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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2261 \(2016\)](#), by which the Council established the United Nations Mission in Colombia and requested that I report to the Council on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days after the start of monitoring and verification activities. The report covers the activities of the Mission and related developments from 24 December 2016 to 24 March 2017.

II. Major developments

2. The reporting period witnessed significant developments in the implementation process, including the movement of approximately 6,900 members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) to 26 local agreed zones and points. The laying down of arms process has started in these areas, and the process of reintegration of FARC-EP combatants should begin soon. This is a major step towards the consolidation of the ceasefire, the reintegration of the members of FARC-EP into civilian life and the transformation of the armed group into a political party. Notwithstanding delays in implementation overall, the parties have reiterated their determination to complete the process of the laying down of arms by the end of the 180-day timeline established in the peace agreement, together with the advance of key measures regarding legal, security and socioeconomic matters that are critical to the success of reintegration and the consolidation of peace beyond the phase of the laying down of arms.

Legislative and institutional implementation of the peace agreement

Key legislation

3. The amnesty law was passed on 30 December 2016 under fast-track legislative procedures for peace implementation. It is a critical piece of legislation: it provides de jure amnesty for FARC-EP members accused of or sentenced for political crimes

* Reissued for technical reasons on 28 March 2017.



(such as rebellion, sedition, conspiracy and connected crimes). It also provides for conditional release or parole for imprisoned members of FARC-EP who have served five years or more of their prison sentences for crimes that do not fall under the amnesty provisions, upon their signing a commitment to become subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia. In addition, the law provides that FARC-EP members sentenced for crimes that are not subject to amnesty and who have not yet served five years of their sentences will be transferred to alternative facilities located in some of the zones where FARC-EP has regrouped. Such facilities are in the process of being established and will be certified as adequate by the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism before FARC-EP members are transferred to them.

4. The amnesty law further provides for different modalities that will apply to members of the public security forces who are accused of or prosecuted or sentenced for crimes associated or in connection with the armed conflict with FARC-EP.

5. Throughout the reporting period, concerns were expressed about the slow pace of implementation of the amnesty law. On 17 February, the Government issued a decree aimed at expediting the application of the law. However, other actors, including within the judiciary branch, have expressed their own misgivings about the practical implementation of the law. At the time of writing the present report, only 72 FARC-EP members have benefited from the provisions of the amnesty law. At least some 1,000 requests under the amnesty law are currently being processed. In addition, since 15 December 177 FARC-EP members have been freed as a result of pardons issued by the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, rather than the amnesty law.

6. On 19 December 2016, the Government submitted to Congress, under fast-track legislative procedures, a draft law with constitutional scope to establish the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition, provided for in the peace agreement. This includes the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, consisting of a distinct judicial system and procedures under which crimes committed during the armed conflict and the rights of victims will be addressed.

7. The draft legislation was the subject of protracted debates in Congress, owing in part to the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace was at the centre of concerns expressed by the groups that supported the “no” vote during the plebiscite of 2 October 2016. The debates resulted in many amendments to the legislation, notably with regard to the armed forces and civilian third parties that may have been involved in the conflict. The law on the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition was adopted by Congress in mid-March, with those amendments. The Constitutional Court will subsequently review it. Congress is now expected to consider laws regulating this transitional justice system.

8. On 26 January, my Special Representative confirmed the designation, endorsed by the two parties, of Néstor Correa as the temporary Executive Director of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. On 27 January, I designated Diego García Sayán to be part of the selection committee tasked with choosing magistrates and other officials for the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition over the coming months. All other designating entities (the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Colombia, the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Standing Committee of the State University System in Colombia and the President of

the European Court of Human Rights) had completed their appointments by 14 February. The members of the Committee met in Bogotá on 7 March.

9. On 1 February, the Government presented to Congress a draft law of constitutional scope on the political reintegration of FARC-EP. It concerns financing, political guarantees and minimum representation during the next two legislative election cycles (2018 and 2022). On 14 February, Congress adopted a law regulating the participation in congressional debates on peace-related legislation of six observers on behalf of FARC-EP.

10. Other peace-related legislation was also introduced during the reporting period, such as legislation with constitutional scope aimed at ensuring that State institutions implement in good faith the content of the peace agreement, legislation on norms applicable to State agents in the context of the finalization of the armed conflict and a law on the status of the opposition.

11. On 24 March, the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations delivered to me the peace agreement signed on 24 November, which, in accordance with the agreement, I will transmit to the Security Council for its subsequent circulation as a document of the Council.

Key implementation bodies

12. On 3 February, President Santos announced the formation of a post-conflict cabinet comprising the Ministers of the Interior, Finance, Health, Agriculture, Mines, Energy and Labour and the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict. The cabinet is tasked to oversee the Government efforts of implementation of the peace agreement and achieve effective linkages between the Government and State institutions responsible for implementing post-conflict programmes and projects. It has focused initially on humanitarian demining, illicit crop substitution and regional development.

Overall implementation

13. The body responsible for overall supervision of peace implementation, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, was created on 2 December 2016. The Commission is composed of three Government officials, including the High Commissioner for Peace, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, as well as three high-level members of FARC-EP — Iván Márquez, Victoria Sandino and Jesús Santrich. During the reporting period, the Commission focused, among other things, on progress in the zones and points, passing and implementing the amnesty law and other peace legislation, reaching agreement on crop substitution and designing development programmes in rural areas.

Electoral matters

14. On 17 January, President Santos established the special electoral mission envisaged in the political participation chapter of the peace agreement, in order to enhance autonomy and independence in the organization of elections, and requested it to present its recommendations as soon as possible.

Reintegration

15. A national reintegration council was formally established on 2 December 2016, bringing together Government officials and representatives of FARC-EP to address the political and socioeconomic reintegration of FARC-EP members. The council has discussed a workplan and is considering the modalities for FARC-EP reincorporation into civilian life. During the reporting period, it focused its attention on the situation of children in the ranks of FARC-EP.

16. On 26 January, the national reintegration council activated the protocol on the separation of children upon entry of FARC-EP forces into zones and points, and adopted guidelines for a special reintegration programme for children separated from FARC-EP. The issuance of those procedures followed a period of increasingly vocal appeals from the Government and civil society for FARC-EP to comply with the commitments it had made on 15 May 2016 to separate children from its ranks. As decided by the council, children arriving with FARC-EP to the zones and points are transported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), accompanied by two civil society representatives, to transitional accommodations, where the United Nations Children's Fund, with the support of the International Organization for Migration and in collaboration with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Human Rights, initiates the restitution of their rights. The implementation of the programme began on 3 March. As agreed by the parties, ICRC is responsible for reporting on this issue. ICRC reported on the reception of the first groups of children on 4, 10 and 15 March.

Security guarantees

17. On 3 February, President Santos signed a decree setting up the national commission on security guarantees to design and monitor public and criminal policy related to the dismantlement of criminal organizations. The commission is chaired by President Santos and includes the Ministers of the Interior, Defence and Justice, the Attorney-General, the Ombudsman, the Inspector General and the Director of a dedicated special unit of the Office of the Attorney-General. It also includes representatives of human rights non-governmental organizations and experts. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia was invited to participate. On 23 February, President Santos formally established the commission in Cauca department, one of the departments most affected by violence. This body seeks to address the actions of groups responsible for homicides and/or massacres targeting individuals involved in the implementation of the agreements and the construction of peace. This includes organizations termed as successors of former paramilitary groups and their support networks. As noted in paragraph 24 of the present report, the persistence of attacks against community leaders and human rights defenders in conflict-affected areas has been a prominent source of concern, including owing to its implications with regard to the upcoming reintegration of FARC-EP.

Participation

18. On 31 January, the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission established a high-level consultative entity to ensure coordination between the parties and civil society organizations representing ethnic groups. In addition, a

total of six women's organizations will participate in discussions with the Commission, in order to guarantee that a gender approach is maintained in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Political context

19. Implementation of the peace agreement has been unfolding in a political environment increasingly marked by the next general elections, which will take place in May 2018. All Government officials who intend to participate in next year's electoral contest are expected to resign from their positions. The current Vice-President will be succeeded by General Oscar Naranjo, the former Director of the National Police and one of the Government's plenipotentiary negotiators in the Havana peace talks.

20. In mid-January, at a meeting of its Central Command held in the Llanos of the Yarí region of Meta department, FARC-EP leadership reaffirmed its commitment to transform into a political party and stated its intention to hold a "foundational congress" at the end of May. FARC-EP leader Rodrigo Londoño (also known as Timoleón Jiménez or Timochenko) also indicated that the group did not intend to field a presidential candidate in the 2018 election, but rather it aimed to promote national consensus around a candidate guaranteeing continuity in the implementation of the peace agreement.

21. During the reporting period, President Santos reiterated his call for an inclusive political compact on the implementation of the peace agreement. However, leaders of political parties who opposed the terms of the peace agreement during the plebiscite of 2 October 2016 have expressed their intention to review aspects of the agreement if elected to office in 2018.

Security context

22. Confirming the commitment of the Government and FARC-EP to the definitive end to their conflict, the bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between the Government and FARC-EP held and no casualties were registered during the reporting period.

23. At the same time, concern continued to be expressed over the presence and actions of non-State armed groups, including in areas of former deployment of FARC-EP. These include the National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group, successors of former paramilitary groups such as Clan del Golfo, Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and other groups linked to organized crime, and in particular a variety of groups operating at the local level that vie for the control of illegal mining, drugs and extortion activities.

24. Civil society organizations have denounced the presence of these non-State armed groups, which they hold responsible for a number of attacks and acts of intimidation against communities and their leaders. Threatening leaflets have been circulating in several departments, including close to zones and points where FARC-EP are concentrated, calling for the assassination of community leaders and human rights defenders. There has been particular concern over attacks against and intimidation of community leaders and human rights defenders. The Ombudsman has called for improvement in protection measures. OHCHR has to date verified 60 cases of killings of human rights defenders in 2016. Civil society organizations have

reported higher figures that include the killing of a wider category of community leaders. According to all sources, this worrisome trend has continued in the first months of 2017.

25. The Government has taken measures aimed at preventing other armed groups from developing a foothold in zones vacated by FARC-EP, focused initially on 160 municipalities. At the inauguration of the commission on security guarantees on 23 February, President Santos strongly condemned all attacks against community leaders, and committed in particular not to allow the repetition of such tragedies as those that befell Unión Patriótica, the party established by FARC-EP, whose membership was decimated in the 1980s and 1990s. By virtue of its high-level and multidimensional composition, the commission would appear to be ideally positioned to ensure that all of the responsible State entities work effectively together to combat violence and to ensure cooperation with civil society. This is not a short-term endeavour, but it is hoped that the work of the commission will soon have an impact on reducing levels of violence, in particular in conflict areas.

26. An additional concern has been the desertion of a number of FARC-EP members, although the phenomenon appears limited in scope. Figures vary in the range of 2 to 5 per cent of combatants, primarily in areas of the south-east and the Pacific coast. There have been frequent reports that FARC-EP members are being enticed to desert, in particular by criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking.

27. In a long hoped-for development, the formal phase of peace talks between the Government of Colombia and ELN, the country's second largest guerrilla group, began in Quito on 7 February, following a number of postponements. The beginning of the talks followed the release by ELN on 2 February of a hostage held since early 2016. However, violence resulting from the ongoing conflict between ELN and the Government of Colombia persisted, as illustrated by the attack claimed by ELN on 19 February, when a bomb in Bogotá killed 1 policeman and injured 26 persons, mostly policemen.

III. Mission tasks

28. The Mission serves as coordinator of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, which worked intensely during the reporting period. The Government, FARC-EP and the Mission have been collaborating more effectively at the national, regional and local levels. In its coordination role, the Mission has been instrumental in facilitating consensus on the Mechanism's monitoring and verification activities. The Mechanism demonstrated its value through its successful coordination and accompaniment of the movements of FARC-EP members to zones and points, the verification of compliance with protocols, the investigation of incidents and the recommendation of remedial action when appropriate. Some matters relating to the verification of the ceasefire and the process of the laying down of arms were affected by the slow pace of construction of FARC-EP camps. Those were referred to the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission, given the need for political-level decisions. Recent discrepancies in the parties' views with respect to the state of progress in the preparation of zones and FARC-EP camps pointed to the need to reinforce joint assessments carried out within the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.

Ceasefire and cessation of hostilities

Monitoring of movements

29. According to the timeline established in the peace agreement, movement of FARC-EP to the zones and points was to be achieved by the end of December, 30 days after the entry into force of the agreement. However, on 28 December, taking into account the status of the zones and points, the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission agreed that FARC-EP would remain in temporary pre-grouping points near those areas, and that those FARC-EP units in locations distant from zones and points would continue their movement toward them.

30. On 5 January, President Santos, during a visit to the local temporary site in Mesetas (Meta department), expressed the commitment of the Government to overcoming delays in the construction of FARC-EP camps. Subsequently, an accelerated effort to address logistical shortcomings was made by the Government, in coordination with FARC-EP and the Mission. It was agreed that the Government would take responsibility for camp access and ground preparation, the provision of water, power and sanitation and the construction of common areas. The camps' living areas were to be built by members of FARC-EP with the material provided by the Government.

31. On 17 January, the Government and the leadership of FARC-EP agreed that, regardless of the status of camp construction, movement of FARC-EP units to the zones would be completed by the end of January.

32. From 28 January to 18 February, the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism undertook a major operation to accompany and monitor the final movement of FARC-EP guerrillas to zones and points.

33. An operations centre to plan and monitor the movements was established at the headquarters of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in Bogotá. The centre brought together the Mechanism and office of the High Commissioner for Peace, as well as military and police forces, including the Strategic Transition Command and the Police Unit for Peacebuilding. Such an integrated structure was required to provide the logistical support and security to the movements.

34. Overall, 36 movements toward the zones and points were carried out in 14 departments. That involved compliance with ceasefire regulations, the establishment of routes for movements, effective coordination and communication and security measures for the transport of arms. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism monitored, coordinated and accompanied FARC-EP movements, while the Government supplied logistics, security and means of transport.

35. By 18 February, some 6,900 members of FARC-EP had gathered in the 26 zones and points. Of that number, approximately 1,179 were women, many of them pregnant or with young children. Remarkably, that complex movement of thousands of armed members of FARC-EP was carried out with hardly an incident.

36. The parties agreed on 17 January that FARC-EP militia members would enter zones and points temporarily to undergo procedures for their reintegration into civilian life. Most militia members, however, are not expected to remain in zones and points.

Investigation of incidents

37. During the reporting period, the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism received 81 requests for the investigation of incidents. Of those, 19 were found to be irrelevant to the mandate of the Mechanism, while 14 could not be verified. During the reporting period, the Mechanism verified seven compliance failures, eight minor violations and two serious violations of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities protocols. A serious violation took place on 10 January, near San Vicente del Caguán (Caquetá department), when FARC-EP forces attacked a group of deserters, causing the death of one. Investigations are also ongoing into a case of alleged sexual abuse of a girl by a member of the Colombian armed forces.

38. The most frequent incidents concerned the exit of FARC-EP members from camps without proper coordination with the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, the entry of Colombian public security forces to areas near FARC-EP camps and the conduct of alleged political proselytism by FARC-EP members during movements outside of zones and points.

39. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism conducted routine activities such as accompanying FARC-EP in movements other than those to zones and points, monitoring the security layout for the protection of FARC-EP, conducting technical visits to zones and points, accompanying high-level visits to the Mechanism's local headquarters, including by foreign Government representatives, monitoring temporary pre-grouping points and monitoring and assisting in medical evacuations.

40. Social tensions and the mobilization of communities have in some cases affected the work of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. The movement of FARC-EP forces to Caño Indio (Norte de Santander department) was interrupted from 9 to 14 February, owing to protests by local communities in La Gabarra voicing concern about the security situation in the region and the alleged presence of armed groups. In La Variante, Tumaco (Nariño department), starting on 21 February members of the community demonstrated intermittently in front of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism local site, affecting its work. Demonstrations and roadblocks near the zone of El Carrizal, Remedios (Antioquia department) have impeded access to the Mechanism local headquarters, with local communities protesting recent public security operations against illegal mining. Similarly, in Filipinas, Arauquita (Arauca department) local farmers blocked roads, claiming they had been damaged by efforts to prepare the zone of Filipinas.

Monitoring of the provision of logistics

41. Monitoring and verification of logistical support activities conducted by the Government to address the needs of FARC-EP members resumed. As noted in my previous report, FARC-EP had decided to suspend Government-provided supplies, arguing that food had been delivered in poor condition and that the authorities were not complying with the commitment to use local suppliers. On 17 January, the parties decided to resume Government supplies and asked that their quality and local origin be monitored by the Mechanism.

42. A marked improvement in compliance with commitments and the quality of supplies was observed as the Mechanism offered recommendations to address shortcomings. Nonetheless, the Mechanism found a number of deficiencies that

remain to be addressed. These include discrepancies between the articles requested and provided and the provision of an insufficient quantity of certain goods, the insufficient supply of infant formula and other goods for infants, the need for equipment to ensure refrigeration of perishable goods in some areas and the need to guarantee local supplies in accordance with agreements reached by the parties.

43. On 25 January, the Colombian Minister of Health indicated that 6,247 members of FARC-EP had been registered with the health system. In addition, the Government provided medical brigades to offer assistance in temporary pre-grouping points and urgent medical treatment. During the movements toward zones and points, medical assistance was provided to 22 persons, including 11 pregnant women, 5 children and 6 adults.

44. Despite improvements made, there is an urgent need to establish field clinics in the zones. The presence of more than 60 pregnant and nursing FARC-EP members underscores the importance of medical attention, and FARC-EP has voiced complaints regarding the unavailability of such care. The clinics are also intended to provide medical services to local communities and personnel of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. According to the Government, the procurement process is ongoing. In the meantime, the Government has deployed “medical brigades”, consisting of medical personnel who remain in a specific area for a few days, to the zones and points, in order to ensure that health care is provided until the clinics are established. A number of civil society initiatives have sought to support the construction of FARC-EP camps and improve conditions therein, including providing assistance to pregnant and nursing FARC-EP members.

45. The Mechanism has been monitoring the status of completion of FARC-EP camps in the zones and points, and reported its latest findings in its report of 14 March. It has measured progress made in percentage terms to provide a general idea of the preparation process. Phase I, comprising identification and renting of land, is almost completed, with renting of additional land for a second camp in one of the zones still pending. Phase II includes ground preparation, the provision of water, power and sanitation and the construction of common areas. Approximately 17 zones were between 10 per cent and 50 per cent ready and 9 were over 50 per cent ready. Phase III includes the delivery of material and the building of accommodation. Approximately 25 zones were between 10 per cent and 50 per cent completed, and 1 was more than 50 per cent completed.

Liaison and outreach

46. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism has continued holding regular meetings with civil society organizations, including women’s groups, to share information on the situation in areas where zones and points are located and to listen to community concerns regarding the process. Meetings were also held with departmental and local level authorities. The Mechanism established a communications strategy implemented from Bogotá, through its eight regional offices and its presence at the local level. Specific efforts have been directed towards highlighting the work of women as part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. The Mechanism, in collaboration with the United Nations Mission, has trained over 140 journalists in one national, two regional and one local workshop on

communications to enhance understanding of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the process of the laying down of arms.

47. On 16 March, the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism initiated workshops at its regional offices with the aim of addressing, among other issues, potential gender concerns that may arise in the context of monitoring activities, such as reports of gender-based violence. The workshops will include the participation of personnel based in local sites from the three components of the Mechanism.

Laying down of arms

48. A major milestone was achieved with the beginning of the process of the laying down of arms on 1 March, when the Mission initiated the registration of arms in the FARC-EP camps. On 11 March, the Mission received the arms of the 140 FARC-EP members who are part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, to be followed, in short order, by the arms of FARC-EP members who have been designated to promote peace-related activities. In addition, the Mission initiated, in coordination with FARC-EP, planning for the verification of the destruction of unstable FARC-EP armament located in caches.

49. While those steps represent a tangible start to the process of the laying down of arms, the timeline set out in the peace agreement specified that by 1 March (D+90) FARC-EP was to have delivered 30 per cent of its members' arms to the Mission, followed by the storing of remaining arms in two subsequent tranches. FARC-EP has stressed its readiness to take those steps as greater progress is made in parallel with regard to the logistics of the zones and the implementation of specific commitments that are the responsibility of the Government, including the legal and security guarantees for FARC-EP members and the implementation of plans for socioeconomic reintegration as the process of the laying down of arms comes to a conclusion. Notwithstanding this somewhat more complex dynamic of interlocking commitments, which was the subject of an exchange of letters and subsequent discussion between my Special Representative and the parties, both the Government and FARC-EP have reaffirmed their commitment to completing the process of the laying down of arms within the 180-day time frame established in the peace agreement.

50. The status of camp construction has influenced the initiation of laying down of arms activities. Under the terms of the peace agreement, the laying down of arms was to take place at designated United Nations sites located inside FARC-EP camps within the zones and points. As those camps are not expected to be completed until the end of March or possibly later, FARC-EP members find themselves in temporary camps that are in close proximity but may not coincide with the exact location of the final camps.

51. Pending the completion of the designated United Nations sites within the final FARC-EP camps, the Mission has adopted measures to enable the laying down of arms to begin in the temporary FARC-EP camps. Observers deployed to FARC-EP temporary camps have set up rudimentary team sites and stored weapons in easily transportable reinforced metallic storage boxes, capable of holding up to 100 small arms each. The boxes are monitored through the constant presence of at least two United Nations observers. All permanent designated United Nations sites, including larger containers to store arms, are expected to be ready in the coming weeks.

52. According to the timeline established by the peace agreement, unstable explosive material contained in weapons caches should have been destroyed by 30 January (D+60). This ambitious timeline could not be observed owing to delays in the movement of FARC-EP members to zones and points. On 28 February, FARC-EP agreed to inform the United Nations of the location of said caches, and the Mission is in the process of deploying 60 observers to verify the extraction of arms contained in weapons caches, as well as the destruction of unstable explosive material, in coordination with FARC-EP. In early January, the Mission verified the location and transport of a light weapons cache in Caloto to Monte Redondo, Corinto (Cauca department). The upcoming monitoring and observation of the destruction of weapons caches will be a major undertaking, owing in particular to the remoteness and difficulty of access of most caches.

53. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security in Bogotá and the security officers at the regional and local levels are involved in the planning of operations related to the laying down of arms and the destruction of unstable FARC-EP armaments located in caches. It was agreed that, following the security risk management assessment of the overall process of laying down of arms, specific security risk management assessments will be prepared for each local operation of destruction of unstable armament and explosives.

Substantive coordination functions

54. The substantive coordination staff of the Mission continued to engage with national, departmental and local authorities and civil society organizations to exchange information on the peace process and the implementation of the mandate of the Mission.

55. At the national level, the Mission holds regular meetings with the diplomatic community, political leaders, civil society organizations, churches, the human rights community, indigenous organizations, women associations and platforms of non-governmental groups. Those encounters allowed the Mission to engage with key stakeholders and brief on the implementation of its mandate. They also provided an opportunity to collect perspectives on challenges and potential risks facing the peace process, particularly the ceasefire and the laying down of arms. Given the broad array of active and influential social and political actors in Colombian society, such exchanges are essential to the work, acceptance and broad legitimacy of the Mission; they also contribute to inform public opinion on the dynamics of the process. Such interactions are particularly important, considering the reservations of some sectors of the public regarding the peace process. Regular meetings with civil society platforms bringing together women's organizations and ethnic groups have brought to the light their desire to participate and be consulted throughout the process of implementation of the peace agreement. Human rights groups have highlighted the aforementioned security situation and threats facing community leaders and human rights defenders.

56. A productive relationship continues with the United Nations country team at all levels. The Mission participates regularly in the country team meetings, both at headquarters in Bogotá and at the regional level, providing updates and exploring ways to further expand mutual cooperation. As an example, the Mission cooperated with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to develop local assessments

for targeted quick impact projects in municipalities housing zones and points. To that end, the Mission provided personnel to participate in inter-agency assessment visits to zones and points during the months of February and March. The Colombian Agency for Territorial Renovation, under the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Post-Conflict, was a key participant in this effort.

IV. Mission set up and structures

57. During the reporting period, the Mission moved quickly to reach full capacity. It is currently fully operational at its national headquarters in Bogotá and in eight regional offices and one subregional office in Bogotá, which began its activities on 17 January. Bucaramanga operated from temporary premises until 25 January, when a permanent office became operational. The same applied to the Quibdó regional office, which received permanent premises on 12 January. The Medellín regional office continues to operate from temporary premises, although transfer to the final premises is expected shortly.

A. Observers

58. During the reporting period, the Mission reached the authorized ceiling of 450 observers from 19 countries, of whom 58 were women (13 per cent).

59. Currently, observers of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism are deployed in 23 temporary local headquarters and 3 mobile temporary local teams — Agua Bonita (Caquetá department), Caño Indio (Norte de Santander department) and El Gallo (Córdoba department) — thereby covering all zones and points.

60. There was little progress in the expansion and improvement of the local headquarters of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, despite commitments of the authorities to do so by the end of January. As a result, the Mission was unable to deploy its full contingent of observers to local headquarters, as planned; some 200 observers (as well as 20 United Nations Volunteers and 8 professional civilian staff) remained either at Mission headquarters in Bogotá or in the Mission's eight regional offices pending the availability of space at local headquarters. In addition, security and infrastructure improvements that had been foreseen for local headquarters (such as the building of perimeter fencing and the installation of security lighting) are yet to be made. During the meeting of my Special Representative with the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission on 21 February, the Government indicated that it would proceed with improvements to local headquarters. On 9 March, the Government signed an agreement with contractors to improve local sites.

B. Coordination and substantive

61. My Deputy Special Representative for Colombia, Tania Patriota of Brazil, arrived at the Mission on 3 February.

62. The Mission has made significant progress in the staffing of its eight regional offices. All regional offices are staffed with heads of office, liaison officers, national information officers and security officers.

63. The civilian staff deployed to local headquarters work closely with, and as an integral part of, the observer component. A determined effort was undertaken to recruit women to these positions as a means to ensure greater gender parity. Of the 17 professional posts at the local level and 30 United Nations Volunteers currently on board, 36 are women (76 per cent). As noted, there has been a delay in the deployment of substantive-section observers, owing to logistical delays in the expansion of the local headquarters. Those who have arrived at the Mission, following training, have been deployed to their corresponding regional offices, where they have been fully engaged in the work of regional teams and travel frequently to their local headquarters to interact as much as possible with members of the local tripartite Mechanism teams.

C. Mission support

64. The Mission continued to rely on existing United Nations capacity in Colombia to facilitate administrative, logistical and financial services, primarily through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The letter of assist for medical services, which provides for evacuation and medical coverage for Mission observers and camp health facilities, was signed with the Government of Colombia on 26 January 2017. The remaining letters of assist setting out the scope and description of logistical and administrative support to be provided by the Government to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission are approaching finalization.

65. As authorized in Security Council resolution [2307 \(2016\)](#), costs relating to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism are to be shared equally with the Government. Reimbursement for an initial submission of expenses by the Government took place on 28 February, and the second batch of Government invoices are now being processed for reimbursement.

66. In accordance with these cost-sharing provisions, the Government has, to date, provided 122 of a total of 158 vehicles required for the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission. The remaining vehicles will continue to be deployed in accordance with the opening of the local headquarters. The Mission has contracted and deployed two helicopters to provide logistics support, movements and regularly scheduled and special flights for the local zones and points. This capability will provide crucial support for the process of the laying down of arms. For mobile and static communications in remote regions, the Government of Colombia has requested the Mission to assume full responsibility for the provision of telephone, radio and Internet connectivity services throughout the Mission, including the regional offices and local zones and points. All regional offices now have enhanced radio connectivity and high frequency, VHF and satellite telephones. With UNDP support, the Mission has rapidly established contracts for the provision of the full range of information technology and communications services to local sites. These contracts are now under implementation.

67. As at 16 March, of the 111 authorized international civilian staff, 88 were already serving with the Mission, 4 were scheduled to arrive and 23 were in the

process of being hired. Of the total 211 civilian staff posts authorized for the Mission, 148 have been recruited and are either serving with the Mission or have scheduled arrival dates. Most of the 79 remaining posts still under recruitment are in the national staff category. Of the civilian staff within the Mission, 47 per cent are women.

D. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

68. The Government of Colombia, specifically the National Police of Colombia, continues to provide security to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission. The Department of Safety and Security provides ongoing leadership and operational support and advice on the policies and procedures of the United Nations security management system, in close cooperation and liaison with the Colombian authorities.

69. The security management system covers the United Nations country team and the Mission in an integrated and unified security structure, under the responsibility of the Designated Official, in line with the provisions of the memorandum of the Secretary-General dated 28 December 2016 regarding the authority of the Department of Safety and Security over security personnel and assets of peacekeeping and special political missions. The Chief Security Adviser/Chief Security Officer reports and serves as the principal adviser on safety and security to the Designated Official. In addition, the Chief Security Adviser/Chief Security Officer provides advice to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on all matters related to safety and security regarding the Mission.

70. All regional offices include a regional security officer. The regional security officers are responsible for guaranteeing compliance with the policies and procedures of the United Nations security management system within their area. Under the coordination and technical guidance of the respective field security coordination officers, the regional security officers advise the heads of regional offices and the Chief of Regional Observers on security issues. Mission security focal points have been designated in each zone and point, in order to liaise and coordinate with the regional security officers. Field security coordination officers and regional security officers participated in the monitoring of the movement of FARC-EP to zones and points.

71. As a result of the security risk management developed for the Mission, the predicted levels of risk in relation to most identified threats (attack by spoilers, crossfire and violent demonstrations) vary between low and medium. From the point of view of security, the activities planned for the Mission are viable insofar as the relevant risk management measures are fully implemented. The threat of landmines continues to pose considerable risk in some areas.

E. Conduct and discipline

72. The Mission is strongly committed to preventing acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and any misconduct involving its personnel. Following a risk analysis at the Mission headquarters and regional offices, a variety of preventive measures

have been put in place, including a conduct and discipline field visit programme undertaken by the Conduct and Discipline Team to offices in the Mission area of responsibility. Regular meetings with women's organizations at the national and local levels and close contact with communities remain important tools of prevention. An immediate response team was established, as was a roster composed of selected staff members and international observers to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to any suspected case.

73. In the light of the multiple challenges posed by the mandate of the Mission and the potential impact on the work environment of any case of misconduct, a plan to train all Mission personnel on prohibited conduct was developed to ensure a broad knowledge by personnel of their obligations, including maintaining strict standards of impartiality and respect for the population, as well as an environment free of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

74. The Mission established a conduct and discipline task force that is led by my Special Representative and is composed of senior Mission staff, to review and discuss preventive measures, identify gaps and decide on further measures regarding conduct and discipline. In that regard, and following recommendations from the task force, a conduct and discipline sub-working group composed of different Mission components developed and reviewed training materials and the welfare policy to ensure that misconduct does not take place. Furthermore, posters and calendars underscoring the zero-tolerance policy and informing of reporting lines have been disseminated to all offices, Mission headquarters and regional offices.

V. Observations

75. Colombia's remarkable journey towards peace has continued. The images witnessed in February of thousands of FARC-EP members making their final march into the zones where they will begin their reintegration into civilian life and FARC-EP will transform into a political organization were images of peace that many Colombians thought they would never see. These historic steps forward, as part of a comprehensive peace agreement, are testament to the resilience of the peace process and the commitment of the parties.

76. We should not lose sight of this momentous progress, even as the peace process now squarely confronts the challenges of implementation. In this undertaking it faces hurdles that are not unusual in peace implementation, in particular where the scope of the tasks envisaged in the peace agreement stretches resources and capacities under demanding time constraints. As I observed in my last report to the Council (S/2016/1095), the transition from war to peace in Colombia faces unique difficulties, including a pattern of insecurity in rural areas long affected by the conflict, with strong linkages to a thriving illicit economy. The violence against human rights defenders is of serious concern. Moreover, the first steps towards implementation coincide with the opening phase of campaigning for general elections due to be held in May 2018, which carries its own set of complications.

77. In dealing with the complexities in Colombia, the primary asset of the peace process remains the determination on the part of the leadership of the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP to achieve the goal of a sustainable peace, including the transition of FARC-EP into a political organization, the reintegration of its members

and the provision of peace dividends to the people and areas most in need of security, stability and development. That determination has not been diminished by the challenges encountered since the signing of the peace agreement in November 2016, as illustrated in particular by the full respect for the ceasefire by both parties throughout the reporting period. In that respect, the commitment of Colombian security forces — the army and police — to the process will remain a foundation for the consolidation of peace.

78. There are other factors of strength. In its contacts with the diverse sectors of Colombian society — the Church, political parties, the private sector, civil society organizations, women's groups, ethnic organizations and local communities — the Mission has found strong support for efforts to ensure the sustainability of the peace process. There is no debate about the need to end definitively a conflict that has spanned generations, even if, for some, doubts, misgivings and objections to parts of the peace agreement remain. The peace process has genuine roots in this broad national consensus across political divides.

79. These assets notwithstanding, there are matters that the United Nations, in concurrence with the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP, deems urgent, particularly given the dynamic process of the laying down of arms and the transformation of FARC-EP into a political party, both of which are to be completed within the next three months. Several sensitive issues have been mentioned in this report, ranging from quicker implementation of the amnesty law to the requirement of health care in the zones. Others will become increasingly sensitive as time goes by, including security guarantees and the prospects for productive livelihood following the laying down of arms. Increasingly, the process will also be judged throughout the most affected areas by the delivery of concrete peace dividends.

80. Much of the responsibility for advancing the implementation of the peace agreement rests with the Government at the national, departmental and local levels. However, the private sector and civil society can also bring their resources and ingenuity to bear. The international community has its contribution to make to this common effort, and rightly sees in the Colombian peace process a much-needed message of encouragement that deadly conflict can be resolved by peaceful means.

81. I would like to thank once again the Member States, principally but not exclusively, from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for their crucial contributions of observers to the Mission. The Mission reaching its full deployment level, with an exemplary percentage of female observers, was only possible thanks to the responsiveness of contributing countries. I would also like to acknowledge the continuing support of the guarantor nations, Cuba and Norway, and the accompanying nations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chile.

82. Lastly, I wish to commend my Special Representative, Jean Arnault, and his team for their serious and determined efforts to implement the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, as well as the close cooperation with the United Nations country team, which has its own important roles to play in facilitating the implementation of the peace agreement. The United Nations will continue to provide its utmost support to a peace process that is owned and led by the Colombian parties and the Colombian people.