



Bogota, July 13, 2021

Ladies and Gentlemen
Representatives of the United Nations Security Council members
New York

We at the *Diálogo Intereclesial por la Paz en Colombia* (DiPaz), an interchurch platform for dialogue for peace in Colombia, together with Latin American churches and global ecumenical organizations, wish to express our deep gratitude to the United Nations Secretary General Mr António Guterres, the members of the Security Council and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for its work of protection and verification of the implementation of the Final Agreement to End the Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed in November 2016 between the Colombian government and FARC ex-guerrillas.

As the fifth anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement approaches, we acknowledge that advances are being made in its implementation, as the most recent quarterly report of the Secretary General¹ indicates.

Nevertheless, the current national administration's omissions and slowness to act in relation to the implementation of many points of the agreement continue to worry us, as does the lack of progress in fulfilling other agreements with communities and sectors of civil society which, together with the increase of poverty during the pandemic, gave rise to the nationwide protests and strike action that began on April 28 of this year.

These protests have continued because the government has delayed reaching agreements with the strike committee, has refused to engage in dialogue with other sectors that participate in the protests, and has chosen to use the army to suppress protesters.

The security-related problems mentioned in the report affecting the ex-guerrillas continue to be of concern. Many of them do not have land to cultivate and we continue to see delays in implementation of actions related to comprehensive rural reform (chapter 1), political participation (chapter 2), the dismantling of criminal structures (chapter 3), substitution of illicit crops (chapter 4) and conditions that guarantee the implementation and verification of the agreements (chapter 6).

During the recent protests we observed how state forces acted disproportionately against the young people who took to the streets to raise their voice, and in several instances there is

¹ <https://colombia.unmissions.org/nota-de-prensa-del-informe-trimestral-del-secretario-general-de-naciones-unidas-ante-el-consejo-de-2?fbclid=IwAR1UJsF-UuNUP8jv7AAVjJ66tDeZhqheHyyuja8xwQoHRd7MhgN2nvabYOIk>

documentation that they did so with support of armed civilians. In addition, there was significant stigmatization of indigenous peoples, evidence of the persistence of racism in Colombia.

It troubles us that some groups used the protests to cause damage to public and private property. Nevertheless, the protests of recent months have demonstrated that the majority of the Colombian people are calling for better living conditions as a basis for a sustainable peace.

Given this situation we call on the international community to urge the Colombian government to resume and strengthen channels of dialogues to resolve societal issues, which will avoid polarization and violence in the upcoming election season.

We expect a greater commitment on the part of the Colombian government to the full implementation of the Final Agreement signed by the Colombian State and the FARC, the adoption of effective measures to guarantee the protection of those in the process of reincorporation into civilian society, and the proper functioning of the mechanisms established for monitoring the implementation of the accords.

Inspired by our common goal of increasing progress towards the fulfillment of the Final Agreement, and recognizing the important monitoring task that the UN Verification Mission in Colombia has undertaken, we recommend:

1. Given the proximity of rulings to be issued by the Peace Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), that rulings be verified for all those on trial, according to point 5.1.2. of the Final Agreement, numeral 53 d, as well as the places where the sentences will be served and the plans for security and surveillance that will protect the life and physical wellbeing of those convicted and of the victims in those territories.

2. Monitoring the application of the differential and gender perspective of the Final Agreement, which is an achievement noted by all but which requires greater human and financial resources in order to be applied. It needs to be put in practice and continually reviewed to determine how commitments to women and ethnic groups are being fulfilled.

3. Promotion and possible verification of the Security Council's Resolution 2532 (1 July 2020) calling for a global humanitarian ceasefire in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, urging especially the Colombian government and all armed groups still active in Colombia to embrace such a ceasefire as an urgent ethical necessity for the advancement of the peace process and to enable the provision of humanitarian aid to rural communities ravaged by the violence and the virus. The Final Agreement focused on the victims; for that reason creating an environment free from armed violence is essential for responding to the effects of the pandemic and advancing the attainment of a sustainable peace.

Once again, we express our gratitude to the international community, and ask for your continued support and presence in Colombia so that together we can work for negotiated solutions to the armed conflict, adopting mechanisms of judicial process for diverse armed groups, promoting humanitarian initiatives as solutions to our conflicts, and strengthening a democratic society operating under the rule of law.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milton Mejía". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal stroke extending across the name.

Rev. Milton Mejía
Advocacy coordinator, DIPAZ