

Speech: Cooperation and Lasting Peace in Colombia

Thank you Mr President, and may I also thank the SRSR Arnault for his briefing, which chimes very closely with our own assessment and analysis of developments over the past three months. Thank you. Let me also warmly welcome Foreign Minister Holmes Trujillo to the Security Council for the first time.

The UK welcomes Colombia's continued commitment – clearly set out by President Duque – to implement the Peace Agreement. As we have all said many times in this chamber, that agreement represents an opportunity for lasting peace in Colombia as well as being a positive example to the rest of the world.

And like SRSR Arnault, we also welcome the steps taken by the new government so far, including the commitment to push ahead with effective reintegration of former members of the FARC, as well as the appointment of key positions in important institutions for the peace process. In particular, the CSIVI and the National Reintegration Council. We share the Secretary-General's hope that that Colombian institutions will continue to pursue the peace process, including security, development and rule of law in conflict zones; an effective justice system and reparations for victims; and the essential commitment to those who have laid down their arms. Recent progress in the investigation of initial cases by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has been a key step in achieving these goals, and we encourage all parties to support the extremely important work of these institutions.

But as the Secretary-General has said, the challenges ahead remain formidable, we are particularly concerned by two important and concerning trends.

First, the departure of several former FARC commanders from some of the territorial areas for training and reintegration has highlighted weaknesses in the reintegration process. We agree with the Secretary-General that economic reintegration activities need to resume on a larger scale and faster than has been the case to date and that the security of FARC members must be assured.

Secondly, we share the Secretary-General's concern about the expansion of illegal economies, competition of criminal groups for territorial control, and the persistence of violence, which is continuing to claim the lives of human rights defenders and social leaders. We welcome President Duque's commitment to tackling these issues and look forward to the signatories to the "Pact for Life and the Protection of Social Leaders and Human Rights Defenders" on 23 August implementing their commitments.

Mr President, with this in mind, we welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We hope and believe the

Verification Mission will continue to play an important role in maintaining confidence and cooperation between the parties, and encouraging them to work together on peace implementation.

For our part, the UK is fully committed to working with the new Colombian government, just as we did with the last, as Colombia works towards securing a lasting and sustained peace.