

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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

Columbia Debate at the Security Council

New York, 12/4/2019

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I want to thank the briefers for their presentations, as well as Minister Trujillo for his presence.

I wish to highlight four points: (1) a call for reconciliation and the strengthening of trust; (2) the need to reinforce the role of women and to protect children; (3) the fight against violence targeting those who defend human rights and social leaders; and (4) the importance of the autonomy and independence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

1. Firstly, Belgium hails **the renewed commitment of the Colombian government to the peace process**. Indeed, this process constitutes a unique opportunity to break the cycles of violence, respect victims' rights, and implement a dynamic of change. Many indicators show the great progress that has been made and the country can truly be proud of its achievements. The finalisation of the regional development plans is a major step. The peace process set up in Colombia is, without exaggeration, a true source of inspiration for the whole world.

In this context, it is a matter of great concern to witness an increase in **polarisation** and **tensions** in recent months. Some measures could alleviate these tensions: in particular I am referring to the speeding up of the socio-economic reintegration process, the promotion of better access to land, and clarifications about the future of areas of concentration, with the full participation of the FARC in the specific conventions created in the frame of the agreement.

2. Secondly, Belgium wishes to draw attention to the **role of women**. The gender aspects included in the Peace Agreement are among the best practices in the world. Belgium is calling for the **implementation** of the actions of the national reintegration strategy on gender and the rapid setting up of the cross-sectoral commission for the security of women leaders and defenders of human rights.

Special attention should also be paid to the protection of **children's rights** and the fight against the violations of these, such as their recruitment and exploitation by non-state armed groups.

3. My third point concerns the **persistent violence against defenders of human rights and social leaders** outside of the security perimeters. We strongly encourage the Colombian authorities to assert **the State's presence** throughout the country, including through social programmes. These measures will also help to deal with the problem of violence against former FARC fighters.

Reports of an increase in forced displacement are also of great concern and, therefore, we repeat the call made by the OHCHR in its last report concerning compliance by all parties with human rights and international humanitarian law.

4. My final point concerns **transitional justice**, the cornerstone of the Peace Agreement. For this to be implemented in the best possible conditions, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) must be able to work completely autonomously and independently. Therefore, Belgium repeats the call of the Secretary General and appeals to all the parties concerned to take measures to ensure **the rapid adoption of the statutory law** of this Jurisdiction, in accordance with the Peace Agreement. This is important not only for the legal authority and credibility of the SJP, but also for ensuring the judicial security of FARC members and military officers who have already presented themselves or who are planning to call upon the services of the SJP.

Mr President,

Belgium is concerned about the **situation in Venezuela** and understands that this crisis has serious consequences in Colombia. We hail the solidarity shown by Colombians for the many refugees and migrants who have arrived in their country.

2019 is a **crucial year** for the consolidation of peace in Colombia. We firmly believe that the full implementation of the Peace Agreement will allow Colombian society to achieve its goals in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

Thank you.