

Speech: Shared commitment will be needed from the Colombian Government, the FARC and the UN Mission in Colombia as we write a new chapter in the country's history.

Thank you Madam President and thank you Jean for your briefing today and for your recent report and for all the hard work that you do on our collective behalf.

At the outset, I'd like to express my condolences to you Maria Emma following the tragic loss of life in the Mocoa landslides at the weekend. It was such an awful tragedy, and the people of Mocoa, and of Colombia as a whole, are in our thoughts.

The disaster has cast a shadow over what has been a very positive few months for Colombia. And yet despite the terrible loss of life, I have been struck by the resilience and resolve shown in response. And I'm pleased that it's a shared resolve, with the FARC offering to work side by side with the government to help rebuild the town.

And it's this same shared commitment that will be needed from the Colombian Government, the FARC and the UN Mission in Colombia as we write a new chapter in the country's history.

And I'm very pleased to see the progress already being made; the government has committed to making peace a reality for all Colombians, the FARC have moved over 6,800 of their members into the transition zones to begin the process of laying down arms, as Jean has just updated us.

And I'm reassured by your commitment Jean, and that of your personnel, as you move as swiftly as possible to meet the tough timeframes ahead. We recognise that the scale of the Mission's work is ambitious and challenging and you have our full support in those efforts.

As with all post-conflict situations, sustained implementation is vital. We learned from our own experiences in Northern Ireland that building peace requires a comprehensive, sustained and joined-up effort. There is no 'quick fix'. Establishing and maintaining momentum in the early stages though is critical.

And there has been steady progress including on the legislative track, with the Amnesty Law and Special Jurisprudence for Peace passed by Congress. I also welcome the report that a thousand FARC weapons have already been taken off the battlefield. This has been made possible by continued commitment of both the Government and the FARC to meeting the D+180 day deadline.

I recognise that this has been an ambitious timeline and encourage both sides to continue to work towards the final goal of complete disarmament. In the mean time it's important that visible steps are taken to deliver implementation in the transition zones, including the provision of health facilities.

Amid the progress, we are concerned by the activity of non-State armed groups, including ELN and criminal attacks against community leaders and human rights defenders, as verified by the OHCHR report in March. These attacks are a threat to public confidence in the peace agreement, especially in isolated and vulnerable communities.

A robust, coordinated response from the Government is needed to ensure security in all areas vacated by the FARC and I welcome efforts taken so far, including the establishment of the Commission on Security Guarantees, which I very much hope will co-operate effectively with civil society.

In the coming months, politics in Colombia will increasingly focus on next year's Presidential and Legislative elections. No one doubts the commitment of both parties to achieve peace, but during the election period it will be crucial that work continues on the structures and mechanisms needed for long term reintegration of the FARC and the development of areas affected by the conflict.

The Colombian Government should feel assured that the International Community is ready to assist in any way it can with these efforts. As the penholder in the Security Council, and as a witness to the handing over of the Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General two weeks ago, the United Kingdom stands ready to play our part.

And we also look forward to the Council's visit in May, which will give us a clear sense of progress, and demonstrate our continued support for peace in Colombia.

Finally Madam President, before giving up the floor, I'd like to say that as we meet today, we should reflect not just on the positive developments that Colombia has seen in recent months, but also on the positive role that this Council has played in bringing that progress about. And that's a role that we don't play on every single issue on our agenda. But I hope that Colombia gives us all in this chamber increased hope and belief in the power of the Security Council to deliver peace and security. And I hope that we can channel this spirit into the other difficult issues that we face.

Thank you.