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Written statement* submitted by Oidhaco, Bureau International des Droits Humains - Action Colombie, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Humanitarian Situation, Persistence of Violence and Peacebuilding Efforts in Colombia

We welcome the more than 250 recommendations made to the Colombian State during the Fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) held on 7 November 2023.

We consider that this fourth cycle of the UPR was an opportunity to surround and motivate peace-building efforts in Colombia and to overcome the humanitarian crisis and the continuation of violence in the country.

The UPR provided an assessment of the evolution of the human rights situation in Colombia from 2017-2022. During this period, the human rights situation has been negatively affected by a reconfiguration of the armed conflict, the effects of which are reflected in the not-very-encouraging balance of the review conducted for that period. Indeed, after a reduction in the rates of violence in the years 2012-2016, the indicators of the human rights situation and violence related to the armed conflict again showed a worsening trend. In 2018, during the third cycle of the UPR, the Colombian State received numerous recommendations to swiftly and comprehensively implement the 2016 Final Peace Agreement signed with the now-extinct FARC-EP. This to avoid scenarios of repetition of the conflict and human rights violations. The process under the Santos government had been slow, but during the Duque government, it stalled.

Despite the Iván Duque government's lack of political will to implement the Final Peace Agreement, some progress was made: the Truth Clarification Commission produced and published its final report, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace was able to issue its first resolution, and some perpetrators acknowledged their crimes and apologised to the victims of the conflict during acts of acknowledgement of responsibility.

The government of Gustavo Petro has announced and shown the political will and commitment towards the full implementation of the Final Peace Agreement with the now-extinct FARC-EP; has initiated new dialogue processes with other armed groups to work towards ending the conflict; has initiated social reforms; and, has made social justice a priority.

Although the advances in peacebuilding over the last year, including bilateral ceasefires with both the ELN and the self-styled EMC-FARC, have played a key role in bringing significant humanitarian relief to communities and peoples throughout the country, despite this, violence continues to plague rural populations in much of the country.

Although the figures in some cases show a reduction compared to the previous year, in general, the dispute over various territories and/or illegal economies, the continuity of armed clashes between illegal groups that have not agreed to ceasefires between them added to the delays in the territorial implementation of the final peace agreement of 2016 and the non-compliance with the agreed ceasefires, continue to generate human rights violations and humanitarian effects on the civilian population in these areas. This represents a significant challenge for constructing a stable and lasting peace throughout Colombia.

Among the most urgent situations, we would like to highlight the following elements:

- Between 1 January and 28 December 2023, 94 massacres were committed, with 303 victims, the same number as in 2022, but with a decrease of 40 in the number of victims[1]. Valle del Cauca, Antioquia and Atlántico were the departments with the highest number of these massacres[2], most of which occurred in the main cities and metropolitan areas, as a consequence of violent dynamics between local armed actors derived from practices such as micro-trafficking, extortion and control of drug trafficking routes[3].
- In the first half of 2023 alone, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) registered 162 victims of different types of explosive devices[4]. Anti-personnel mines continue to be used as a tactic by armed actors to dispute territorial control, generating 55 victims between 1 January and 30 November 2023, six of whom were minors, with the Pacific region of Nariño being the region where most victims have been re-reported[5].

- Forced displacement is one of the serious humanitarian consequences that continues to occur. Between January and November 2023, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported 62,300 forcibly displaced persons, with Afro-Colombian communities and indigenous peoples particularly affected[6]. These figures represent a 20% reduction compared to last year's period[7].
- In November 2023 alone, seven events of mass forced displacement were recorded, with 1404 families and 3613 people forcibly displaced, and 45 events of forced confinement in November with 2322 families confined, according to data from the Ombudsman's Office[8].
- In addition, it was recorded that between January and November 2023, 81,100 people were forcibly confined in their towns or territories due to violence. The Ombudsman's Office reported a 31% increase in these events compared to the previous year, with Chocó being the area with the highest confinement[9] as a result of threats and clashes between illegal groups such as the ELN, the Clan del Golfo and FARC dissidents[10].
- OCHA also recorded an increase in cases of forced recruitment of children, sexual violence, abduction and social control during 2023[11].
- According to the Indepaz[12] observatory, the trend from the beginning of the year to November 2023 is still worrying, with 86 cases of children and adolescents being involved in activities related to armed groups.
- In addition to all of the above, the phenomenon of migration continues to occur on a massive scale in Colombia, generating serious humanitarian consequences for people who, in conditions of extreme vulnerability, risk the violation of their rights in search of a better future. Between January and November 2023 alone, 487,782 migrants have crossed through the Darién, most of whom are of Venezuelan origin. This represents an increase of 96% over the previous year[13].

The monitoring and presence of the various entities of the United Nations system for promoting and protecting human rights in Colombia remain essential for constructing and achieving a stable and lasting peace.

Despite its political will, the current government is facing numerous challenges in setting up negotiations and peace talks with the armed groups that remain active in the country. At the same time, it must respond to the humanitarian conditions that persist.

We, therefore, urge the Colombian authorities to take precise and effective measures to make progress on the UPR recommendations and continue the path to achieving a stable and lasting peace, promoting dialogue and ensuring guarantees for the political participation of its citizens. We highlight the call of Colombian civil society organisations: it is essential that these recommendations are turned into concrete actions that improve the quality of life and respect for the fundamental rights of the entire Colombian population.

We call on the United Nations mechanisms to continue contributing to the strengthening of Colombian institutions, but also of civil society as a fundamental pillar in the construction of peace and the overcoming of violence, with special emphasis on women's organisations and indigenous peoples who have worked for peace and who have specifically suffered the consequences of the war.

1. Indepaz. Violencia en Colombia. Informe 2023, 29 December 2023.

2. El Espectador. La violencia en el 2023 de Petro: se mantienen masacres, desplazamiento baja 43%. 29 December 2023.

3. Ibid. Note 1.

4. International Committee of the Red Cross. Fear and anxiety continue to condition the lives of thousands of people in Colombia, 1 August 2023.

5. Ibid. Note 1.

6. Oficina para la Coordinación de Asuntos Humanitarios. Informe de situación humanitaria 2023 - Enero a noviembre de 2023, 26 de diciembre 2023,

7. Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia. Informe trimestral del Secretario General, 8 de enero de 2024.
8. Defensoría del Pueblo de Colombia. Boletín de movilidad humana forzada, 30 noviembre de 2023.
9. Ibid. Note 8
10. El País. Lamentable: Chocó es el departamento con más casos de confinamiento durante 2023, alertó la Defensoría. 25 de junio de 2023.
11. Ibidem. Nota 6.
12. Ibidem. Nota 1.
13. Ibidem. Nota 8.