaited structural transformations promised in the Final Agreement.

120. Almost six years into the reintegration process, thousands of male and female former combatants have devoted precious resources and tireless efforts to their economic reintegration. Considering the challenges facing collective productive projects, I welcome the agreement reached within the National Reintegration Council on a strategy on sustainability and the Government's commitment to backing it with significant resources. I trust that the parties' consensus on the matter will lead to swift agreement on other equally important mechanisms, and that whatever solutions are devised, they are made available to all former combatants who remain committed to peace, regardless of where they have decided to settle.

121. Efforts to advance the implementation of the ethnic chapter are encouraging, as the challenges facing this key element of the Final Agreement cannot be overstated. I urge the Government to redouble efforts to address historic exclusion and inequality, including through the allocation of much-needed funding. Making full use of the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples is equally essential to ensure that

implementation is shaped by the views and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians.

122. It is undeniable that the signing of the Final Agreement has led to palpable reductions of conflict-related violence at the onset of implementation. Nevertheless, over recent years conflict-affected regions have seen an increase in the presence and actions of illegal armed actors in a context of a still limited State presence. As the present report shows, there are regions in Colombia, especially those prioritized for implementation, where violence against entire communities, vulnerable boys and girls, social leaders or former combatants makes up a landscape of insecurity in which peace cannot take root.

123. I commend once again in this context the Government's determination to find solutions to respond to these ever-evolving conflict dynamics, especially its emphasis on dialogue. Especially noteworthy are the recent results reached at the negotiation table between the Government and ELN. I trust that the parties will continue to show determination and good faith in the implementation of the agreements reached in Cuba and that the next cycles will lead to further agreements for the benefit of all Colombians.

124. I welcome the announcement by the Government of upcoming talks with several illegal armed actors and I call on them to demonstrate genuine commitment to peace, for I am certain that these talks represent a unique opportunity.

125. Similarly, I trust that the recently adopted policy on security and defence will lead to significant, sustained improvements in the protection of conflict-affected communities.

126. In that vein, as the second departmental and municipal elections since the signing of the Agreement are quickly approaching, I urge the authorities to take every measure necessary to preserve one of the most tangible dividends of the Final Agreement, namely the holding of increasingly peaceful and participatory elections.

127. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is making clear through its decisions that genuine commitment to upholding victims' rights is the only way forward, and that failure to acknowledge full truth and responsibility comes at a cost. Sustained cooperation between the Special Jurisdiction, the Government and other State entities, and the commitment of individuals within the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction to fulfil their obligations, remain essential to ensure that justice can be a cornerstone of peace and reconciliation. The first restorative sentences will undoubtedly contribute to bringing justice, truth and guarantees of non-repetition to the victims.

128. I also strongly condemn any threats and acts of violence against the magistrates of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, victims, individuals appearing in its cases and all other actors taking part in the Special Jurisdiction's fundamental work.

129. There can be no doubt about the many dividends that the Colombian peace process has yielded, but the work of building peace is far from finished. Every effort must be made to preserve and expand these hard-fought gains. The United Nations will continue to assist and accompany Colombians in this endeavour.