

**S/2017/539:**

**Report of the Secretary-General:**

**On the Implementation of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.**

Date: 23 June 2017

Period: 25 March 2017- 23 June 2017

**MANDATE**

The report provides an update on the implementation of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, pursuant to [Resolution 2261](#) (2016), for the reporting period of 25 March 2017 to 23 June 2017. The Mission is mandated for a period of 12 months, is comprised of unarmed international observers, and is tasked with the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire, laying down of arms, and cessation of hostilities. Though Resolution 2261 (2016) is gender-blind, the Colombian Peace Accords include significant gender perspectives. In instituting the agreement, it is within the purview of the UN Mission in Colombia to ensure the gender-specific provisions of the accords are implemented, including: ensuring Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives afford priority to rural women and female heads of household; promoting women's participation in politics; integrating gender perspectives throughout all reintegration efforts; addressing the specific needs of women in monitoring and verification activities; including gender approaches in national plans to eradicate poverty; and making crimes of sexual and gender-based violence ineligible for amnesty in the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

**GENERAL ANALYSIS**

The Secretary-General reports significant progress in the implementation of the mission's mandate, including the preservation of the ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and demobilisation of nearly 60 percent of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) combatants' registered weapons (para.20). Yet, the perspective of [several organisations](#) on the ground contradicts this statement - they report that parties have actually been at pains to comply with the peace agreement's disarmament timeline. Collection of weapons in arms caches are a particular concern, as it could re-ignite the conflict. Moreover, the Secretary-General expresses concern at the country's current security situation in regards to the agreed-upon reintegration phase of the FARC-EP fighters. Rural areas formerly under FARC-EP control are especially concerning as they present a higher risk of attacks against social and community leaders, as well as

FARC-EP members and their families. The Secretary-General underscores effective reintegration of FARC-EP ex-combattants must include legal measures - such as the application of amnesties for all incarcerated FARC-EP (para.4) - and socioeconomic measures such as basic stipend and economic support (para.6). The report also calls for the establishment of a second special political mission by 10 July 2017.

Of the 81 paragraphs in the report, 12 (14.8 percent) included references to Women, Peace and Security, with a focus on the implementation of the peace agreement and the involvement of women's groups in the process. The report notably announced that in April 2017, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement established a special entity to ensure that a gender perspective - including on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues - is mainstreamed in the implementation of the peace agreement (para. 11). This entity will (i) make recommendations to the Commission, (ii) follow up on the implementation of gender provisions in the agreement and (iii) establish a permanent dialogue between women's group and peace-related bodies. Further efforts to include women's participation, especially in matters related to disarmament and economic reinsertion however remain imperative for lasting peace in Colombia.

## **GENDER ANALYSIS**

### **Participation**

The adoption of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement is a tremendous step forward in the inclusion of women's needs in the implementation of the peace agreement. Not only does this special entity allow for a cross-cutting approach, including women's long-term participation, protection and post-conflict recovery, but also for an intersectional approach, representing the LGBTIQ+ community. In this vein, this platform will facilitate women's groups' interaction with the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM), including the participation of female FARC-EP in meetings. These are very significant developments towards the greater inclusion of women in the peace agreement's implementation and the acknowledgment of women's diversity. Women's inclusion in reporting mechanisms is however not enough. Further efforts regarding women's political participation in institutions, committees and programs created in the post-agreement scenario are necessary. Until now, women have scarcely been included in these entities, and the parity provisions included in the 2016 peace agreement have not been respected.

## Protection

The Secretary-General reported on incidences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the mandate zone and announced further UN financial support to help local organisations for women affected by SGBV. The newly funded protection programmes are however only present in a few municipalities which host zones and points. They need to be extended to the rest of the country and demand thorough implementation and follow up. Moreover, the report fails to reflect the experiences of displaced women in Colombia. Violence associated with the conflict has forcibly displaced more than 6.8 million Colombians, generating the world's second largest population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), after Syria. Displaced women in the area have greater odds of being attacked violently or sexually, and holes in Colombia's criminal code do not adequately defend these women. Moreover, the report falls short of reporting on women [human rights defenders](#) who face ongoing and particular threats. Members of [Afro-descendant and Indigenous human rights organisations](#), who work to maintain community-based and gender-responsive self-protection plans are especially targeted in areas formerly under FARC-EP control. It is critical that mitigating measures be taken by the Colombian governments to provide vulnerable population the level of protection that they need.

## Prevention

The issue most relevant to preventing the resurgence of conflict in the peace agreement, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), was only addressed in a gender-blind manner in the report. External [reports](#) indicate that approximately one-third of FARC cadres arriving at demobilisation zones are women, which is a hopeful sign that women understand the value of DDR and are willing to support it. However, while the mission's mandate focuses on the monitoring of disarmament efforts in Colombia, the Secretary-General fails to report on such developments in a gender-inclusive manner. This entails a missed opportunity to ensure a feminist, pacifist, and anti-militarist perspective is integrated into the DDR programme in Colombia. Moreover, a focus on women combatants' reinstatement is necessary as failure to effectively demobilise women in armed groups can result in a continued cycle of grievance and hostility toward the peace process. Accuracy in reporting regarding demobilisation efforts, and the lack of a gender dimension in the DDR process in the Secretary General's reports on Colombia are therefore highly disquieting, as DDR is critical for gender equality and sustainable peace in the post-conflict Colombia

## Relief and Recovery

Efforts led by the United Nations country team and the Colombia Agency for Territorial Renovation to support small-scale economic initiatives and collective reparations for women affected by SGBV are positive developments (para. 56). However, slow progress in Transitional Justice efforts and the lack of fair prosecution of incidents of SGBV in transitional zones are not addressed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Participation

Future reporting must reflect women's participation in the Mission's peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts, including through consistent and explicit analysis on the gendered impact of this conflict. The Secretary-General must advocate for the inclusion of [gender perspectives](#) in security initiatives and strengthen spaces for active women's participation with the aim of avoiding current centralisation. Indeed, consultations with women's group are crucial to identify possible situation of gender-based violence, protection mechanisms but also avenues for women's increased post-conflict participation. They should be continued regularly moving forward, including with Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and rural women's organisations.

### Protection

It is imperative that human rights violations, including SGBV, continue to be monitored, through consultation with civil society, including women leaders and, human rights defenders during field visits. Moreover, discussions should reflect the complexity of the current situation with regards to the increase of death threats against, and killings of [human rights defenders](#), social leaders, including Afro-descendant and Indigenous community leaders in areas recently vacated by FARC-EP and areas surrounding the UN Mission. As conveyed by [civil society organisations](#) (CSOs), there remains an urgent need to maintain the presence of UN humanitarian agencies to monitor and report human rights violations during the implementation phase of the peace agreement.

### Prevention

The Mission must monitor all stages of the transfer of arms, including the identification of those who participate in the arms trade; establish a transparent, complete, and current arms register; and encourage spaces for effective participation of women in forums for safety, legal measures, and disarmament plans. As suggested by [WILPF Colombia](#), an

increased focus on the [prevention of sexual and gender-based violence](#) should be included in the DDR monitoring and verification mechanisms led by the UN Political Mission. Future reports must also acknowledge and support grassroots efforts in Colombia which help demobilised women reintegrate society and empower them economically. Some organisations teach demobilised women to remove landmines from conflict-affected areas and to acquire skills in software and information technology. Other initiatives, including [Women Coffee Farmers Build Peace](#), empower women working in coffee line production in three different regions of Colombia. These programmes open pathways and widens women's participation in sectors that have been mainly dominated by men. Such programmes must be supported financially by the UN Political mission and its partners, and expanded throughout the country. Following the successful example of [Liberia](#), creating microfinance programmes aimed specifically at female ex-combatants can also be considered in Colombia.

### **Relief and Recovery/ Implementation**

Furthermore, the Mission must ensure that justice institutions are accessible and accountable to all survivors of violence in both rural and urban areas, including in the 20 Transitional Local Zones for Normalisation (TLZN) and the 8 Transitional Local Points for Normalisation (TLPN). The mission must also address the risk of an increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in transitional zones and ensure that all cases are adequately investigated and if there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecuted in fair trials, as it is essential for the successful implementation of personal and collective measures. Finally, in light of the continuing harassment and killings of human rights defenders (HRDs), the Secretary-General should call upon the Colombian government to properly investigate killings without further delay and to hold perpetrators fully accountable.