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United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2574 \(2021\)](#), by which the Council extended and expanded the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Council resolution [2366 \(2017\)](#), in which it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days. The report covers the period from 27 March 2021 to 25 June 2021. Progress and challenges are presented within the framework of the five priorities for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace as recommended by the Secretary-General for 2021, namely protection and security for former combatants, conflict-affected communities, social leaders and human rights defenders; the sustainability of the reintegration process; the consolidation of the integrated presence of the State in conflict-affected areas; the reinforcement of a constructive dialogue between the parties; and the promotion of reconciliation.

Major developments

2. Heightened social unrest in Colombia and polarization surrounding nationwide protests and associated violence marked the reporting period. The events drew serious national and international concerns, along with appeals for non-violence, respect for human rights and the resolution of differences through peaceful dialogue.

3. On 28 April, a national strike accompanied by widespread demonstrations mostly concentrated in urban settings was carried out with the support of several civil society actors, including unions, students, peasants, women's, indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations. Protests also featured an unprecedented level of participation by young people. Protesters voiced demands revolving around a wide range of issues, especially a tax reform proposed by the Government (which it withdrew on 2 May), as well as issues related to health care, education, a guaranteed basic income for the most vulnerable in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and agrarian development. Opposition parties and movements echoed the demands made in the context of the strike. Youth, women's, indigenous peoples and peasants' organizations in various regions also cited the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement as part of their demands.

4. The national strike was mostly characterized by peaceful protests, but it also led to violent clashes between public security forces and protesters, abuses by public



security forces, acts of vandalism against public infrastructure and roadblocks. Some of the most serious incidents of violence were reported in the cities of Bogotá, Cali and Popayán. From 28 April to 16 June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered allegations of 56 deaths, 54 civilians and two police officers, in the context of the protests; hundreds more were wounded. Various statements by the United Nations called for respect for human rights and peaceful protest, the de-escalation of violence and dialogue to find a solution to the crisis. Civil society organizations alleged extensive police abuses in the context of the strike, which led to increasing demands for enhanced security guarantees for protesters, as well as police reform. The President of Colombia, Iván Duque, condemned the violence and the roadblocks hindering mobility and the flow of essential goods and assured that all cases of abuse by members of the public security forces would be investigated. On 6 June, he announced a series of police reforms. Government officials and the Attorney General stated that illegal armed groups could have been linked to some of the violence during the strike.

5. At the request of the Government and the National Strike Committee – which brings together many of the civil society actors engaged in the protests – the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, along with the representative of OHCHR and a representative of the Catholic Church, facilitated dialogues aimed at reaching a negotiated solution to the strike at the national level. Similar efforts were supported through good offices in the regions most affected by the strike, including Cali, the third largest city in Colombia. The Mission and members of the United Nations country team have also lent their support to facilitate the establishment of life-saving supply corridors and OHCHR monitored compliance with human rights standards during protests.

6. On 15 June, in the absence of a negotiated solution to the strike, the National Strike Committee announced the temporary suspension of mobilizations and stated that civil society actors would continue to voice their demands, including through draft bills to be introduced to Congress.

7. Colombia reached an important milestone in the peace process in April, when former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) secretariat indicted in January by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Case 01, on hostage-taking and other severe deprivations of liberty, provided their response to the indictment, including information in response to specific requests made by victims accredited in this case. Following their response, the former commanders acknowledged the existence of a policy of kidnapping within the former guerrilla group and assumed their responsibility for crimes against humanity and war crimes. They also said that they failed to exercise effective control over their subordinates and that they were responsible for the ill-treatment of kidnapping victims. Furthermore, the former FARC-EP leaders asked for forgiveness and pledged to help to locate the remains of victims of kidnapping who were killed or died in captivity.

8. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace also received comments on the indictments by accredited victims and the Office of the Inspector General. The observations will be instrumental for the next step in the process, whereby the Judicial Panel for Acknowledgement of Truth, Responsibility and Determination of Facts and Conduct of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will assess if the response by the former members of the FARC-EP secretariat constitutes a full acknowledgement of responsibility and an exhaustive contribution to the truth.

9. The response was widely commended, including by the Special Representative, as an important step for truth, justice and reconciliation, as well as for the satisfaction

of victims' rights and as an important demonstration of the commitment of former FARC-EP members to the Final Agreement.

10. On 17 June, former FARC-EP commanders indicted by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace provided the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing with information to begin the search for 55 civilians and members of the security forces who were kidnapped by the FARC-EP. They also pledged to provide information on another 136 victims. According to the Unit, 192 victims linked to Case 01 are still missing.

11. In May, after a series of legal actions, the Constitutional Court ruled that Congress had, in a disputed vote held in 2017, approved a bill creating 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace, which were provided for in section 2 of the Final Agreement. The new electoral districts are meant to promote the participation of historically excluded populations in areas affected by conflict, including members of victims' and women's organizations. The Court ruled that the 16 additional seats in the House of Representatives would be open for the 2022–2026 and 2026–2030 congressional periods.

12. Also in May, President Duque replaced ministers and senior officials who had resigned. He appointed the Vice-President, Marta Lucía Ramírez, to serve concurrently as Minister for Foreign Affairs. There were also changes in the Ministries of Finance, Commerce and Culture and the appointment of a new High Commissioner for Peace.

13. On 15 June, a car bomb was detonated on an army base in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander Department, leaving 36 people wounded. The attack was widely condemned by political actors and civil society. No illegal armed group has taken responsibility for the attack and investigations are ongoing.

14. The reporting period was also marked by the third, and most severe, wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed the lives of 103,321 persons as at 25 June. The Government-led vaccination strategy is moving forward and some 16 million vaccines have been administered.

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

Regional dynamics of violence

15. Disputes over social and territorial control between illegal armed actors continued to affect communities, human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants, in particular in areas historically characterized by limited State presence, illicit economies and high levels of poverty. Violence continues to be concentrated in 25 municipalities in Antioquia, Cauca, Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca Departments.

16. Violence has also escalated in previous strongholds of the former FARC-EP, including the border area of Caquetá, Guaviare and Meta Departments. In late May, the Land Restitution Unit reported the disappearance of a four-person mission in Meta Department (a staff member from the Unit, two female victims and a driver) who were conducting activities related to the restitution of the victims' land, which was taken from them during the conflict. Search efforts are under way.

17. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs registered the forced mass displacement of more than 7,400 persons (33 per cent from indigenous communities) in seven Departments, bringing the total of mass displaced persons so far in 2021 to 29,000 (an increase of 101 per cent compared with the same period last year). Most displacements are linked to clashes between illegal armed actors and

between illegal armed actors and public security forces. In addition, 25 confinements of communities were reported, affecting 27,000 people, almost all indigenous and Afro-Colombian. The most affected municipalities are in Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle de Cauca Departments.

18. During the reporting period, OHCHR documented 9 large-scale killings and 10 more are under verification, with the highest numbers registered in the Departments of Antioquia (2) and Huila (2).

Security and protection for former combatants

19. During the reporting period, the Mission verified 16 killings of former FARC-EP combatants (15 men, 1 woman), bringing the total to 278 (270 men, 8 women) since the signing of the Final Agreement. The Mission has verified 63 attempted homicides (59 men, 4 women) and 21 disappearances (all men), since the signing of the Final Agreement. Risks also persist for the relatives of the victims.

20. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, the killings have mostly been concentrated in the Departments of Cauca (48), Nariño (33), Antioquia (29), Caquetá (26), Meta (23), Norte de Santander (22), Valle del Cauca (21), Putumayo (20), Chocó (15), Huila (8) and Guaviare (7). Former combatants involved in reintegration activities, including leaders of cooperatives and of productive projects, and in the handover of former FARC-EP assets, continue facing risks, especially in areas characterized by limited State presence and the presence of illegal armed actors.

21. In March, following legal actions by attorneys of former combatants, the Constitutional Court began an assessment to determine whether to declare an unconstitutional state of affairs regarding the security of former combatants, which could lead the Court to issue orders for their protection. The Court invited national entities, departmental and municipal authorities, civil society and international organizations, including the Mission, to provide insights on the implementation of the Final Agreement's provisions for security guarantees.

22. A former mid-level commander of indigenous origin, Arnoldo Medina, who was leading a cooperative, was killed in a new reintegration area in Cauca in April. Threats have led six members of the same cooperative and their families to flee the area. The Mission is working with the police to ensure that the security risks and specific needs of former combatants residing outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration are taken into account in the development of its rural security plan.

Precautionary measures issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace

23. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has continued to follow up on its precautionary measures for the protection of former combatants issued in 2020 and has issued new ones, including specific actions at the local level in areas with heightened risks for former FARC-EP members. The Investigation and Accusation Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which monitors the security situation of persons participating in the transitional justice system, has also warned of the risks for former combatants in 10 municipalities, most of which align with the 25 municipalities identified by the Mission where violence persists.

24. To strengthen interinstitutional coordination on security guarantees, in late March, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation announced the adoption of a Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants, in response to Special Jurisdiction for Peace orders. The Comunes party, formerly the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) party, stated that the plan did not reflect their inputs and that it was not aligned with the commitments in the Final Agreement.

25. On a positive note, also pursuant to Special Jurisdiction for Peace orders, the National Protection Unit has made progress in the assessment of pending protection requests. To date, 52 per cent of pending requests have been evaluated and 345 have been approved, including 43 for women and 20 collective protection measures. There are still 307 requests pending evaluation. The National Protection Unit has also made progress in filling the bodyguard vacancies, hiring 383 of the 686 additional bodyguards ordered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

26. In May, the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings held an extraordinary session by order of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace related to an October 2020 early warning for Tuluá, Valle del Cauca Department. The meeting resulted in the adoption of an action plan focused on differentiated risks for former combatants residing in a new reintegration area. Regrettably, in June, a former combatant belonging to a cooperative in this area was killed. The victim was the president of a local administrative board and had run in the local elections in 2019 under the banner of the FARC party.

Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General

27. The Special Investigations Unit reported six new convictions related to attacks against former FARC-EP combatants, bringing the total to 41 convictions out of 320 attacks investigated by the Unit. Another 44 cases are in trial phase, 22 are under investigation and 49 have arrest warrants issued. Of the 279 arrest warrants issued against persons suspected to be linked to attacks against former combatants, 250 allegedly belong to a criminal organization. During the reporting period, nine persons were arrested and 129 arrest warrants are still pending execution. The Unit reported that, owing to security challenges, to date it has reached only 65 per cent of the crime scenes.

28. In June, the Attorney General reported the killing of the sectional prosecutor, Esperanza Navas, in Tibú, in Norte de Santander Department. According to the Attorney General, the crime was allegedly committed by unidentified armed men while Ms. Navas was at her residence. Investigations are ongoing.

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

29. Through preventive security deployments, army and police units continue monitoring security around all 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration, which host approximately one third of accredited former combatants. Despite their overall effectiveness, in May a former combatant was attacked within the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Tumaco, Nariño Department and survived as a result of the collective protection scheme of the National Protection Unit. This event highlights the gravity of the risks and the importance of ensuring the continuity and complementarity of these security and protection mechanisms.

Security for Comunes and other political parties

30. Threats and attacks against members of political parties and elected public officials were reported in Antioquia, Bogotá, Caquetá, Chocó, Sucre and Valle del Cauca Departments. Affected parties include Alianza Verde, Centro Democrático, Colombia Humana, Comunes, Polo Democrático, Partido Conservador and Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social (MAIS). Fully implementing the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics is instrumental to strengthening security guarantees for individuals who participate in politics, especially future candidates for the 2022 elections, as well as for civil servants.

31. The Tripartite Security and Protection Mechanism, composed of the police's peacebuilding unit, the specialized subdirectorate of the National Protection Unit and the Mission, is developing a new coordination strategy to enhance prevention measures for members of the Comunes party and former FARC-EP combatants in general, in preparation for the upcoming electoral process.

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

32. During the reporting period, OHCHR received information about the killings of 49 human rights defenders (5 documented and 44 under verification): 43 men and 6 women, of whom 4 were Afro-Colombians and 10 were indigenous leaders. A total of 71 killings have been reported in 2021 (7 documented and 64 under verification): 63 men and 8 women, of whom 24 were ethnic leaders and 1 was a leader in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. The Departments with the highest number of killings are Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca.

National Commission on Security Guarantees

33. The National Commission on Security Guarantees did not meet during the reporting period. Civil society members of the Commission called for the Commission to be convened to develop a clear road map to implement the public policy guidelines to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks, adopted in March.

Sustainability of the reintegration process

34. Most former combatants remain committed to reintegrating into economic, social and political life notwithstanding the unfavourable security environment in specific regions. In the context of the national strike, former combatants throughout the country have participated peacefully in demonstrations and, along with the Government, have continued to work jointly regarding the different aspects of the reintegration process.

Access to land and housing

35. During the reporting period, the Government purchased land for two additional former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in Guaviare and Nariño Departments. So far, the Government has purchased land for 7 of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration; in one former territorial area for training and reintegration in Cauca Department, former combatants reached an agreement with indigenous communities to remain in the area. In six former territorial areas for training and reintegration, the parties have identified potential plots to be purchased, pending the required legal procedures. A clear route to access land is still pending for another 10. No significant progress was made regarding access to land outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration and regarding new resources for the special programme to grant land for reintegration.

36. In May, the Government presented the results of technical assessments on the viability of housing projects in five former territorial areas for training and reintegration hosting 580 former combatants and conducted visits to three of those areas to inform former combatants of their options to access housing subsidies. Some 150 houses are expected to be delivered this year, representing approximately 1.2 per cent of the potential demand. Outside of former territorial areas for training and reintegration, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization aims to provide housing solutions for former combatants through rural and urban housing programmes, pending additional financial resources.

37. Former combatants living in former territorial areas for training and reintegration have expressed concern regarding the phased approach stipulated in a Government resolution regulating access to housing subsidies. The Government has reiterated its commitment to provide all of them with housing solutions.

Productive projects

38. Approximately half of the 13,589 accredited former combatants are involved in individual or collective productive projects and nearly the same percentage has received the corresponding financial support. These include 90 collective projects approved by the National Reintegration Council, benefiting 3,414 former combatants (including 944 women); 82 projects have received funding. Two new collective productive projects were approved during the reporting period. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has approved a total of 2,709 individual projects (260 during the reporting period), benefiting 3,273 former combatants (including 736 women).

39. In addition to the continued effects of the pandemic on reintegration activities, the process has also been affected by the national strike. Mobility restrictions have delayed the implementation of 17 collective productive projects recently approved by the National Reintegration Council and have affected the flow of supplies and goods to and from some of the projects.

40. Representatives of former combatants have continued requesting more information regarding individual projects and their sustainability. In May, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization reported that almost 1,600 (60 per cent) of the projects were functioning, 509 had yet to begin implementation, 213 were closed and 86 were suspended owing to the effects of the pandemic, the relocation or the death of the beneficiaries, among other reasons.

41. More than half of the 3,136 accredited women former combatants participate in productive projects, often involving joint work with members of surrounding communities. Nevertheless, challenges persist regarding their access to decision-making roles and technical support. An assessment on the status and needs of women-led productive initiatives in eight regions carried out by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Mission found that most of them require specific technical assistance and face challenges owing to additional tasks, including caregiving.

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

42. Two thirds of former combatants live outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, where they face greater challenges in accessing reintegration benefits. In Cauca, Huila and Valle del Cauca Departments, violent attacks affecting former combatants and their cooperatives have led to their relocation, jeopardizing their collective reintegration process. Leaders of the national cooperative of former FARC-EP members have expressed concern about limited access to land, lack of comprehensive technical support and the security issues affecting cooperatives. Representatives of former combatants' have asked for greater engagement by the National Reintegration Council to address the specific risks and needs affecting the reintegration process of these former combatants.

43. Almost half of approved collective projects benefit 1,140 former combatants (including 314 women) living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration. This means that almost 12 per cent of the close to 10,000 former combatants living outside of former territorial areas for training and reintegration

have received support for collective projects, while 96 per cent of individual projects are implemented outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

Regional sessions of the National Reintegration Council

44. Despite preparations carried out during the reporting period to hold additional regional sessions of the National Reintegration Council, as agreed by President Duque and former FARC-EP combatants in November 2020, no sessions were held.

Health

45. The Working Group on Health of the National Reintegration Council has continued monitoring COVID-19 cases among former combatants. According to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, 227 former combatants (151 men and 76 women) have tested positive, 6 of whom died (all men). Some former combatants have started to receive vaccines through the national vaccination plan. Health visits have been carried out as planned in most former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

46. Around a third of former combatants with disabilities have received certification for their disability, which could help them access specific benefits, including rehabilitation support.

Reintegration policies and institutions

47. An agreement between the parties regarding the objectives and legal status of the National Reintegration System is still pending. According to the national reintegration policy, the guidelines and legal status of the System should be defined by the National Reintegration Council.

48. With a view to promoting greater engagement by regional and local actors, Working Group on Gender of the National Reintegration Council has been working on local action plans to implement the gender-specific actions of the national reintegration policy. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has allocated approximately \$300,000 for increased coordination in the 16 prioritized municipalities that host large numbers of former combatants, including in urban settings, to implement actions related to sexual and reproductive health and to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Role of municipal and departmental authorities

49. Two regional reintegration working groups were established, in Cundinamarca and Tolima Departments, bringing the total across the country to 17. Joint efforts by the Government, former combatants, local authorities and the Mission in the working groups have supported access to housing in Arauca and Bolívar Departments; improved access to health and education in Nariño Department; and allowed access to land or making premises available for the sustainability of the reintegration process in Valle del Cauca, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Sucre Departments.

Political reintegration

50. Within the framework of the national strike, Comunes party congress members took part in public hearings organized by the Peace Commissions of Congress in various regions. The party has supported the strike, promoted peaceful protests and called for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement to address popular demands. In May, two members of the Comunes party in Congress convened a hearing to engage with civil society sectors, including ethnic communities, in the context of the national strike.

51. In April, Comunes party legislators submitted a draft bill in the Senate to establish the national plan on rural health as provided for in the Final Agreement.

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

52. The Final Agreement includes a series of interconnected programmes for the State to provide services and infrastructure, protection and security, and sustainable economic opportunities, in close collaboration with the communities in conflict-affected regions. Five years into the implementation of the Final Agreement, the progress made so far proves that, with greater support, those mechanisms have the potential to meet the communities' expectation to address the uneven State presence across the country and the eroded relationship between institutions and the citizens in those regions.

Comprehensive rural reform

53. The Government finalized and handed over to communities 1,286 works of the development programmes with a territorial focus established under the Final Agreement, through participatory consultations, and another 189 are currently under way. A total of 143 new projects, worth \$540 million, were approved with resources from royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon exploitation. In addition, agricultural, environmental and forestry projects benefiting over 15,000 families are under way in 59 municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus, as part of the efforts by the Government to boost economic reactivation in the regions most affected by conflict.

54. The Comunes party has insisted on the need to strengthen the participation of communities in the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus to ensure that decision-making by State entities is guided by local needs, rather than by a centralized, top-down approach. To that end, the Government recently carried out 20 meetings with local communities and aims to hold similar encounters in all 170 municipalities with development programmes with a territorial focus.

55. The Government reported that 1,089,286 hectares have been included in the Land Fund, intended to provide land to peasants and rural communities affected by poverty and conflict and to promote a more egalitarian distribution of land, which has a final goal of 3 million hectares. So far, 231,892 hectares have been handed over to 8,599 peasant families. According to the Comunes party, only 3.4 per cent of the final goal has been delivered, echoing information previously reported by the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the Comptroller, which indicated lack of transparency regarding the feasibility of handing over a significant part of the land in the Fund to the intended beneficiaries.

56. In June, supporters of the Final Agreement regretted the failure by Congress to pass a key draft bill aimed at creating a dedicated judicial mechanism for the resolution of agrarian and rural controversies, as provided for in the Final Agreement.

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

57. In May, the technical committee of the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories met to approve a workplan for 2021, regarding its prevention and protection component. Seven additional pilot programmes for civil society organizations were approved.

Illicit crop substitution

58. As at 30 April, 44,185 hectares had been voluntarily eradicated by 99,097 families in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops. Approximately 87 per cent of the more than 75,000 participating families receiving food security assistance have received all the payments stipulated for this purpose. The Government reported that approximately \$24 million have been committed for productive projects, allowing for the development of close to 9,000 investment plans. Nevertheless, only 7 per cent of participating families have so far received support for productive projects.

59. As voluntary substitution continues, often amid complex security conditions, the Government has taken steps to restart aerial spraying with glyphosate, including through the issuance of a decree regulating the activity, which was suspended in 2015. Communities affected by the presence of illicit crops continue advocating for voluntary substitution as the most appropriate and sustainable solution. Through various legal actions and during the national strike, these communities have opposed the Government's intention to resume aerial spraying and have called for prioritizing voluntary substitution, as stipulated in the Final Agreement.

Reinforce constructive dialogue between the parties

60. Despite the challenging environment surrounding the implementation of the Final Agreement and the persisting differing views of the parties on the process, the Government and former combatants have continued to work jointly and with the support of the international community, to advance some key aspects of the Final Agreement.

61. Representatives for the Government and Comunes discussed the need to conduct a joint assessment of the implementation of the Final Agreement to inform the construction of the roadmap agreed during the meeting between President Duque and the president of Comunes, Rodrigo Londoño, in March. The parties also met six times within the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, including technical-level sessions to discuss the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, reparations for victims and the implementation of the gender provisions in the Final Agreement.

62. In April, the Office of the President instructed all ministries, administrative departments and national entities to submit peace-related draft bills and decrees for discussion within the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, before officially presenting them for approval before Congress or to the President of the Republic.

63. The tripartite working group on mines continued making meaningful progress, reflecting the commitment of the Government and former FARC-EP combatants working with the support of the Mine Action Service and the Mission. Former combatant representatives conducted six visits to Antioquia, Santander and Tolima Departments to encourage former combatants to participate in the efforts despite security problems. In April, in close coordination with the tripartite working group and within its approved methodology, 14 former combatants under the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace provided information to a humanitarian demining organization on the possible location of minefields, which will help clear these explosives and will benefit an indigenous community in Tolima.

64. The tripartite working group on transit to legality continued addressing pending issues regarding the accreditation of former FARC-EP members. The number of accredited former combatants stands at 13,589 (including 3,136 women). The

accreditation of 28 individuals (23 men, 5 women) located through an exercise of the tripartite working group is currently under verification by the Government. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and representatives of former combatants are jointly assessing the cases of 139 individuals (133 men, 6 women) to determine whether they effectively belonged to the former FARC-EP. In addition, according to the National Institute of Prisons and Penitentiaries, there are still 187 accredited former FARC-EP members (180 men and 7 women) deprived of their liberty. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has denied conditional liberty and amnesty for 90 of those individuals and has granted those benefits to 3 individuals. There are another 78 individuals awaiting a decision and attorneys for the remaining 16 are reviewing their cases to bring them to the attention of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

65. The tripartite working group on former FARC-EP assets, established to help the parties contribute to the realization of reparations for victims of the armed conflict, did not meet during the reporting period.

Strengthening conditions for reconciliation

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

66. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has continued to receive reports on crimes committed during the conflict, including from unions and women, Afro-Colombian, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex organizations. The sustained increase in the number of accredited victims – which is now approximately 325,000 – illustrates their willingness to take part in the cases despite security risks.

67. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace reported in May that indictments of some of the members of the public security forces appearing within the context of Case 03, on extrajudicial killings by agents of the State, are in the final stages of preparation. Two former army generals appeared before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (under Cases 04 and 06). Victims accredited in those two cases have emphasized the importance that those appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace fully cooperate and contribute to the truth regarding the crimes committed during the armed conflict.

68. The Truth Commission continued to hold public and private meetings with former members of the FARC-EP, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, retired members of the public security forces, victims and other actors focused on truth, forgiveness, reconciliation and acknowledgment of responsibility. The Commission has held 74 of these dialogues addressing the causes and impacts of the conflict on different groups. In the meetings, perpetrators have acknowledged their responsibility for several crimes committed in different regions during the conflict. The testimonies rendered during the dialogues have provided key inputs for the final report of the Commission, which will be presented in November 2021.

69. In June, the former President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, appeared voluntarily before the Truth Commission to provide his account regarding extrajudicial killings (also known as false positives), committed by State agents during his term as Minister of Defence (2006–2009). He acknowledged the occurrence of such crimes, stated that they should never have taken place and asked victims for forgiveness.

70. With the participation of institutions and civil society organizations, the Special Unit for the Search for Persons deemed as Missing signed search pacts in five new regions. So far, the Unit has promoted eight of these pacts, which are key to help to find thousands of victims of forced disappearance. Former members of FARC-EP and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia have pledged to contribute to the work of the Unit.

71. In addition, and in coordination with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, other institutions and civil society organizations, the Unit took DNA samples from 10 families in Antioquia and Chocó Departments to identify 46 bodies of potential victims of forced disappearance which were recovered in these Departments. The Unit also handed over the bodies of four forcibly disappeared persons in Risaralda and Meta Departments to their families. The Unit also received 90 requests from Colombian exiles looking for their missing relatives in the country.

72. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution [2574 \(2021\)](#), the Special Representative met with the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to discuss the new tasks of the Verification Mission and define next steps. A technical working group between the two entities was created to devise the procedures and protocols required to put in place the monitoring and verification of the restorative sentences.

National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence

73. The National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence has been assessing the status and main needs of territorial peace councils, which bring together authorities and civil society organizations. The assessment is aimed at leveraging the advisory role of the peace councils in the design and implementation of reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization strategies. In the context of the national strike, the National Council and several territorial councils promoted negotiated solutions. In addition, and despite not having proper funding to conduct its essential work, the National Council is promoting regional humanitarian pacts, such as the one in Chocó, highlighting the need for armed actors to observe humanitarian principles and demanding a ceasefire to bring relief to conflict-affected communities.

74. The Ministry of Interior has yet to adopt the public policy on reconciliation, coexistence and non-stigmatization, even though the National Council formally presented the policy's guidelines to the Government in October 2020.

Cross-cutting considerations

Gender

75. The Special Forum on Gender of civil society has successfully initiated the regional-level meetings for the selection of its eight new representatives from women's organizations and will, for the first time, include a female former FARC-EP combatant as a permanent participant. The new membership is to be approved by the parties of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and will begin its work by the end of July. In a welcome development, the current monitoring system of the 51 gender indicators of the framework plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement, led by the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, will now include the gender provisions in the ethnic chapter. The Special Forum on Gender has requested the inclusion of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex perspective as part of the gender approach in monitoring the indicators.

76. In the context of the national strike, the Office of the Ombudsman reported having received, as at 4 June, 113 reports of gender-based violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, allegedly committed by public security forces, and one case against a female police officer allegedly committed by civilians in the protests. These cases have been referred to the Office of the Attorney General for investigation. The Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Inspector General are implementing monitoring and reporting mechanisms in coordination with women's organizations.

77. On 25 May, during the commemoration day for the dignity of victims of sexual violence in Colombia, women's organizations reiterated their request to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open a "macro" case on conflict-related sexual violence and to strengthen its gender approach in its investigations.

Ethnic affairs

78. During the reporting period, six former combatants of ethnic origin were killed (3 Afro-Colombian and 3 indigenous). Since the signing of the Final Agreement, 61 indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants have been killed (41 Afro-Colombian and 20 indigenous). Four of these killings were investigated and tried by the special indigenous jurisdiction.

79. The Ethnic Commission of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace launched a protocol to guide the relationship between the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Afro-Colombian peoples. The protocol includes the principles to guarantee the effective participation of Afro-Colombian victims and individuals subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, complementing similar guidance issued in 2019 by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace regarding its relationships with indigenous communities.

80. The situation of the Emberá indigenous peoples in municipalities of Antioquia and Chocó Departments continues to be of concern, as communities have reported confinements resulting from the installation of antipersonnel mines and clashes between illegal armed actors. Similarly, due to confinements as the result of the installation of antipersonnel mines, in May, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace ordered the Ministry of Interior to take action through the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings to protect the Muina Murui peoples in Putumayo Department and instructed the Office of the Ombudsman to issue an early warning to activate protection and prevention mechanisms.

81. Indigenous organizations and communities participated in national strike mobilizations in various regions through a form of social mobilization known as *minga*, many of them denouncing the activities of illegal armed actors that continue to affect their territories and their security and calling for the full implementation of the Final Agreement.

Children

82. The Mission verified the killing of one member of the programme "A different path of life" in Antioquia Department. Since the signing of the Final Agreement, four members of the programme have been killed, highlighting the need for a tailored protocol to respond to the specific risks facing these young former combatants. The payment of reparations to 30 members of the programme is still pending. Of the 123 members of the programme, so far only 29 have received resources for productive projects.

83. In a welcome development, the parties agreed to reactivate the Technical Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council and the first meeting since July 2019 was held in May. The Working Group is meeting to address challenges related to security and protection concerns, as well as the implementation of "A different path of life" (including psychosocial support), and the inclusion in the programme of the 232 individuals who were recognized in 2020 as children at the moment of accreditation.

84. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute is developing a plan to enhance the protection of children of former combatants. The plan is focused on tracing and

identifying some 2,000 children of former combatants and ensuring access to regular programmes in 20 municipalities.

Youth

85. Colombian youth were at the centre of the national strike. They denounced being particularly affected by inequality, limited education and lack of employment opportunities – especially for women – as well as insufficient political representation.

86. In this context, pursuant to an existing law on youth, President Duque pledged to carry out the first elections of municipal youth councils in November 2021. The members of these councils, which will later choose representatives to departmental and national councils, are elected by young persons who are 14 to 28 years old. Individual candidates and candidacies are put forward by youth organizations and by political parties' youth branches. The President also announced youth employment programmes and free enrolment in public universities for students from low-income backgrounds during the second semester of 2021.

87. Youth were also a key party in dialogue initiatives promoted by the Government, the Truth Commission and regional and local authorities, as well as universities and civil society organizations, to channel demands made by protesters, open humanitarian corridors and lift roadblocks. United Nations entities, including the Mission, accompanied several of those initiatives.

88. In May, the Government announced over 1,700 openings in a programme for undergraduate students to carry out paid internships supporting the implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus in public entities at the national level and in municipalities with the development programmes.

Developments related to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional

89. Local communities in conflict-affected regions as well as civil society organizations and political actors continue calling for the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) to re-establish peace negotiations. The Special Representative and a representative of the Catholic Church have engaged with the Government and ELN to explore the possibility to resume peace talks and to follow up on the call by the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire.

Coordination with the United Nations country team

90. The United Nations country team continued supporting the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. Agencies, funds and programmes finalized joint planning, aiming to deliver \$149 million in 2021 through projects in support of reintegration, development programmes with a territorial focus, illicit crop substitution, security guarantees for human rights defenders and transitional justice. From these, \$20 million will be invested in reintegration and \$23 million in security guarantees for human rights defenders and transitional justice. Projects in areas such as reintegration and security guarantees are designed in coordination with the Mission.

91. The United Nations country team, with funding from the multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, supported the work of the transitional justice system financially and through technical assistance, including to civil society organizations submitting reports to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Assistance was also provided to the final report of the Truth Commission with support from the Peacebuilding Fund to dialogues between different social sectors, some of which included public acknowledgement of crimes by parties to the conflict.

92. During the reporting period, the multi-partner trust fund allocated \$8.7 million to projects supporting community-based communication in regions with development programmes with a territorial focus, land restitution to women victims and institutional strengthening of the transitional justice system. The allocation also included supporting 20 projects by civil society organizations to promote reconciliation between communities and former combatants, three calls for proposals for civil society organizations on protection for human rights defenders and the empowerment of women and girls, supported by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Mission support

93. The Mission monitored the situation of disrupted supply chains owing to the strike and provided logistical support to affected field offices.

94. The Welfare Committee of the Mission continues carrying out initiatives focused on emotional support and staff well-being. A subcommittee on mental health was established to identify the main factors contributing to stress and recommend appropriate actions.

95. As at 31 May 2021, women represented 44 per cent of Professional and Field Service staff; 58 per cent of United Nations Volunteers; 32 per cent of international observers; and 75 per cent of consultants and individual contractors.

Safety and security

96. During the reporting period, 27 security incidents affecting United Nations personnel occurred, ranging from robbery to threats and movement restrictions, many of them related to the demonstrations and roadblocks in the context of the national strike. Missions including United Nations staff were affected by confrontations between public security forces and protesters in Cali and Popayán. Also, in the context of the strike, unidentified individuals vandalized and looted a building in which three United Nations entities operate. No personnel were injured in these incidents. There were also movement restrictions owing to activities of illegal armed actors.

97. Procedures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 were maintained and the Mission has continued to implement strict protocols for the safe conduct of operations in the field and the limited physical return to offices. The United Nations system has developed a local vaccine deployment plan to vaccinate a portion of its prioritized personnel as a complementary measure to the national vaccination plan.

Conduct and discipline

98. During the reporting period, the Mission received two allegations of misconduct related to conflict of interest and physical assault connected with gender violence, which are currently under investigation. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were received during the reporting period. The Mission is designing a new mission-adapted communication strategy for outreach in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Observations

99. The developments regarding the implementation of the Final Agreement described in the present report have taken place amid formidable challenges for Colombian society, ranging from the third wave of the pandemic, to pressing economic problems and unprecedented social unrest. In these difficult times and as the country prepares for a new electoral cycle, I call upon all political and social actors in Colombia to commit to non-violence and to prioritize dialogue to find

mutually agreeable solutions. That is the path that will allow Colombia to continue to move towards reconciliation and the restoration of its war-torn social fabric. The United Nations remains fully committed and available to assist in the realization of that objective.

100. The signing of the Final Agreement in November 2016 marked the beginning of a new era for Colombia after decades in which the armed conflict was a barrier to peaceful democratic expression. The peace process proved the value of dialogue in resolving conflict, while the Final Agreement offered a set of instruments to address several long-standing issues, many of which have also been the subject of discussion in the context of the national strike. The parties to the peace process acknowledged that peacebuilding requires the active engagement of all Colombians and stipulated, in section 2 of the Final Agreement, safeguards for political and citizen participation. The implementation of these provisions would prove useful in the current context and for the future.

101. The recent demonstrations have included demands to resolve long-standing inequalities, security issues and the prioritization of voluntary crop substitution to solve the problem of illicit drugs. Some of these concerns have also been heightened by the effects of the pandemic. Greater efforts to implement the provisions in section 1 of the Final Agreement, including continued progress on the development programmes with a territorial focus and the adoption and implementation of the national sectoral plans, would help include communities affected by poverty and violence in the ongoing economic recovery efforts. Similarly, investments in food security and technical assistance for families committed to voluntary substitution will only be sustainable if access to viable productive opportunities is ensured. Finally, adequate support and resources for the implementation of the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories are necessary to guarantee their safety, especially as they will now be more involved in electoral matters with the creation of the special transitional electoral districts for peace.

102. Guaranteeing the security of social leaders and human rights defenders, communities affected by the conflict and of former combatants is an essential condition for the Final Agreement to take root. Despite the efforts and measures taken by the Government and relevant state institutions, more effective actions are still required to address the multiple, persisting risks, especially in areas where the Agreement was expected to be a turning point from violence to lasting peace. The early warnings of the Office of the Ombudsman have played an essential role in this regard and it is crucial to ensure that the early warning system works as designed so that relevant entities, including within the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings, can respond in a timely manner.

103. Preventing and defusing violence also requires firm steps towards the implementation of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks. For it to bear effective results, it should also be accompanied by an integrated presence of the State, including the deployment of security forces and an increased presence of civilian institutions. As noted in previous reports, the role of the public security forces in ensuring conditions for the Special Investigations Unit to access crime scenes is essential for it to continue its crucial work of fighting impunity and deterring those crimes. Persistent risks facing women leaders, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, illustrate the need for further progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

104. I also urge the parties to work closely together to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants. Additional steps

are needed from the Government to provide the National Protection Unit with enough resources to address the backlog of pending protection requests and to deliver timely protection to former combatants for whom protection schemes have been approved, including considering specific risks for women.

105. The results attained thus far in the reintegration process are commendable, but the challenges ahead are equally significant. Firm steps are necessary to consolidate the process in the coming months. Reaching a common understanding on the National Reintegration System would be a key step to ensuring a State-wide response to former combatants' needs.

106. As most former combatants are engaged in reintegration initiatives, the complex context facing the process calls for greater support to ensure the sustainability of productive projects, focusing on commercialization, links to local development plans and increased technical assistance. This includes tailored support for women, in particular for those living outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

107. Access to land and housing are also of the essence to provide certainty and a sense of belonging to former combatants. I welcome the progress made in these areas and I encourage the Government to make additional efforts to accelerate the pace, especially regarding housing and land outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

108. The regional sessions of the National Reintegration Council are an opportunity to further adopt context-specific action plans with concrete commitments, roles and responsibilities among all concerned, as well as with clearly defined financial resources for implementation. In doing so, the parties should also consider specific responses to the needs of former combatants living in urban areas and other settings outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in view of the ever-changing geography of reintegration. I call upon the parties to hold the sessions as soon as possible.

109. As we approach the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Peace Agreement, and in view of increasing polarization, I welcome the parties' resolve to move forward with constructive engagement regarding implementation despite what are often deeply held differences.

110. At this critical juncture, and with full respect for the role that all national democratic institutions play, it is of the essence that all branches of the State work together in advancing the full implementation of the Final Agreement, including through the adoption of peace-related legislation.

111. Sustained progress and recent developments related to the work of the transitional justice system, such as acknowledgement by the former FARC-EP commanders of their responsibility for grave crimes committed during the conflict and the provision of information to locate missing persons, are a sign that the process is entering a key phase. For Colombian society to reconcile with its past and for Colombians to restore their mutual trust, the commitment by all parties to contribute to upholding victims' rights is fundamental. Such a commitment demands that all actors contribute fully to the truth and recognize their responsibilities for their crimes and that they take steps to repair damage caused during the conflict. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search of Persons Deemed as Missing continue to prove their value and the significance of their work deserves the utmost respect and support from all parties and all actors of Colombian society.

112. I am grateful for the trust placed by the parties in the work of the Mission, which led them to request the expansion of its mandate to include the verification of

compliance with and implementation of restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The unanimous adoption by the Security Council of its resolution [2574 \(2021\)](#) allowing the Mission to take part in this crucial stage of the process is yet another demonstration of the unyielding support of the international community to the efforts by Colombia to build lasting peace.

113. Lastly, I reiterate my gratitude to the staff of the Mission for their tireless work under the leadership of the Special Representative, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and I commend the complementary efforts of the United Nations system as a whole to the success of the Colombian peace process.

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

Verification Mission Geospatial 

