

UN Mission in Colombia starts verification as FARC-EP begins turning in weapons

1 March 2017 – In a major step for the peace process in Colombia, the United Nations Mission in the country today started the verification of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP)'s laying down of arms.

According to a news release issued by the Mission yesterday, its observers will identify and register all weapons present in FARC-EP camps in the 26 zones where the group's members are currently located and where they will transition to civilian life.

Simultaneously, the Mission will install containers – are already in local sites – in the FARC-EP camps, where these will progressively receive weapons under the constant monitoring of its observers.

The process should conclude on 29 May, 180 days after the final peace agreement came into force.

As a first step of the gradual weapons storage process, the Mission will receive the armaments from the FARC-EP members who are part of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, added the news release.

In parallel and in coordination with the FARC-EP, the Mission will immediately begin the process of planning and verification of the destruction of unstable weapons and munition, mines and explosives.

RELATED: 'Historic' day as last FARC-EP members gather to turn in arms

Also in the release, the Mission welcomed the parties' decision to initiate the weapons laydown process without further delay, despite logistical challenges which continue to hamper the successful implementation of the final peace agreement.

"This is a partial but substantive advance in the laying down of arms process, which [we] value as a good starting point towards overcoming implementation delays," said the UN Mission.

"We trust that this process can be accelerated, as part of a virtuous dynamic of simultaneous progress in the implementation of all aspects of the Peace Agreement. This will inspire confidence to those who were party to the conflict and to Colombian society as a whole."

The UN Mission also noted that values the decisions announced by the Government today regarding the legal guarantees of FARC-EP members.

"This will be a factor of tranquillity in the complex process of transition

to civilian life," noted the Mission.