

Maintaining momentum to realise the full promise of the Colombian Peace Agreement

Thank you Madam President.

My thanks to the Special Representative Ruiz Massieu, for your briefing and as ever for the work of you and your team. I thank Luz Marina Giraldo for sharing your important personal perspective with the Council, as a former FARC combatant and now an active participant in the reintegration process. And I welcome Counsellor Archila, and thank you for joining us today and for your tireless efforts on behalf of peace and the implementation of the agreement..

Madam President as the Secretary-General's latest report notes, the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement in November was an important opportunity for all stakeholders in Colombia's peace process to reflect on the historic progress achieved to date, and to take stock of the challenges that remain.

The UK was proud to play our part in the commemorations, with our Minister for the Americas joining the events in Antioquia alongside the Secretary-General and President Duque.

Following these commemorations, we now look ahead to the next five-year implementation period. It is important to maintain momentum towards realising the full promise of the Agreement, and ensure its continuous and comprehensive implementation including through the upcoming electoral period.

The transitional justice system continues to be vital to this process, and 2022 will be a crucial year for its three components to deliver on their mandates. We reaffirm our ongoing support for their important work. We look forward to seeing the final report from the Truth Commission, and the first sentences to be handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. These will mark an important milestone in Colombia's reconciliation process and securing justice for victims. We welcome the preparations undertaken by the Verification Mission, in readiness to assume its mandate to verify the implementation of these SJP sentences.

Madam President, the Secretary-General's report notes a reduction in the killings of former combatants from 2020 to 2021. While this downward trend is positive, we all agree around this table that one such killing is one too many. We express concern at the increased threats by illegal armed groups, which have resulted in the relocation of former combatants and their families from former TATRs. And we remain concerned by the persistent killings and threats targeting social and environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Just this week, we were shocked and saddened to learn that an indigenous

environmental activist was killed, aged just 14 years old.

We urge the Colombian Government to continue stepping up its efforts to increase protection and security and improve state presence in conflict-affected areas, and to strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible for this violence. We also reiterate the need for all institutions to act upon the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office.

As we look ahead to the elections, we call on all political stakeholders to take steps to ensure that they will be peaceful and inclusive. In particular, we are hopeful that the 16 congressional seats for victims provide a new opportunity to increase the voice of victims in legislative processes and peace implementation.

Madam President, the parties to this Agreement have shown what can be achieved in five years through constructive dialogue and cooperation. We cannot take for granted the gains achieved thus far. We must protect and build upon them. The UK remains fully committed to working with the Colombian government and other stakeholders as they work towards securing a lasting peace.