

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 5 May 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

Ireland and Mexico, 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, would like to share the summary note on the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on the situation in Colombia (see annex).

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

*(Signed)* **Geraldine Byrne Nason**  
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

*(Signed)* **Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**  
Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

*(Signed)* **Barbara Woodward**  
Permanent Representative 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 8 April 2022**

On 8 April 2022, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in Colombia. The group was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, accompanied by the Resident Coordinator and representatives of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by UN-Women and additional observations shared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

**Questions from Council members**

Members of the Security Council asked for an assessment of the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement, more than five years after its adoption, and what elements should be built on by a new Government, expected to take office in August. They asked how Council members could support the Government and the United Nations in ensuring that indigenous and Afro-Colombian women were better protected, that the development of a national action plan on women and peace and security fully involve civil society, that conflict-related sexual violence be adequately reflected in the proceedings of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and that women participate meaningfully in the dissemination of and follow-up to the final report of the Truth Commission, expected in June. Council members also inquired about the functioning of the Special Forum on Gender and about recent trends of gender-based political violence in the context of the parliamentary elections in March and the upcoming presidential election in May.

**Main points raised in the meeting**

- More than five years after its adoption, the peace agreement in Colombia remains an inspiration for the world, including with regard to its treatment of gender equality issues.
- The Government tracks the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement against 51 indicators. According to its assessment, 13 have been fully implemented, and 17 have shown significant progress. Analysis by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies shows that the gender provisions of the peace agreement are being implemented at a slower pace than the rest of the provisions. This is especially acute in areas such as security guarantees, rural reform and political participation, which register at the lowest level of implementation. The United Nations considers that implementation of the gender provisions is key to accelerating the implementation of the peace agreement as a whole.
- Nearly 70 per cent of the more than 3,000 women ex-combatants are involved in individual or collective productive projects. However, the National Reintegration Council, which has identified 18 gender-related actions for

implementation, can do much more to empower its technical working group on gender and make progress on the 18 actions, especially with regard to resource allocation and the inclusion of women in decision-making.

- Progress has been made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, including the establishment of local committees in several regions, but the committees need to be supported, strengthened and expanded. UN-Women collaborates with the Embassy of Norway and the Office of the Ombudsman to support the protection of women leaders in Nariño, Cauca, Chocó and Antioquia. There is also a need for greater ownership on the part of national and local authorities, as well as gender expertise and resources in the National Protection Unit.
- In recent parliamentary elections, the number of women candidates increased to more than 40 per cent, and the number of elected women increased to nearly 30 per cent, a record for Colombia. However, in the 16 districts for peace, the new seats allocated to the regions most affected by the conflict, only three seats were won by women. Women candidates were affected by security risks, gender-based discrimination and political violence, and unequal access to resources. Comprehensive political reform addressing violence against women in politics and both vertical and horizontal parity are still needed.
- However, renewed violence, including in the form of killings, displacement, extortion, sexual violence and child recruitment by non-State armed groups and criminal organizations in regions such as Arauca, Chocó and Putumayo, is affecting in particular Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities and female-headed households. Women leaders continue to call for a cessation of hostilities and the demilitarization of their communities.
- In 2021, the United Nations verified the killing of 12 women social leaders, of which 7 were indigenous leaders, such as Sandra Peña in Cauca in April 2021 and Luz Marina Arteaga in Meta in January 2022. In addition, the United Nations has received 1,100 complaints of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and their organizations. In all, 29 per cent of them were women, and 26 per cent of them could amount to gender-based violence. In the past few weeks, in the electoral context, the armed group Águilas Negras has threatened several women leaders, including vice-presidential candidate Francia Márquez, and acted on its threats by killing one indigenous leader only a month ago. The United Nations participates in the committee that conducts risk assessments and recommends protection measures for women. That committee has reviewed the cases of more than 560 women human rights defenders and social leaders, 72 of them indigenous women and 57 of them Afro-Colombian women. However, Decree 1139, adopted in 2021 to regulate the central committee that works with the National Protection Unit, failed to recognize the functioning of the committee that focuses specifically on women leaders.
- The latest public policy on gender equality for women (2022–2030) includes a commitment to developing a national action plan on women and peace and security. Women’s organizations insist that the development of the plan must be extensively consulted on with civil society.
- Since May 2021, the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has been expanded to include the verification of the implementation of the restorative sentences administered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and the Mission and the United Nations country team have been working together to integrate gender equality issues and the meaningful participation of women into this area of the mandate.

- Women’s organizations consider it imperative that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace open a macro case on conflict-related sexual violence as an autonomous crime, rather than only as an associated crime in the macro cases already under way, and the United Nations supports that request.
- The final report of the Truth Commission, due in June, will include a specific chapter documenting the atrocities committed against women during the conflict. Many of the victims who have testified to the Commission are being revictimized in new waves of violence. The final report will include recommendations on avoiding a repetition of the cycles of violence, including a commitment to rural reform and greater opportunity for regions that have historically been abandoned by the State.
- Colombia has been included in the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence since 2012, and it is noted in the latest such report that the violence continues to be used as a driver of displacement and a tactic of territorial control. The report also documents sexual violence committed against women and girls during their association with armed groups, patterns of sexual slavery, and sexual violence against Venezuelan migrants. In 2021, the national Victims’ Unit recorded 293 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, which represents a 20 per cent increase compared with 2020. Given chronic underreporting, high levels of stigma and prevailing impunity, the figures are considered only indicative. Out of 62 cases of conflict-related sexual violence referred to the Office of the Attorney General, the number of convictions for the crimes was at just over 17 per cent of total cases. Nearly two decades after the kidnapping and sexual abuse of Colombian journalist Jineth Bedoya, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a landmark ruling in October 2021 finding the State responsible for a number of violations of her rights. Measures ordered by the Court included the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible, as well as the implementation of a policy on the protection of journalists and the establishment of a centre dedicated to the memory of women victims of conflict, in particular female journalists.
- Participants praised the level of collaboration between the Mission and the United Nations country team on gender equality issues in the context of the implementation of the peace agreement. In all, 80 per cent of the agencies of the United Nations country team support the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement, which cover a broad spectrum of issues. One of the sources of funding for the work is the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, which has dedicated close to \$38 million, or 42 per cent of total funding, to the gender dimension of United Nations work on peace. The Mission has reached gender parity in its overall composition, although it is at only 43 per cent with regard to international, fixed-term staff, and the percentage of women varies among different categories of staff and is below parity for international observers and senior leadership positions.
- Participants reaffirmed the importance of having Colombian women, especially those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, speak directly to the Security Council and bring visibility to their current realities in the territories most affected by the conflict, as well as to repeated cycles of violence and neglect. It is imperative that they be able to do so without any intimidation, including from the Government.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group:<sup>1</sup>

The Security Council, in resolutions or statements on Colombia, should consider the following language:

- Demands the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the implementation of the peace agreement and negotiations with other armed actors in Colombia.
- Urges the Government of Colombia to provide adequate technical and financial support to accelerate the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement.
- Calls for the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the action plan for the security of women former combatants under the reintegration policy.
- Requests the Mission to continue to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue into its planning, operations and reporting, commends the Mission's efforts to achieve gender parity and engage systematically with women's organizations and notes the importance of supporting the deployment of gender expertise.

In addition, Security Council members and the Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group could:

- Encourage the Government to expedite the implementation of the gender-relevant provisions of the peace agreement, including by providing financial and operational support for the adequate functioning of the Special Forum on Gender.
- Support the Colombian State's commitment to developing a national action plan on women and peace and security, as stipulated in the latest public policy on gender equality for women (2022–2030), and encourage it to be developed in a consultative and participatory manner, in particular with the active and meaningful engagement of civil society.
- Advocate that the Government add a gender marker to its financial tracking of peace-related spending, as requested by women's organizations.
- Encourage Security Council members and other international partners to step up their support to the Government of Colombia and civil society for the implementation of rural development plans targeting gender issues in the territories most affected by the conflict, as well as for the stronger implementation of the peace agreement's gender provisions regarding political participation and illicit crop substitution.
- Expressly condemn every killing of women human rights defenders and social leaders, inquire about the status of the investigations of the murders of women human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants, and advocate the adequate funding and resources to implement the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> The recommendations are suggestions from United Nations participants in the meeting, including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, or from the background note prepared by UN-Women as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, rather than recommendations of the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council members.

adequate representation by women's organizations representing indigenous communities and communities of African descent on the National Commission for Security Guarantees and the Intersectoral Commission of Guarantees for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

- Urge the Government to allocate the resources required for the implementation of the gender actions of the national reintegration policy at the national and local levels and encourage the Government and the Comunes party to ensure the active and meaningful participation of women former combatants in the reintegration process.
- Encourage the Government to guarantee the establishment by the State authorities of the conditions necessary for the implementation of the restorative sentences expected to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace at the end of 2022, including their gender-related elements, and to continue to work towards eradicating impunity for conflict-related sexual violence through both the transitional justice mechanisms and the rest of the justice system in Colombia.
- Encourage the Government to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of victims of and witnesses to conflict-related violence and their access to justice, from investigations to prosecutions to reparations, as well as the implementation of the security forces' plan to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, which was designed jointly with the United Nations, and to fully implement the decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.
- Amplify the advocacy of women's organizations petitioning for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open a macro case on conflict-related sexual violence.
- Support the meaningful participation of women in any follow-up mechanism or initiative to implement the recommendations in the final report of the Truth Commission.
- Encourage the Mission to continue to include gender analysis and specific reporting on the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement in its reports to the Security Council, and ensure adequate resources allocated for gender expertise within the Mission.

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and committed to following up on the important issues raised at the meeting.

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