

Colombia's peace process is an example for the world

Thank you Mr President.

First let me thank the Special Representative, for your briefing today and for the important work of the Verification Mission. I'd also like to thank our two civil society briefers Bibiana Peñaranda and Daniela Soto for sharing their perspectives and the powerful testimony you have given on the situation in Colombia.

Vice-President Ramírez, it's a pleasure to welcome to the Council once again; your presence demonstrates the importance your Government attaches to the Security Council's role in supporting Colombia on its journey towards lasting peace.

Mr President, next month we will be marking the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement. This is a significant milestone. We know that more than half of all peace agreements fail within the first five years. It is therefore an important moment for the international community to celebrate with Colombia the progress achieved to date, and the ways in which Colombia's peace process serves as an example for the world.

One such element is the novel transitional justice system created by the Peace Agreement, which puts victims at its heart. The United Kingdom commends the continued progress achieved in recent months by the components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We reiterate our appreciation and support for the vital work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons, and we welcome the extension of the Truth Commission's mandate. We encourage all actors to play their part in this process: acknowledging their crimes and injustices, fulfilling their responsibility to the victims of the conflict, and paving the way towards reconciliation.

Another major achievement during this reporting period was the creation of 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. The UK supports this important initiative to facilitate the political participation of historically excluded groups.

Mr President, while celebrating the achievement represented by the fifth anniversary of the Peace Agreement, it is also an important time to take stock of the challenges that remain to its comprehensive implementation and the commitments required to overcome them. The gains of the last five years cannot be taken for granted.

Foremost among these challenges, as all of us around this table have recognised before, is the high number of killings and threats against former combatants, social and environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Again, I

recognise the testimony of Bibiana Peñaranda and Daniela Soto in this regard.

To end this ongoing violence, we urge the Colombian Government to further integrate its presence in conflict-affected areas, and strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible. We note with concern that the National Commission on Security Guarantees has not met fully during this reporting period, and call on the Government to make full use of this body, working with civil society, to develop a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups. We also call on all institutions to heed the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office to help prevent attacks from happening and protect those at risk.

Finally, as the 2022 elections come into focus, we underline the importance of peaceful preparations and call on all parties to take steps to ensure safe and inclusive elections, and minimise the risk of pre-electoral and political violence.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom has been proud to accompany Colombia on its journey so far to implement the Peace Agreement. As we look ahead, we remain committed to supporting Colombia in consolidating the gains achieved and overcoming the challenges that remain.

In closing, I would like just to add that we look forward to beginning work shortly with other Council members on the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the Verification Mission.