

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 25 August 2020 from the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Germany and the Dominican Republic, as co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, would like to share the summary of the following meeting of the Informal Expert Group (see annex):

- The situation in Colombia

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) José **Singer Weisinger**

Ambassador

Special Envoy of the Dominican Republic to the Security Council

(Signed) Christoph **Heusgen**

Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

(Signed) Jonathan **Allen**

Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations



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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council

Summary of the meeting on Colombia, held on 29 July 2020

On 29 July 2020, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Colombia. The members were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the Resident Coordinator for Colombia.

Members of the Security Council asked questions about the development of a national action plan on women and peace and security, the involvement of civil society and women from diverse backgrounds in the peace process and resources dedicated by the Government of Colombia to the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement. Council members also asked about the protection of women social leaders and women human rights defenders, the effect of the pandemic and the lockdown on women working in the informal economy and measures to respond to sexual violence, including the access of women and girls to health services and medical treatment. Other questions were focused on the need for gender-related language in the mandate of the Mission, the Mission's cooperation with regional organizations and support provided by the Mission to young women, including in the reintegration of former combatants.

Below are the main points raised during the meeting:

- The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), signed in November 2016, has been heralded as a positive example of the active and meaningful participation of women in a peace process. Today, women in Colombia continue to be a driving force in its implementation. For example, 82,000 rural women participated in community consultations for the formulation of the 170 local development plans in conflict territories established by the peace agreement, leading to the elaboration of almost 33,000 initiatives, of which more than 4,000 are rural initiatives with a gender approach.
- A total of 23 per cent of the 13,525 former members of FARC-EP that actively participate in economic and social reintegration programmes are women. There are 1,147 women among the 4,429 former combatants who benefit from collective and individual projects. The national reintegration policy incorporates 18 gender-specific actions agreed upon by the Government and FARC-EP. Limited access to childcare, protection schemes and inclusion in decision-making represents the main barrier to the adequate reintegration of female former combatants. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis has exacerbated this situation, presenting a challenge to the implementation of women-led productive initiatives. The transition of FARC-EP to the political party provided female former combatants with an opportunity to participate in politics. So far, there are two female senators among the 10 members of Congress of the FARC-EP caucus.

- Since 2018, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has received 274 reports from victims' organizations and government institutions, and at least 20 of them have been submitted by women victims of sexual violence during the conflict. While sexual violence has been included in the ongoing case on the forced recruitment of children, women's organizations continue to request the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open a macro investigation related to conflict-related sexual violence. The Truth Commission devoted its first session to conflict-related sexual violence. Furthermore, 54 per cent of testimonies to the Commission have been made by women, and about 780 of those were related to sexual violence. A total of 64 per cent of the staff of the Commission are women.
- The 51 gender-related indicators in the Government's implementation framework are being monitored by mechanisms established in the peace agreement, such as the Government's High-level Forum on Gender and civil society's Special Forum on Gender. At least one adviser to the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, funded by the United Nations, is in charge of following up on the implementation of those indicators, but women and peace and security advocates contend that more government resources are needed to ensure that the relevant government entities can advance the over 100 provisions in the peace agreement that are related to gender equality, beyond the 51 gender-related indicators of the Government's implementation framework.
- Since the signing of the peace agreement, the Mission has verified the killing of four female former combatants, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented the killing of 45 female human rights defenders and social leaders, including 6 from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex population. In June 2018, the Minister of Interior adopted the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, in close coordination with the women's movement. However, its action plan was only launched in February 2020, and its implementation remains limited. In an effort to respond to continuing security threats and protection needs, regional forums on the security of women leaders and human rights defenders in Putumayo, Montes de María and Magdalena have been established with the active participation of women's organizations and the support of the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Attorney General and the United Nations to define concrete protection measures. The National Commission on Security Guarantees recently agreed to formalize the participation of two representatives of women's organizations and to integrate the expertise of the Special Forum on Gender into its work.
- Conflict-related sexual violence continues to be used as tactic for displacement, territorial control and attacks against the communities and the leadership of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons by various illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. In 2019, the National Victims' Unit recorded 365 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, which constitute an increase of over 40 per cent, compared with the previous year and can be linked to renewed conflict dynamics in several areas and possibly improved reporting avenues. Women and girls account for 89 per cent of the victims. A total of 166 cases involved Colombians of African descent, 15 cases involved individuals from indigenous communities, 25 cases involved persons living with disabilities, 51 cases involved children and several cases involved individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex. In the first four months of 2020, 122 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were already recorded, with a high concentration along the Pacific coast.

Colombia's reparations scheme continues to be cited as a global best practice, with an estimated one third of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence having received reparations to date.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the situation of women and girls. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector of the economy, which is especially affected by lockdown measures. They also account for the bulk of the health-care workforce, with over 60 per cent of health-care workers being women. Furthermore, during the preventive isolation period, there was a 140 per cent increase in reports of domestic violence to the national hotline. In response, the Government established a high-level working group to address prevention and response measures to gender-based violence, and the FARC-EP gender commission promoted local campaigns for prevention and awareness-raising with regard to gender-based violence among former combatants. Limitations on movement and on the availability of services have also impaired the access of survivors of gender-based and sexual violence to essential services, justice and reparation. Moreover, the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, including the loss of livelihoods and restrictions on connectivity and mobility, undermine the active and meaningful participation of women in the implementation of the peace agreement.
- Women are especially affected by inequitable access to land. Only 5.5 per cent of the hectares whose titles have been formalized through the Land Fund have been handed over to women.
- A week before the meeting of the Informal Expert Group, the Vice-President, the Ministry of National Defence and the Military Forces established a round table to develop a national strategy to prevent and end sexual violence and gender discrimination across the military forces, following recent cases of sexual violence involving the army that are under investigation.
- The Government has announced the launch of a national action plan to accelerate the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). Coordination with civil society still needs to take place to ensure a participatory and inclusive process.
- In all, 49 per cent of all civilian personnel of the Mission and 36 per cent of international police and military observers are women. The Mission has adopted a gender directive and a gender parity strategy, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia maintains a regular dialogue with women from civil society and the FARC gender commission.
- Gender equality is a specific outcome within the peace and stability pillar of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Furthermore, gender is a cross-cutting theme of the framework, and one in five indicators of the framework relate specifically to gender. Since 2016, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia have allocated over \$20 million to support gender equality in Colombia.

The following recommendations were made by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict:

- The Security Council, in its messaging on Colombia, should commend the Mission's efforts to achieve gender parity and encourage the Mission to continue

to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue into its planning, operations and reporting

- Security Council members should support the Government's intention to develop a national action plan on women and peace and security and encourage it to be developed in a consultative and participatory manner, particularly with the engagement of civil society
- Security Council members should encourage the Government to expedite the implementation of the gender-relevant provisions of the peace agreement, assign and report on indicative budgets for the 51 gender-relevant indicators in the Government's monitoring framework and maintain a sustained and open dialogue with civil society and the monitoring efforts of civil society, including by providing financial and operational support for the adequate functioning of the Special Forum on Gender
- Security Council members and other international partners should step up their support to the Government of Colombia and civil society for the implementation of rural development plans in the territories that target gender issues
- Security Council members should encourage the Government to further implement the gender policy of the Minister of Defence, including through the deployment of female personnel to field areas and the increased training of public forces on gender-related matters
- Security Council members and other international partners should support the advocacy of women's civil society organizations with regard to opening a case on conflict-related sexual violence within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace
- The Security Council should continue to encourage the Mission to report on conflict-related sexual violence as part of its mandate with regard to verification of reintegration and security guarantees

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the briefers for their participation and committing to following up on the important issues raised at the meeting.
