

## **Peacebuilding Commission Informal Meeting on Colombia**

**13 November 2017**

### **Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened a meeting on the peacebuilding experience in Colombia. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Chair of the PBC.

1. The Chair opened the meeting by emphasizing the relevance of the PBC as a platform to share experiences and challenges of the Colombian peacebuilding experience, and thanked the Colombian delegation for their willingness to share their lessons at the meeting.
2. H.E. Mr. Rafael Pardo Rueda, Minister of Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security of Colombia, provided a comprehensive briefing on the current stages of the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia. He highlighted the developments over the past year and challenges ahead. He noted that the implementation plan focused on 5 areas: comprehensive rural reform, political participation, end of conflict, illicit drugs and compensation for victims, with a total cost of \$129.5 billion. Programs include land registration, demining, and rural development with a focus on conflict affected regions and illicit crop substitution. The Minister also described the ongoing efforts to harness private sector support for the peace process through special tax regimes and construction for taxes.
3. Ms. Mariana Escobar, Director for the Colombian Agency for Territorial Renewal of Colombia, highlighted the government's focus to promote rural development both from bottom up and top down approaches. She emphasized that national reconciliation was a key factor, and for that to take place there needed to be a comprehensive rural reform which would remove the divide between the urban and the rural areas. She highlighted a number of priorities focusing on municipalities most impacted by conflict, including access to land and education which were centered around inclusivity and participation. These programs would contribute to building trust towards the government, as many rural Colombians feel they do not have adequate access to state services.
4. Two Colombian civil society leaders, Mr. Ever Cordoba and Ms. Alba Ruth Cabrera, shared their personal stories living through the conflict. Mr. Ever Cordoba stated that "we are at a critical junction of our history and we cannot afford to return to war". They shared the hardships their communities had faced, and emphasized the need for better access to education, roads and electricity. Ms. Alba Ruth noted that the fear of "not getting food on the table to provide for my children is no longer there". They highlighted how the project "Manos a la obra para la paz" had helped them see real peace dividends, bringing job opportunities to their communities. They

expressed their deep gratitude for being able to share their story at the PBC, and their dedicated support to build peace in Colombia.

5. Mr. Martin Santiago, UN Resident Coordinator (RC) for Colombia, emphasized that challenges remained to make peace irreversible, but the commitment showed by the government and the FARC will enable them to overcome these challenges. He emphasized that the UN is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the peace agreement, with emphasis on overcoming the root causes of conflict and the protection of human rights. He informed the PBC that in August 2017 the Government of Colombia and the UN Country Team in Colombia jointly developed a Priority Peacebuilding Plan outlining the key outcome areas to be implemented over the next 18-months. These included: (i) political and socio-economic reintegration of FARC-EP; (ii) stabilization and scaling-up of peace dividends around local zones and points; (iii) and transitional justice and restoration of victims' rights. PBF's new financial support to Colombia, which will total up to \$12 million, will be channeled through the existing UN Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Colombia. Aspects that remain critical for peace include a comprehensive rural reform, advancing gender equality and support for victims of the conflict to achieve justice. The UN Post-Conflict Fund has invested \$40 million for catalytic projects that has begun to deliver initial results by strengthening institutions that will be crucial to deliver peace in the future. The RC complimented the role of the PBC and highlighted the PBF for having been a key partner.
  
6. Ms. Teresa Whitfield, Director, Policy and Mediation Division, Department of Political Affairs(DPA) of the UN, noted that DPA's focus had been to support the work of the UN Special Political Missions that had been involved, first, in the verification of the cease-fire and the laying down of arms of the FARC, and currently, of the reintegration of FARC and the provision of security for the ex-combatants and communities in the former conflict zones. She recalled that, in verifying the laying down of arms process, the UN Mission in Colombia collected and disabled almost 9,000 weapons, 2 million ammunitions and 38 thousand kilograms of explosives. These figures alone are a testimony to the lives saved with the end of the conflict. The deep operational insertion of the UN Mission within a Tripartite Monitoring and Verification mechanism during the first mandate was a distinct innovation of the Colombia process, the lessons of which will no doubt be studied for future peace operations. She went on to note that the peacebuilding phase will no doubt be more challenging. The importance of getting the reintegration phase right and of establishing basic security in the post-conflict were also important lessons learned from previous peace processes in this region and elsewhere. She stressed that DPA would coordinate with the rest of the UN system to ensure a coherent, all-out effort to support the building of peace in Colombia.
  
7. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support of the UN, said this meeting represented an important step in strengthening the synergies between PBC and PBF, building on the Secretary-General's decision to declare Colombia eligible to receive funding from the PBF. He noted that PBSO will continue to build on these positive examples, strengthen PBC-PBF synergies and continue to support initiatives from Member States to make PBC more accessible and flexible.

He also highlighted that the presentations provided insights on the types of problems the Colombian Government faced in the implementation of the peace plan and some of the solutions provided. The fact that the funding mechanism for support from the international community was created in anticipation of the peace process needs, and that they were brought together under one government office, have proven to be key in allowing for better coordination and alignment with government priorities. He highlighted the meeting organised on 1 November in conjunction with the UN Global Compact and the Bogota Chamber of Commerce as a positive effort aimed at contributing to economic growth and job creation, especially in the conflict affected areas. He expressed the hope that the projects supported by the PBF will demonstrate that the ability to act swiftly and flexibly, focusing on pivotal projects, can contribute to jump starting the process for the implementation of the programmes related to the peace agreement.

8. Members of the Commission welcomed the opportunity to discuss the peacebuilding process in Colombia and thanked the Colombian Government and civil society representatives for sharing their experiences. In their interventions, delegations focused on the following issues:

- They congratulated Colombia for the important progress made over the past months and highlighted that the government's focus on social-economic development/peace dividends had been crucial.
  - They commended the Chair for convening this meeting, and welcomed the thematic diversity which allows the experience of Colombia to enrich the PBC proceedings. By sharing their lessons learned this meeting was a good learning opportunity. They urged the Commission to continue to engage with Colombia and other countries that would be open to this kind of engagement. They especially thanked the civil society representatives for travelling to the UN and sharing their personal stories.
  - Many delegations expressed their commitment to continuing to support Colombia in its transition to peace. Several underlined the importance of South-South cooperation.
  - A number of delegations highlighted the ongoing risks and challenges, such as FARC dissidents, lack of security (especially the recent attacks against communal leaders), and land registration.
  - Several delegations emphasized the importance of the PBF engagement in Colombia and its strong alignment to government priorities.
  - They highlighted Colombia's success story, especially on its strong national ownership and a firm democracy with strong institutions, which meant that the international community has had effective national counterparts with which to partner.
  - Several delegations complemented Colombia's intention to decrease the urban/rural divide.
- The Chair closed the meeting thanking the Colombian representatives for addressing the PBC, and expressing his support to continuing the discussion on providing support to Colombia at its critical time of transition.