

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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

Colombia Debate at the Security Council

New York, 19/07/2019

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would firstly like to thank Mr Massieu for his briefing and Minister Trujillo for his attendance today.

I would also like to thank the delegations from the United Kingdom and Peru, the United Nations Mission in Colombia and the Colombian authorities for arranging **our visit** last week. This was a valuable opportunity for the Council to show our support for the peace process and gain a better understanding of the challenges which Colombia is facing during the implementation of the Havana peace agreement.

Belgium welcomes the firm **commitment** expressed by all parties during its visit. From President Duque to the FARC leaders and the officials of the Peace Agreement institutions, along with representatives of civil society organisations, former fighters from Santa Rosa in Cauca and the communities in which they live: the main message that we heard was the need and the commitment to make the peace agreement work. I left Colombia with the belief that, despite the considerable challenges, the country continues to provide an enlightened example to the world's conflict areas that need inspiration.

The **request to extend the Verification Mission's mandate** is a clear sign of this commitment. We also recognise the progress made with regards the reintegration of former rebel fighters, the search for a pragmatic solution for the 24 concentration zones, the approval of the national and regional development plans and the proposal to improve the land registry. It is now important to strengthen these efforts of reincorporation and rural reform.

The **October elections** will be an important step for the political reintegration of the FARC. We urge the authorities to protect the social leaders, human rights activists, the candidates and the FARC's male and female politicians in anticipation of these elections. Female leaders are particularly vulnerable. It is deeply concerning that since the Peace Agreement was signed, 123 former soldiers and several hundred social leaders have been murdered. Too often, the culprits have not been held to account. Guarantees of security are needed, especially in the framework of a wider extension of the State's total presence in former conflict areas.

Belgium is delighted with the adoption of the statutory law of the **Special Peace Jurisdiction** which consolidates its autonomy and independence and is the cornerstone of the restorative justice model in

Colombia. I welcome the work of the Truth Commission and the Group that Searches for Missing People. These transitional justice institutions must have sufficient resources to fulfil their mandate. While recognising that the great majority of former FARC fighters are complying with their commitments under the Peace Agreement, I want to stress that it is vital that all FARC leaders set an example and actively contribute to telling the truth in all the cases reviewed by the Special Jurisdiction. The actions of a small minority of critics of the agreement must not be abused by others in order to undermine the agreement's implementation. This requires continued courage from all political actors.

Belgium is monitoring in particular the situation of **children in armed conflicts**. We are encouraging the Government to prioritise child protection and I congratulate the institute for family welfare for its work. We remain very concerned about the sharp increase in the recruitment and use of children mainly by non-State armed groups.

Mr President,

We regret the **persistent polarising atmosphere** around elements of the Peace Agreement which illustrates the need for an inclusive dialogue between all political forces. We must overcome the mistrust and unite behind peace.

There is no doubt that the **historic decision to end to the armed conflict** is the right one, despite the current challenges. I assure all parties of Belgium's unwavering support of the peace process.

Thank you, Mr President.