

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen, Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

Colombia Debate at the Security Council

New York, 13/1/2020

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by welcoming the participation of Minister Blum. We are delighted to see you in New York again. I would also like to thank SRSG Ruiz Massieu for his speech.

More than **three years after the signing of the Peace Agreement**, Colombia can be proud. We must congratulate the parties to the Agreement on their commitment and on the progress made. At the same time, we must be aware of the remaining challenges.

The **recent local elections** demonstrate the positive impact of the peace process on Colombian democracy. There have been fewer violent incidents and citizens were able to take part in the elections in parts of the country that were previously unsafe. Like the recent social mobilisation, the elections illustrate the commitment of Colombian society to peace and the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

We are also encouraged by the implementation of the "**regional development programmes**", which receive expanded funding, and the progress made in the area of **economic and social reintegration**. The resumption of the activities of the Gender Working Group of the National Reintegration Council is an important step. Nevertheless, with regard to legal guarantees, we note with concern that no significant progress has been made in the accreditation process for former combatants. This creates legal insecurity and increases the risk of a recurrence of violence.

One of the cornerstones of the Peace Agreement is the introduction of the Global Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition System. **Transitional justice** is vital for reconciliation and lasting peace. We welcome the significant progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and encourage all those under its jurisdiction to contribute to the truth-seeking efforts. Threats of violence against lawyers defending former combatants are unacceptable.

We regret the continued violence against **defenders of human rights, social leaders and former FARC combatants**. 2019 was the most violent year for former combatants since the signing of the Peace Agreement. We are particularly concerned by the specific targeting of women defenders of rights and social leaders and by the lack of protection for the 70% of former combatants who live outside the former Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration (TATR). More effective measures are required, particularly the finalisation of the action plan of the Cross-sectoral commission for the security of

women leaders and defenders of human rights and access to the National Security Guarantees Commission.

Mr President,

We have read with interest the recent report by the SG on the **situation of children in armed conflict** in Colombia. We are extremely concerned by the widespread recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular the NLA and the FARC dissidents. I urge all armed groups to adopt and implement commitments to end this serious violation and to immediately release all the children within their ranks. We also call for sustained investment in the "A different path of life" reintegration programme and in the work of the National Reintegration Council's Working Group on Children.

Mr President,

In conclusion, it is important to **strengthen trust between the parties and intensify cooperation** and dialogue with regard to the implementation of the Final Agreement. It is in the interests of the Parties to use the consultation, monitoring and verification mechanisms and institutions created for this purpose. I would like to reiterate Belgium's firm commitment to working closely with Colombia to move forward with the full integration of the Peace Agreement.

Thank you.