

DPPA Partners Field Visit **Background brief**

Colombia

The Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the former FARC-EP guerilla, signed in 2016, brought an end to one of the most protracted internal conflicts in the western hemisphere, and laid the foundation for lasting peace and reconciliation in Colombia. Three successive Colombian administrations so far have been implementing its wide-ranging provisions, resulting in significant achievements: the five-decade long insurgency concluded through dialogue, the guerilla laid down its arms and converted into a political party that functions in Colombia's thriving democracy, over 13,000 former combatants are actively reintegrating into society, perpetrators of grave crimes – both former guerilla and Colombian security forces – have been indicted under an innovative transitional justice system that places victims at its heart and is preparing restorative sentences, and policies and institutions aimed at consolidating peace and preventing the repetition of conflict have been set up. Despite these major gains, the context for peacebuilding remains challenging.

The Government of President Gustavo Petro began its four-year term in August 2022. It has set out an ambitious agenda of progressive policies and reforms to expand peace and overcome root causes of conflict, combat inequality, enact political and security reforms critical for human rights, foster women's equality and rights of ethnic groups, and promote economic transformation for sustainable development. A central tenet of its agenda is the flagship "Total Peace" policy that combines strengthened implementation of the Agreement (including transformational aspects such as comprehensive rural reform) with differentiated negotiations with remaining armed groups. Negotiations with one of those groups – the National Liberation Army, or ELN – resumed in November 2022 following a four-year hiatus, and the Government is actively engaging with other groups to achieve a reduction in levels of violence.

The UN Verification Mission in Colombia

The Final Peace Agreement envisaged a role for a United Nations political mission as an impartial verifier of advances in peace implementation. The first "UN Mission in Colombia" observed the cease-fire, disarmament and destruction of weaponry of the former FARC-EP, a process completed in 2017. Since then, a successor mission – the Verification Mission – began its operations with a mandate

focused on the verification of other provisions of the Agreement, and by doing so to help build confidence between the parties and encourage progress.

Specifically, the Mission is tasked to verify processes related to the political and socio-economic reintegration of the FARC-EP, the security guarantees for former combatants and conflict-affected communities, the compliance with and implementation of the restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and the comprehensive rural reform and ethnic chapters of the Final Peace Agreement. The Security Council is currently considering an additional request for the Mission to take part in the verification of ceasefires under construction with various armed groups under the “Total Peace” policy.

The Secretary-General reports to the Security Council every three months on the activities undertaken by the Verification Mission. The [last report](#) was published on 24 March 2023.

The Mission is led by SRSG Carlos Ruiz Massieu (Mexico) and DSRSG Raúl Rosende (Uruguay). The Mission’s regular budget for 2023 stands at approximately USD 67 million. Through its network of regional and local offices, the Mission is deployed in the key regions prioritized for implementation of the Peace Agreement in former conflict areas. The Mission’s budget provides for a total of 495 civilian personnel (international and national staff, and UN volunteers) and up to 120 unarmed international observers with a military or police background, provided for the most part by countries from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Gender focus

The Woman, Peace and Security agenda is woven throughout the Mission’s verification activities, and gender parity in the Mission is relatively high. Currently about 40 per cent of the international observers and 48 per cent of all civilian personnel are women. The strong presence of women has increased the Mission’s effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate. DPPA and the Mission have prepared a “lessons learned” study on its implementation of the WPS agenda titled [“From words to action: the experience of UN Special Political Missions in Colombia on Women, Peace and Security”](#).

UN Country Team

The Verification Mission is a non-integrated Mission working alongside a nearly 3,500-strong United Nations Country Team, led by Resident Coordinator Mireia

Villar Forner (Spain). While the Mission verifies the provisions under its mandate, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes provide technical assistance to Colombian authorities in the implementation of those and other aspects of the Peace Agreement. Given the complementarity of respective mandates, and with a view to maximize synergies, the Mission has established mechanisms to ensure coordination with the Country Team. In addition, a Peace and Development Advisor embedded in the Resident Coordinator's Office contributes to Mission/UNCT coordination.

DPPA support for the Verification Mission (funding and other support)

The Verification Mission is primarily funded from the UN regular budget, as are all Special Political Missions. At the same time, two other funding streams provide invaluable support to the implementation of the Mission's mandate:

- **Targeted DPPA MYA funding** enables a broad range of programmatic activities undertaken by the Mission. Those funds contribute to sustaining and increasing the confidence of former combatants and communities in the benefits and potential of the peace process in Colombia, mainly under DPPA's "local peace initiatives" and "WPS" windows. The nature of those activities has changed over time, in keeping with the Mission's evolving mandate and context for peace implementation. For instance, during the "laying down of weapons" phase, MYA funding supported processes to dispose of arms and ammunition. During the subsequent early stages of the reintegration process -- a politically sensitive moment in every peace process -- activities consisted of the strategic application of funds to reinforce the Mission's credibility with its interlocutors and to promote dialogue. When larger national and international funding streams were in their infancy, the Mission provided seed-funding for small-scale reintegration projects and ensured a community-based focus on reintegration to strengthen project sustainability. Funding has also helped the Mission to better understand and capture local post-conflict dynamics affecting former combatants, and foster dialogue between FARC members, government representatives and Mission officials to refine security provisions. The inclusion of a gender perspective has been an important part of the Mission's efforts, and much was enabled by DPPA MYA funding, from addressing gender specific challenges with the parties to the Agreement, to ensuring a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) approach where needed, to supporting the Gender Technical Working Group of the National Reintegration Council and the implementation of locally led Women, Peace and Security (WPS) initiatives. Between 2018 and 2023, the Mission has implemented over USD 5 million of MYA funds.

- **Funding from the Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund**, administered in New York by DPPA, is equally vital. Between 2017 and 2022, PBF investments in Colombia, which are overseen by the UN Resident Coordinator, amounted to USD 41.9 million, including through its Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF), Immediate Response Facility (IRF) and the annual Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI). PBF investments are generally channeled through the country-level Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustaining Peace in Colombia (MPTF-C) established in 2016 by the Government, the UN in Colombia and the community of donors, to agree on priorities and articulate investments in support to the implementation of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement. The MPTF-C is co-chaired by the Government and the UN Resident Coordinator.

Last month, a USD 3 million PBF project has been approved to support the new peace dialogues and promote local peacebuilding initiatives, in the context of the Government of Colombia’s “Total Peace” policy which seeks to deactivate sources of violence through peace initiatives with a variety of remaining armed groups. The proposal was developed by the Verification Mission and the Office of the Resident Coordinator and will be implemented by UNDP and OHCHR.

In addition to financial support, the Mission receives **political and operational backstopping support** from DPPA’s Regional Division covering the Americas through a dedicated “Colombia team”, and **thematic support** including from DPPA’s Policy and Mediation Division. For instance, at the request of the Government of Colombia and of the National Liberation Army (ELN), the United Nations and Norway co-organized workshops for each party on global perspectives on negotiation and management of ceasefires with experts from DPPA’s Mediation Support Unit providing technical expertise. The workshops took place in advance of the third round of Government-ELN negotiations in Havana. DPPA’s **Innovation Cell** also provides support as needed and has produced, in collaboration with the Verification Mission and DPPA’s Colombia Team, “Pathways Colombia” – a [virtual reality experience](#) on the Colombian peace process, with three immersive short episodes focusing on the reintegration of former combatants, security challenges and reconciliation efforts respectively, meant to serve as supplementary informal briefing material for Member States and the wider public.