

Reintegrating former rebels into civilian life a 'serious concern' in Colombia: UN Mission chief

The reintegration of former members of the Colombian FARC-EP rebel movement, which signed an historic peace deal with the country's government in 2016, remains a subject of serious concern, said the head of the [UN Verification Mission](#) set up to monitor the deal, on Wednesday.

Jean Arnault warned members of the Security Council that the vast majority of those being reintegrated still have no clear economic prospects or livelihoods, once the monthly sum they currently receive as part of the peace process, comes to an end next August.

The Colombian National Council for Reintegration, which includes members of FARC and the Government, has a huge task before it, he said, and must agree on its approach to projects, lands and reintegration.

Over the past year, he continued, FARC-EP, the Government and the UN Verification Mission have learned that local authorities must be empowered, and more systematic links should be developed with the private sector, universities and other actors "willing and able to assist with long-term reintegration."

Another worry expressed by Mr. Arnault was the sense of legal uncertainty felt by former FARC-EP members. Reconciling peace and justice, he said, is a controversial and emotional issue everywhere. The peace process seeks to bring the full guarantee of due process, victim's participation and the benefits of restorative sanctions, which he described as a "promising solution to old and difficult dilemmas."

The Verification Mission chief deplored the continued killings of social leaders in Colombia, citing the killing, just a few days ago in the town of Bolivar, of the leader of a government-sponsored coca crop substitution committee, an element of the peace process, together with his two sons. He said that there is a pressing need to prevent and prosecute these crimes.

Noting positive developments, Mr. Arnault said there was a strong spirit of cooperation between the members of the bodies tasked with implementing the peace agreement, and the political participation of former FARC rebels in Colombia's two chambers of Congress, where they are contributing to debates and legislation.