

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

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

**Open VTC on Colombia at the Security Council**

New York, 14/2/2020

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Dear Mr. President, dear colleagues,

Thank you to SRSR Ruiz Massieu for his insightful briefing as well as to Mr. Cano for sharing his inspiring efforts to support the reintegration of former combatants. I welcome the participation of Minister Blum at this session.

The **comprehensive implementation of the Peace Agreement** remains the way forward. The commitment demonstrated by new subnational authorities is a welcome development. We encourage both parties to make full use of the mechanisms for dispute resolution created by the Agreement.

While the **COVID** pandemic raises an additional challenge to the peace process, we are encouraged by the parties' joint efforts to ensure continued implementation. Authorities have shown a strong initial response and are working to prevent the virus' spread in vulnerable areas where ex-combatants are reintegrating into society. We welcome the announcement by the ELN of a unilateral cease-fire which has added to the growing momentum of the Secretary-General's global appeal.

We remain very concerned about the consistent high level of **violence against human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants** as highlighted in the recent OHCHR report. Their safety needs to be guaranteed and the Peace Agreement offers mechanisms in this regard. We also call for more progress in operationalizing the 'Comprehensive Security and Protection Programme for Communities and Organizations in the Territories. The launch of the action plan for women leaders and human rights defenders constitutes important progress, yet sufficient resources will be required for its implementation. We urge armed groups to refrain from violence.

We welcome the efforts with regards to **reintegration of former combatants** and in particular progress in financing and implementing the 'development programmes with a territorial focus'. Rural reform and access to land remain key challenges as well as a shift in focus to the large majority of ex-combatants now living outside of the concentration zones. We also welcome the agreement to advance humanitarian demining in collaboration between the Government, the UN and Humanicemos, a civil society organisation that employs former combatants.

We remain concerned about the precarious **situation of the children** of former combatants, the recent cases of recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups in some departments and the situation of children still living in areas affected by violence.

Belgium pays particular attention to the process of **transitional justice** in Colombia and welcomes the progress in the cases launched by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. To meet the high expectations of victims it is important that all actors fully contribute to the various components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we welcome the continued efforts towards peace in Colombia, despite the difficult context. Belgium is strongly committed to accompanying Colombia with a view to addressing the remaining challenges in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

Thank you.