

**PBC Ambassador-level Meeting on Colombia: Peacebuilding in Colombia
(Open)**

13 November 2017

Abstract: *Though Colombia is not covered by a country-specific configuration, the PBC held a high-level consultation focused progress in implementing the peace agreement and in building sustainable peace through peacebuilding initiatives. The Chair, as did many Member States, remarked on the importance of learning lessons from countries transforming out of conflict, with Colombia serving as a potential model. This meeting also featured two briefings from civil society representatives, who gave moving testimony to the importance of peacebuilding efforts that are needs-driven and locally owned, and the way in which these efforts by the Government of Colombia with the support of the international community are having a positive effect on the ground for citizens.*

Speakers

H.E. Amb. Cho Tae-yul, Permanent Representative of Korea to the United Nations and Chair, Peacebuilding Commission

Mr. Rafael Pardo, Minister of Post-Conflict in Colombia

Mr. Ever Cordoba and Ms. Alba Ruth Cabrera, Manos a la Obra por La Paz

Mr. Martín Santiago, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN in Colombia and Resident Representative of UNDP

Dr. Mariana Escobar Arango, Director of the Territorial Renewal Agency, Government of Colombia

Ms. Theresa Whitfield, Director of Policy and Mediation Division, UN DPA

Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support

1. Introduction from the Chair:

The Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) introduced the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of Colombia; to hear key lessons on the peace process; to learn how the Government of Colombia (GoC) worked with the international community and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF); and to serve as a platform to provide ideas to help guide the PBC in its work on other countries. The Chair also noted that Colombia is now eligible to receive peacebuilding funds.

The Chair then played a short video provided by the GoC highlighting the work of one of its peacebuilding projects, *Manos a La Obra por La Paz*, which receives technical support from UNDP and has undertaken 140 civil works so far.

2. Other Interventions

Minister Pardo began by sharing an update on implementation of the peace process, highlighting that as of August 2017, all weapons had been laid down, and noting the great deal achieved in one year. The Minister also highlighted 7 areas of focus, including: reintegration of FARC combatants; the work on truth, justice and reparations; efforts to ensure security and individual protection; eradication and substitution of illicit crops; national land development plans; transformation of FARC into a political party; and

humanitarian demining, with which the GoC is partnering with nine civilian organisations.

Implementation will cost 129.5 billion over fifteen years, nine percent of which will be funded through international cooperation, including the UN Post-Conflict Fund, EU Fund for Colombia, Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and other partners.

He noted that in order to further implement the agreement, it is important to engage in widespread legislative and constitutional reform and referenced work underway in this regard, including 94 new norms including some changing land ownership registries to assist with greater security and land restitution.

The Minister raised particular attention to illicit crop growing, which is a deep rooted problem. He affirmed the importance of addressing the demand side as well as supply, and highlighted the voluntary crop substitution programme that intends to replace illicit crop growth in 50,000 hectares with legal activities beginning in rural communities most affected. He called on the private sector to join in these efforts, alluding to the Work for Tax programme that acts as an incentive.

Dr Mariana Escobar underscored that the concept of territorial peace is at the crux of the peace agreement. She noted efforts to promote rural development through a bottom up approach that links rural development with the drive for national reconciliation. In Colombia, territorial peace is taking the guise of comprehensive rural reform that addresses the need of rural areas, ends the divide between rural and urban areas, and also covers other issues including gender divisions. The peace agreement established territorial agencies that ensure voices of rural populations are heard and that rural people drive the programmes forward via their priorities. She identified some priorities as access to land and land ownership; agricultural education; and basic infrastructure. The GoC will focus on municipalities that suffered the most from conflict.

In enacting these reforms, she underscored the need for the State to move quickly and nimbly - rolling out rapid responses, especially infrastructure, that is locally owned and championed. In addition, the GoC is working to address lack of trust in the State by increasing its presence and working closely with local communities, along with building local governance capacities. The Minister reiterated the GoC's commitment to inclusivity and to address development concurrently with peace and reconciliation efforts. The GoC hopes to accomplish the programme within ten years.

Mr. Ever Cordoba and Ms. Alba Ruth Cabrera, two civil society representatives, spoke of their experiences with *Manos a La Obra por La Paz*. Mr. Cordoba highlighted the plight of rural communities, including a lack of schools, recreation centres, energy and infrastructure. He praised the achievements of the peace process, which he believes are positively changing the mind-set of rural communities. Expressing hope that all stakeholders can work together, he suggested prioritising the strengthening of social infrastructure at the community level, and also called for inclusion of indigenous people.

He noted that rural communities need assistance, but that they want to determine their futures. Lastly, he cited *Manos a La Obra por La Paz* as a peaceful pathway forward.

Ms. Cabrera spoke as a representative of rural women, noting the peacebuilding programmes have brought much needed income and development to communities, including for women. She stated that these programmes finally recognise and formalise the community benefits of women's work for the first time. She urged further development and called for work on day-to-day issues, including health, education, electricity, employment and infrastructure. In conclusion, she expressed rural women's desire for peace, and asked that the voices of women not be forgotten.

Mr. Martín Santiago, UN Resident Coordinator (RC) in Colombia highlighted a number of elements of the UN Country Team's (UNCT) work with GoC that contributes to consolidating peace, including the UNCT's coordination with UN Mission in Colombia, which he cited as reflecting the Secretary-General's vision of prevention and sustaining peace. Further, he praised the UN's support that enabled the GoC to deliver on its rapid response strategy to build trust and to implement key peace agreement activities, including supporting monitoring and verification mechanisms.

Mr. Santiago also commended the Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund as an important partner for rapid financing. Reflecting further, he shared that the PBC and PBF have been key partners, with PBF providing pre-agreement support on awareness campaigns. He noted the peacebuilding priority plan is putting together new initiatives, including local stabilisation through economic recovery and extension of state authority; reincorporation of ex-combatants through mine clearance; and support to establishing components of the Truth, Justice and Reparation Commission. He called PBF support "absolutely critical" in helping to bring about positive change to people and helping to prevent the recurrence of violence.

In conclusion, he acknowledged challenges ahead, including re-emerging violence in some rural areas, the deepening politicisation in the pre-election period, and sceptics of peace benefits. He stated that Colombia will require support to manage these challenges, and confirmed that the UNCT is fully wedded to pursuing the transformation to peace.

Theresa Whitfield, Director of Policy and Mediation Division (PMD), DPA conveyed that the PBC engagement shows the international community's unified support of the Colombian peace process. She expressed confidence that Colombia's recent eligibility will further contribute positively, despite the challenges ahead. She also hoped that the recently signed ceasefire with ELN will lead to progress at the negotiating table.

Ms. Whitfield highlighted PMD's key focus on supporting the special political mission, noting that the mandate respects national ownership and is context-specific. She believes the tripartite monitoring and verification process will be studied for future peace operations, and that the importance of reincorporating and reintegrating ex-combatants along with establishing basic security are key lessons learned from previous peace processes. Ultimately, Ms. Whitfield noted that PMD will provide all assistance possible

by working through the Mission, and in partnership with other UN agencies and the international community, and mentioned that she will ensure coherence with the UNCT, PBF and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).

Assistant-Secretary General (ASG) of PBSO, Oscar Fernández-Taranco, affirmed that PBSO works closely to translate the strategic priorities of the peace plan into concrete programmes. As an example, he referenced *Manos a La Obra por La Paz*, a context-specific programme that provides security and jobs. He further observed that the period after a peace agreement is a critical time that provides both big risks and unique opportunities.

The ASG believed that the creation of a funding mechanism pre-agreement and the gathering of all issues under one government office have been critical in ensuring coordination and alignment with GoC priorities. He noted that PBSO supports the RC and UNCT in their partnership. He further explained that in support of national priorities, PBSO works through the government to: assist with reintegration of FARC; stabilise and scale up peace dividends; and support social justice and victims' rights. ASG Tarranco hoped that these projects underscore the ability to act quickly and flexibly, and to target critical projects that can jumpstart peace agreement programmes.

3. Questions and Comments from the Floor

Norway noted that socioeconomic development is essential in achieving peace, and emphasised that Colombia has come a long way. The Representative expressed gratitude to Colombia for coming to the PBC, noting the international community and countries in conflict can learn from the peace agreement and resolve shown by parties. He acknowledged that creating last people will take time and that it will remain critical to follow up on the agreement in the future.

Norway further recommended that these types of meetings become more regular, and that the UN could gain from a systematic approach to conducting lessons-learned and South-South experience-sharing. He contended that countries with experiences should and can find natural space in the PBC to do this. The Representative concluded by referencing Norway's role as facilitators and pledging continued support.

The World Bank also provided a statement, explaining the Bank's activities and planned projects targeting the lesser developed regions in Colombia. These multipurpose projects aim to develop rural areas and build social stability, and include addressing land use, titling and registration, and connectivity of waterways and services. The World Bank also stated that the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Peace and Post-Conflict Support serves as a platform to coordinate the GoC and donors around national priorities. Among its activities, it aims to strengthen capacity for reparations, an engagement that he noted may warrant further scaling along with reintegration of ex-combatants.

Mexico praised the impressive work and developments, and reiterated full support of the peace process. The Representative asked Minister Pardo to elaborate on the economic

incentives for peasants and workers in the crop substitution plan, namely the value differential between illegal and legal crops.

Minister Pardo outlined the details of the programme, including the GoC's approach and strategy that targets areas with the highest level of illegal crop production.

Germany suggested that the UN reforms should better link the system with the PBC, and highlighted Germany's role in the peace process from the beginning, in addition to supporting talks with the ELN and its financial contributions.

The EU Delegation emphasised the active role its Special Envoy plays in supporting the peace process, including work with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy. It also referenced its contributions financially and in other measures including demining, access to local justice, peace education in the armed forces, and reintegration of child soldiers. The Representative called for progress in implementing the peace agreement to be celebrated, but also raised a number of challenges ahead, including threats of potential spoilers, rise in crime rates, the lack of resources for implementation and upcoming elections.

Argentina welcomed Colombia's decision to request PBF funds as a legitimate step, and thanked the GoC representatives for sharing priority areas for peacebuilding. The Representative noted that Argentina will continue to support the peace process, which it saw as a model with lessons that the UN can apply in other areas. Argentina suggested a reflection of the PBC about how it can achieve its programmes and priorities could be timely, and suggested learning from GoC's success.

Belgium highlighted its contributions to the PBF, and expressed full support of the peace process, which can serve as a model for the transformation into a peaceful, inclusive society, especially for young adults. Belgium believed that the next step is to establish rule of law across the territory and ensure the state is an impartial defender of its citizens. Human rights at the community level and the protection of community leaders were particular areas of concern. The Representative also asked Minister Pardo if the GoC's targets in the crop substitution programme are on track, and what is being done to protect human rights and community leaders.

The Russian Federation stated that recent developments encourage cautious optimism. The Representative called for the respect of the verification mission, whose mandate was tailored to the situation. Russia noted that Colombia's national ownership of the peace process is the engine behind positive developments and maintained it was an important lesson for States and the PBC alike. As the contact point for national ownership in the PBC, Russia contended that this situation is an particularly constructive example.

Japan asserted that despite the challenges, Colombia has distinct advantages, including a firm democracy, reliable government institutions for partnership, leadership and ownership to drive the process nationally. The Representative reiterated the importance of bridging societal divisions, particularly the rural-urban divide, which he believed was

necessary for a stable nation. In response to the GoC's tax incentive plans for rural development, Japan cautioned it may be difficult but that it still acted as a symbol of the holistic approach. Japan reiterated its support to the PBF and also expressed a desire to make the PBC as effective as possible.

The Representative from Burundi said that though each conflict country is unique, the experiences of Colombia could still be useful for others. He further remarked that successful implementation must focus on critical elements in all political accords, including socioeconomic factors and incentivising job creation particularly for women and youth. He remarked that it was excellent to have civil society organisations speak in this forum, and believed the civil society representatives needed to see concrete initiatives taken at the international level. Further, Burundi emphasised the importance of reintegration in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme. He further observed that DDR support too frequently is through financial support, which he believed was insufficient, calling instead for long-term support. He concluded with a call to support a successful Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Brazil congratulated the GoC on the priorities and strategies that it plans to adopt. The Representative noted that the PBC needs to work closely with the PBF in sustaining peace, and welcomed Colombia's eligibility for PBF funds. Brazil asserted confidence that additional financial support will help implement the peace agreement and achieve peace and development. Further, the Representative contended that the peace agreement was not only a great achievement for the GoC, but fundamental to the whole region and will be an important and decisive instrument for development.

The United Kingdom (UK) referenced its close work with GoC and Security Council partners, along with the UN system and international community in support of the peace process. The UK commended the vision and leadership of both parties in asking the Security Council to support the peace agreement, and also complimented the work of the special political mission in monitoring the ceasefire. The UK was encouraged to hear of the scale and scope of work underway, especially with those most affected communities, which serves as an example of a bottom-up approach. The Representative cautioned, however, that supporting FARC ex-combatants to successfully transition into civilian life is the hardest part. The UK urged for words to be turned into action, including passing outstanding legislation. The UK concluded by expressing support for Colombia, and the UN through the UNCT and PBF to consolidate peace gains already made.

Canada reaffirmed its strong support for implementation and was encouraged by the progress to date, particularly the involvement of women. The Representative underscored the importance of former conflict areas receiving peace dividends rapidly. The Representative then asked how indigenous and African communities are being protected when land rights are assigned?

France stated that Colombia served as a model. The Representative remarked that the first mission to support the peace agreement focused on DDR and that several successful steps had been taken. Further, France noted that UN Resolution 2366 paved the way for lasting

peace. It identified the reintegration of ex-combatants and security safeguards as key issues to be addressed, and contended that this phase is less visible but “utterly critical.” France welcomed Colombia’s PBF eligibility, noting it will support development, particularly in rural and remote areas. Finally, France reiterated its commitment in its national capacity and as a member of the EU to serving as a key partner.

Indonesia remarked on the importance of national ownership, and called for the PBF and PBC to align with Colombia’s national priorities, and pledged Indonesia’s support in this regard. Welcoming PBF eligibility, it also stated its support of engaging international and regional development banks to ensure capacity and financing to peacebuilding efforts.

El Salvador noted that Colombia and El Salvador already shared experiences, and reiterated the statement by Burundi that despite difference, countries can learn from each other. The Representative welcomed the PBF eligibility and indicated that Colombia’s experience will enrich the work of the PBC moving forward. He further called for the PBC to enhance thematic diversity and called for it to discuss a range of critical issues.

Ecuador, though not being a PBC member, provided remarks, citing Colombia’s experience as a valuable asset to the UN. The Representative noted that Ecuador has welcomed the refugees it received and looks forward to a situation enabling their return. Ecuador also expressed its full support to the Colombian process, and concluded by identifying what it perceives as an imbalance in favour of peacekeeping missions rather than peacebuilding and called for a shift to prevention and for the PBC to raise its profile.

Colombia thanked the briefers and the PBC for its support.

Minister Pardo expressed gratitude for the tangible support it received. Contending it is not just matter of DDR, he said that the GoC seeks broader peace that reunites the country. Thanking the international community, he affirmed the GoC’s commitment to development to move forward together. He acknowledged also that the transformation will take time. He reiterated the GoC’s desire for a country of unity without discrimination where everyone can enjoy equal opportunities and expressed desire for Colombia to be a model not just for the agreement, but for the existence of peace.

The PBC Chair closed the meeting by contending that this meeting testifies to the improvements in the PBC working methods, and showed better synergies between the PBC and the PBF.

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