

Statement

by

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to the United Nations

on behalf of

Niger, South Africa, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1)

Open VTC Meeting on UN Verification Mission in Colombia

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I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1 - Niger, South Africa, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We extend warm greetings to H.E. Claudia Blum, Foreign Minister of Colombia and we thank Special Representative of the Secretary General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Mr. Clemencia Carabali, for their briefings.

Today's meeting emerges six days prior to the celebration of a significant day in Colombia's history - Independence Day. An auspicious occasion when Colombians everywhere are filled with unbridled elation; reflecting on the past, acknowledging the present and contemplating a prosperous future for their country. In Colombia's journey towards a prosperous future, the 2016 Final Peace Agreement is very integral, and we believe it is the only viable sustainable solution to resolve the conflict, which must be nationally-led and in the interests of the people of Colombia.

Mr. President, as COVID-19 wreaks havoc across the globe, challenging our ideas of the world as we know it and testing the resilience and tenacity of governments and peoples, countries emerging from difficult conflicts, like Colombia, are faced with additional challenges. The A3+1 remains in solidarity with the Government and people of Colombia and commend the efforts by Colombians in responding to the pandemic. We also encourage the international community, including the United Nations and the Security Council, to continue providing support.

Since the conclusion of Colombia's Final Peace Agreement, there have been setbacks, as well as progress. The A3+1 urges all parties to continue advancing with the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement. It remains key for the security and prosperity of all Colombians, and by extension, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are mindful that there would be impediments along the way. But Colombians must remain enterprising and prudent as the circumstances demand, a spirit which saw them move forward on a path to sustained peace, and to overcome encumbrances and new challenges with the same tenacity.

The A3+1 acknowledges the progress highlighted in the Secretary General's recent report including the inclusion of the FARC in processes regarding the formulation of regional and local development plans. However, it is of concern that the COVID-19 pandemic is delaying progress in the implementation of the peace agreement. Therefore, the A3 + 1 urges all parties to address more assuredly, the lingering challenges outlined therein. We take this opportunity to highlight the following:

First, we are pained by the senseless killings of former combatants, human rights defenders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders. The persistent violence against these groups made most vulnerable, including women and children, is particularly troubling. We encourage the National Commission on Security Guarantees to regularly convene meetings to address security issues. It is also imperative that the authorities redouble their efforts, strengthen institutions and enhance

coordination, to robustly tackle this scourge of violent killings and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

Security and protection mechanisms to guarantee the safety and protection of former FARC combatants and their families, must also be efficaciously applied. These remain crucial for the proper reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society. Additionally, the protection of these particularly vulnerable groups will be an important yardstick for the effectiveness of the security measures in general. In this regard, we echo the call by the UN Secretary-General for strengthening efforts towards longer-term reintegration with benefits for all former combatants which will ultimately determine the long-term sustainability of peace in Colombia.

Similarly, we continue to call for the cessation of hostilities of armed groups and organizations, which continue to exacerbate the suffering of Colombians through violence. We regret that the unilateral ceasefire ended and urge full compliance with the recently adopted Security Council resolution 2532, which is especially necessary during this time as the country battles the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We further encourage the government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) to engage in a constructive and inclusive dialogue to this end.

Second, the implementation of the Development Programs with a Territorial Focus (PDET) is crucial to the peace process. We therefore urge the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the National Reintegration Council to address delays in the implementation of productive projects of the National Comprehensive Program for illicit crop substitution. We also call for the resolution of the situation pertaining to the allocation of lands, as well as the situation concerning former combatants residing outside of the territorial areas for training and reintegration (TATRs) to be addressed urgently. These residual issues are indispensable for the collective reintegration of former FARC combatants, especially since economic and housing projects are vital safeguards for lives and livelihoods that facilitate successful reintegration. While we acknowledge that the spread of COVID-19 is an additional obstacle, it is all the more reason for redoubled efforts to promote the livelihoods and development of former combatants to ensure sustainable integration and overall peace.

Third, we welcome the advances within the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, particularly within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) aimed particularly at ensuring communities and victims of the conflict are prioritised in the peace process. The adjustment in the working modalities, adapting to the current realities, is testament to the decision by the government to continue implementing the Agreement despite the pandemic. We therefore encourage the Colombian government to continue in this vein and emphasise the fundamental importance of the reconciliation process, as many of our countries today have benefitted from the positive aspects of such processes.

Equally, we commend the efforts of the Special Investigation Unit of the Attorney General's Office in bringing justice to victims and urge the authorities to expedite remaining cases. Likewise, we appreciate the progress within the tripartite mechanism on transition to legality of former FARC combatants and encourage continued cooperation to resolve outstanding issues.

Mr. President, we are cognizant that Colombia is tasked with implementing the Final Agreement under extreme difficult circumstances, but we believe that the same spirit as that which Colombians displayed through the fever of its history, will aid them in moving forward. We are therefore confident that the resolve and tenacity exhibited by Colombian forebears in laying the solid foundation for the country, through hard work and sacrifice, will be renewed and demonstrated during these challenging times.

The A3+1 reaffirms its support to the government and people of Colombia in their pursuit of lasting peace, as well as to the UN Verification Mission and country team whose work in Colombia continues to be invaluable in supporting the comprehensive implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. Colombia must stay the course for its sustainable development.

Excellency Blum, we extend our sincerest congratulations to you and all the people of Colombia as you celebrate your 210th Anniversary of Independence next Monday.

I thank you!