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Colombian Peace Process: IOM Weekly Report

March, 2014



1. Background

On September 4, 2012, President Santos announced the signing of a General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, setting in motion the fourth official peace talks with this group. The initial agenda includes: 1) integrated rural reform; 2) the guarantee of functional political opposition and civic participation; 3) the end of the conflict (laying down arms and reintegration into civilian life); 4) drug trafficking; and 5) rights of victims. Preparatory talks started in Oslo on October 17, 2012 and substantive dialogues, in Havana, on November 19, 2012. Two agreements have been reached so far: one on the first point on the agenda, integrated rural reform, on May 26, 2013; and the second on the next point, political participation, on November 6, 2013.

2. Key Developments from February 23rd to March 4th

New arrival to FARC team causes stir

Alias “Fabían Ramírez” joined the FARC team in Cuba on Thursday. His arrival is significant for two reasons. First, he is commander of the Southern Bloc, which many thought did not support the talks and therefore might not demobilize. Ramírez’ addition is supposed to quell this fear and show the FARC’s unity and commitment to the talks. Second, Ramírez’ experience in drug-producing regions make him a source for current discussions on this topic.¹

In addition to Ramírez, Jairo Martínez (who has strong links to the peasantry) and Fidel Rondón (a close friend of the FARC high command and an experienced explosive maker) joined the FARC team. Their arrival meant that three other members were sent back to Colombia, as is stipulated in the terms of the talks, which allow a maximum of 30 people in each team (including the second tier who does not participate directly at the dialogue table).²

VP reiterates request for FARC to commit to humanitarian minimums

At a speech at the UN in Geneva, Vice President Garzón reiterated his request that the FARC commit to five humanitarian minimums: 1) to stop kidnapping, and to free hostages; 2) not to use

¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/fabian-ramirez-llega-mesa-de-negociaciones-de-habana-articulo-477746> and <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/llegada-del-bloque-sur-a-la-habana-analisis-marisol-gmez-13580598-4>

² <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/llega-fabian-ramirez-mesa-articulo-478022>



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anti-personnel mines; 3) to assist with demining efforts; 4) not to recruit minors; and 5) to allow their own demobilization with the help of national and international entities.³

FARC requests permission to travel to hearing in Bogotá

The GOC denied the FARC's request for safe passage to Bogotá to attend a congressional hearing on the constitutionality of a law allowing popular referendum on the content of a peace agreement. The FARC oppose such a mechanism, preferring a constituent assembly. Upon the denial of their travel request, they stated this preference to the hearing in writing.⁴

3. Dialogues & Agenda

FARC want talks to continue through elections

The FARC have stated their desire for peace talks to continue throughout the upcoming election period, which starts this Sunday with congressional elections, and runs until presidential elections on May 25th. The current round of talks will end on Thursday March 6th.⁵

Sunday's congressional elections could have an impact on the peace talks, as the Congress voted into office will be responsible for implementing a possible peace agreement. In addition, if many newly elected Congress members oppose the peace process, as do ex-President Uribe and other candidates, the President may encounter increased resistance to the talks as they are currently modeled, as many consider them to foster impunity.⁶ The FARC are seen as a threat to the security of elections and to broad participation, as they may attempt to interfere with people's arrival at voting stations and participation in the vote.⁷

4. International

FARC request US representation in Havana

The FARC requested that the USA send a representative to the peace talks to participate in the discussion on illegal drugs. They said that as the GOC is interested in USA's approval of drug policy, the country should be present. Communication between Washington and the dialogue table is thought to exist through back channels and meetings between Secretary of State John Kerry and

³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/vicepresidente-pide-farc-comprometerse-unos-minimos-hum-articulo-478654>

⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/gobierno-nego-permiso-farc-viajar-bogota-articulo-478650>

⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-indican-preven-continuar-dialogos-de-paz-durante-e-articulo-478196>

⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/un-congreso-paz-articulo-478113>

⁷ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/elecciones-2014/articulo/las-farc-ponen-en-riesgo-elecciones-en-181-municipios/379287-3>



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the GOC. Chancellor María Angela Holguín met with Kerry to discuss the peace process and US support for post-conflict initiatives, to which the US committed \$15 million.⁸

Meanwhile, President Obama announced a 12% (\$40 million) cut aid funding for anti-drug and economic development efforts in Colombia in 2015. This aid in 2014 amounts to \$320 million.⁹

New ambassador to UN seeks to increase attention to peace

Maria Emma Mejía (ex-Secretary General of UNASUR) was sworn in last week as Colombia's ambassador to the UN. She and Ban Ki-Moon met to examine the peace process and the Millennium Development Goals. Mejía stated that the UN's technical expertise and support for peace and a strong post-conflict transition in Colombia is essential.¹⁰

5. Emerging Challenges & Responses

ELN weak but not defeated

Studies show that the ELN is reduced in numbers (Fundación Ideas para la Paz cites 1,330 members) but still active. The ELN committed 304 armed attacks in 2013 – 24 more than 2012. Drug trafficking provides a financial resource for the group, but earnings remain with high command and are not reflected in military strength. Compared to the FARC, the ELN would enter peace talks militarily weaker, which could diminish their bargaining power.¹¹

ELN recruiting girls to extort miners

The army uncovered an ELN strategy to recruit girls for use to extort miners. Demobilized ELN members confirmed that the group lures poor girls in by promising them a better future, and then forces them to call miners and ask for money. This practice is common in areas of illegal mining where the guerrilla groups “guarantee” the safety of the miners in return for a fee.¹²

⁸<http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/paz-orbita-de-washington-articulo-478115>

⁹http://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/estados-unidos/obama-pretende-recudir-fondos-que-gira-a-colombia_13593697-4

¹⁰http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/mara-e-mejia-embajadora-de-colombia-ante-onu_13563096-4 and <http://www.sinembargo.mx/01-03-2014/918738>

¹¹<http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/noticias/debil-pero-derrotado-llegaria-eln-mesa-negociacion>

¹²http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/reclutamiento-de-ninas-del-eln_13589958-4



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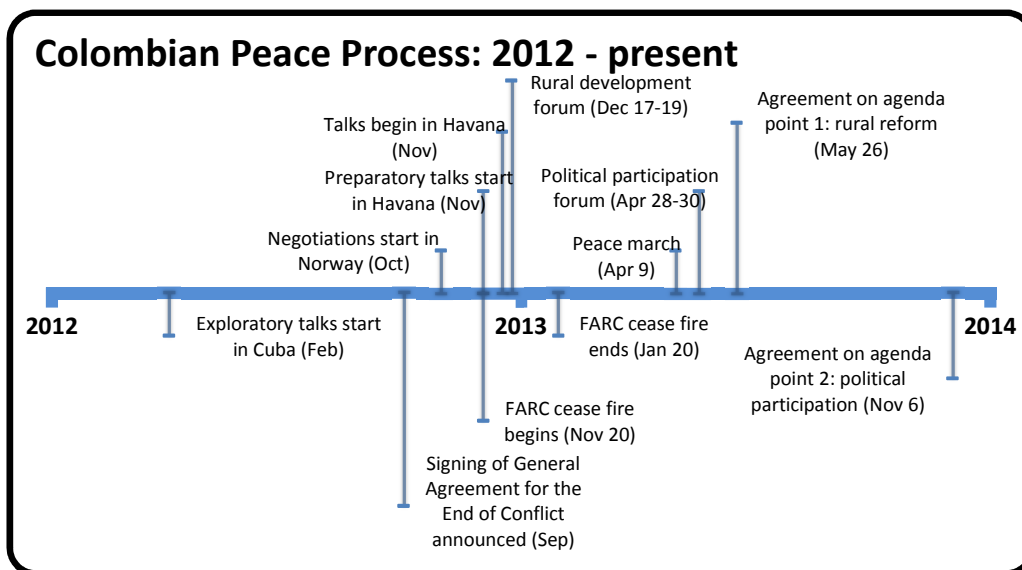
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Educational centers created for 10,000 children

Educational centers aiming to prevent children from being recruited in the conflict have been created in conflict-affected areas of the country. They aim to eventually serve 10,000 children and include computer rooms, libraries, sound systems, dining rooms, and gardens.¹³

6. Timeline



7. Other Voices

GOC and FARC should define a demining agreement

Álvaro Jiménez Millán, National Director of the Colombian Campaign Against Mines, stated to El Tiempo that demining must be included in the peace talks with the FARC.¹⁴

8. Further Reading

Reconciliación Colombia project continues

The Reconciliación Colombia project, supported by USAID and IOM, continued to facilitate dialogue and information exchange on the topic of reconciliation. A meeting of more than 60

¹³ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/casas-ludicas-para-ninos-en-medio-del-conflicto_13583941-4

¹⁴ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/entrevista-con-lvaro-jimenez-director-campaa-contra-minas_13562038-4



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representatives from civil society, government, and international organizations was held in Cali. The dominant conclusion was that reconciliation must occur in the regions and cannot be driven primarily from Bogotá, but rather must respect and foster local autonomy. There was also debate on what reconciliation is, with concepts focusing on reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, between members of society, and as a countrywide phenomenon.¹⁵

International Crisis Group publishes report on ELN peace talks

A report by the International Crisis Group analyzes the possibility of the ELN joining the current peace process with the FARC, or initiating a separate process with only the GOC. The report questions whether a peace agreement with only the FARC would be sustainable if the ELN continued to fight, and suggested that members of the FARC who did not demobilize could join the ELN if the second group did not also sign an agreement and demobilize. It called on the ELN and the GOC to conclude their current exploratory talks and begin a formal process as soon as possible.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/reconciliacion-colombia-las-regiones-piden-pista/379037-3>

¹⁶ <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/latin-america/colombia/051-left-in-the-cold-the-eln-and-colombia-s-peace-talks.pdf>



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2. Key Developments from March 5th to March 11th

Senate elections change the arrangement of peace process support

Congressional and Senate elections were held on Sunday. “La U” Party, of which President Santos is a member, Cambio Radical party and the Liberal Party, which also supports him, won 47 of the 102 seats in the Senate. This means that his confirmed supporters outnumber his confirmed opposition, likely facilitating his reelection in May.¹⁷ Ex-President Uribe’s party, the “Centro Democrático”, won 19 seats, also giving them significant political clout.¹⁸

This election was significant because the elected Congress will be key in implementing any final agreement resulting from the peace process, and in guiding the country into the post-conflict stage.¹⁹ The Centro Democrático’s known opposition of the way the peace process has been managed could have some impact on the approval and implementation of various related initiatives, including the Legal Framework for Peace and other transitional justice measures. However, this impact will be constrained by the number of seats their party has in the Senate.²⁰

¹⁷ <http://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-2014/congreso/el-partido-de-santos-fue-el-ganador-en-el-senado/13625256>

¹⁸ <http://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-2014/congreso/uribe-sigue-siendo-un-gran-elector-en-el-pas/13624556>

¹⁹ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/elecciones-del-congreso-en-colombia_13620235-4

²⁰ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/elecciones-2014/articulo/como-sera-la-paz-con-el-uribismo-en-el-congreso/380032-3>



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3. Dialogues & Agenda

Round 21 closes with harsh words from both sides

The 21st round of talks closed on Thursday. In their closing press meet, the FARC stated that Minister of Defense Pinzón should be more transparent about recent military corruption scandals, with which they believe he was involved. GOC team leader Humberto de la Calle called the FARC accusations unacceptable and said that their language undermined the peace talks by creating obstacles to an agreement.²¹ The next round of talks begins on March 20th.

FARC present 50 proposal points on illegal drugs

The FARC proposed 50 points on anti-drug policy. The broad topics addressed include: democratic anti-drugs policy; the structural conditions necessary to overcome illegal drug use; recognition of the traditional uses of coca, marijuana, and poppy seed, and their substitution where necessary; suspension of crop-spraying; and international responsibility to contribute to a decrease in drug consumption. The FARC also proposed an international conference on illegal drugs and related policy to allow input from a range of countries and sectors.²²

4. International

UN statement on drug sanctions could affect peace process

El Espectador obtained information about a UNODC report to be presented next week, which suggests that drug consumption should not carry a jail sentence but rather a fine or other type of sanction. This will alleviate overcrowding in jails, and other administrative burdens.²³ Political analysts say this could shape the current discussion of illegal drug policy in the peace process, which takes into account sanctions and other policy applying to drug consumption.²⁴

²¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/cierra-otro-ciclo-del-proceso-de-paz-cuba-sin-acuerdos-articulo-479230>

²² <http://www.pazfarc-ep.org/index.php/noticias-comunicados-documentos-farc-ep/delegacion-de-paz-farc-ep/1780-universo-de-propuestas-de-las-farc-ep-frente-al-problema-de-los-cultivos-de-uso-ilicito-y-narcotrafico.html> and http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/propuestas-de-las-farc-sobre-politica-antidrogas_13605515-4

²³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/onu-despenalizacion-de-droga-articulo-479710>

²⁴ <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/8203declaracion-de-la-onu-de-despenalizacion-es-importante-para-proceso-de-paz/20140308/nota/2118093.aspx>



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5. Other Voices

Agriculture guilds reevaluate support for peace process

Various agriculture guilds grouped under the Colombian Agriculture Society (SAC) expressed frustration at the lack of clarity about the peace process. Guilds including Asocolflores, Coltabaco, Fedepalma, and Federacafé, who are part of SAC, are reevaluating their support for the talks. SAC President Rafael Mejía López stated that rural and agricultural reforms are being discussed in the dialogues, but information about progress is not being shared with relevant entities. This reevaluation came as a surprise, as SAC has supported the peace process since it started.²⁵

Humberto de la Calle responded to these statements, saying that the rural reform agreement reached in May was made public and met approval from the agriculture sector, and that nothing in the agreement had been changed since then.²⁶

Inspector General threatens legal framework for peace

Inspector General Ordóñez again opined that the Legal Framework for Peace, which provides the transitional justice framework to implement a final peace agreement, is unconstitutional. He stated that its support for ex-guerrilla members entering politics is illegal. Ordóñez also said that all crimes committed by the guerrilla must be investigated, not just crimes against humanity as stipulated in the Legal Framework.²⁷ The Legal Framework for Peace was declared constitutional and approved by the Constitutional Court in 2013.

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

State Council requests that 'Timochenko' be investigated for crimes against humanity

The State Council has asked that FARC commander alias 'Timochenko' be investigated for the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed under his command in an attack on December 15th 1997. The magistrates stated that the attack violated international war protocol, and that the responsibility of FARC high command must be investigated.²⁸

New FARC and BACRIM target: Teachers

The FARC and the 'BACRIM' are targeting teachers for extortion. Reports show that BACRIM study the behavior of professional unions and target their members based on the financial services they

²⁵ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/apoyo-del-campo-al-proceso-de-paz_13608375-4 and <http://www.elspectador.com/noticias/economia/existe-una-preocupacion-el-proceso-de-paz-articulo-479410>

²⁶ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/de-la-calle-defiende-proceso-de-paz-ante-la-andi_13634736-4

²⁷ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/procurador-insiste-en-tumbar-marco-juridico-para-la-paz_13634536-4

²⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/piden-investigar-a-timochenko-por-crmenes-de-guerra-y-de-lesa-humanidad_13608502-4



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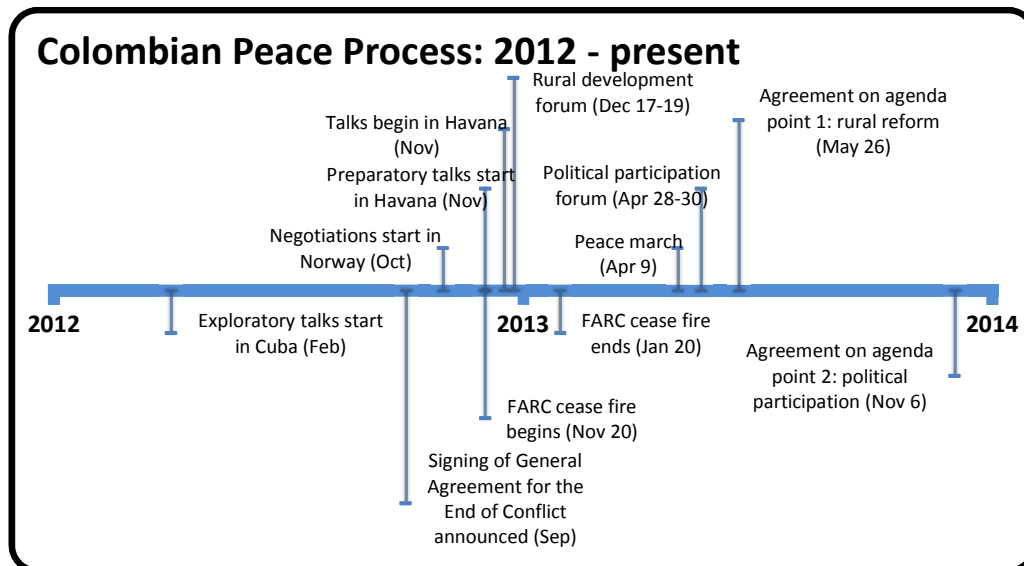
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are expected to use. Teachers are targeted as they save money and are therefore considered to be financial resources. They also receive threats of violence due to the help they often provide local people who are attempting to register for land restitution benefits.²⁹

Ministry of the Interior promotes “soccer in peace”

A study by the Ministry of the Interior found that soccer is a useful tool in promoting peaceful coexistence and positive social change. A plan has therefore been made to use soccer to eradicate violence, enable social cohesion, and facilitate democratic citizenship.³⁰

7. Timeline



8. Further Reading

Political risk analysis in light of the peace process

Forbes published a risk analysis of Colombia, taking into account the possible changes in the political and security context arising from the peace process. The article highlights the two signed partial agreements and presidential elections with the likely re-election of Santos as positive aspects to take into account in calculating political risk. The report also counters that security is

²⁹ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/defensoria-alerta-de-situacion-de-maestros/380173-3>

³⁰ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/en-foros-semana-el-futbol-una-herramienta-para-la-paz/379790-3>



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unlikely to improve immediately after the signature of a peace agreement due to the continued activity of illegal armed groups other than the FARC.³¹

The role of women in war

News source La Silla Vacía published an article on the role of women in the conflict. It contrasts the roles of women in the AUC with those they hold in the guerrilla groups, and draws on testimonies from demobilized women to discuss the female experience of conflict.³²

³¹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/riskmap/2014/03/04/colombia-with-peace-on-the-horizon-new-risks-emerge/>

³² <http://lasillavacia.com/historia-invitado/41299/mariaholes/el-papel-de-las-mujeres-en-la-guerra>



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2. Key Developments from March 12th to March 18th

Elections' effect on peace process continues to cause debate

The FARC doubt the legitimacy of last week's Congressional elections, where more than 55% of the population abstained from voting and even more submitted blank or void votes. The guerrilla group said that a new Congress is not sufficient to solidify peace, and that other efforts must be made.³³

Presidential candidate Oscar Iván Zuluaga does not agree with the FARC's recent statement that they will not go to jail, emphasizing his belief that all members of the FARC must be brought to justice for their crimes.³⁴ Meanwhile, President Santos launched his presidential campaign, outlining his objective of Colombia reaching "total peace" through the peace talks, a focus on poverty, and increased employment.³⁵ Presidential elections will be held in May.

3. Dialogues & Agenda

Private sector is essential to reach peace

GOC dialogue team leader Humberto de la Calle spoke at an event for the National Colombian Businesspersons' Association (ANDI). He emphasized the private sector's role in consolidating

³³ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/vocero-de-las-farc-andrs-pars-habla-del-nuevo-congreso-y-proceso-de-paz_13662455-4

³⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/no-vamos-permitir-farc-no-vayan-carcel-oscar-ivan-zuluaga-articulo-481130>

³⁵ <http://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-2014/presidencia/vamos-a-escoger-entre-el-miedo-o-la-esperanza-santos/13666655>



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peace, reconstructing the social fabric, and facilitating reconciliation. De la Calle stressed the progress that has been made in the dialogues.³⁶ The next round of talks begins on March 20th.

Santos' party suggests dialogues should be suspended

Members of President Santos' political party, "La U" or National Unity, have suggested that the peace talks be suspended or terminated after the FARC killed two policemen in Tumaco.³⁷

4. International

Colombia asks UN to be realistic in drug policy

In UN Session Number 57, Colombian Minister of Justice Alfonso Gómez Méndez will ask member countries to be realistic about international drug policy. The Minister will propose a public health focus in the debate, and discuss the social aspects of illegal crop cultivation.³⁸

Bilateral ceasefire would be optimal: Jeffrey Donaldson

Jeffrey Donaldson was part of the Ulster Defence Regiment, which fought alongside the British Army in the violence in Northern Ireland. He later became a Member of Parliament in Ireland, and is part of a delegation promoting the peace process between the GOC and the FARC. While in Washington D.C., Donaldson was interviewed by El Tiempo. He said that support from the international community is key for the talks with the FARC, and that the US is especially important in these efforts. He also opined that a bilateral ceasefire is necessary so that both parties can focus on the dialogues without the pressure of thinking about the conflict.³⁹

5. Other Voices

Peasants meet to discuss peace

Peasant and indigenous organizations met in Bogotá to discuss peace, land, the economy, and illegal drugs. The goal of the meeting was to coordinate the organizations' messages about what these vulnerable groups want and what their goals are with respect to these topics.⁴⁰

³⁶ <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/noticias/sector-privado-vital-para-alcanzar-paz-humberto-calle>

³⁷ <http://www.elspectador.com/noticias/politica/u-sugieren-romper-dialogos-farc-articulo-481531>

³⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/colombia-pedir-en-la-onu-realismo-sobre-politica-antidrogas_13640775-4

³⁹ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/entrevista-con-el-parlamentario-jeffrey-donaldson-quien-apoya-el-proceso-de-paz_13667795-4

⁴⁰ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/campesinos-indigenas-debaten-sobre-paz-tierras-mineria/380743-3>



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Women discuss their role in peace processes

A forum, led by Antioquia Governor's Office and Medellín Mayor's office, was held in Medellín to discuss the role of women in peace processes, as well as to highlight the vulnerability of women in the Colombian conflict. Attendees included Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan conflict victim and human rights activist.⁴¹

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

In ten years, guerrilla groups recruited almost 4,000 children

The Ministry of Defense conducted a study that shows that the FARC have recruited a total of 1,255 minors since 2002 while the ELN recruited 132. More than 2,000 additional children were recruited by other illegal armed groups in the same period.⁴²

Demobilized paramilitaries will not receive new reintegration benefits

President Santos stated that members of paramilitary groups who demobilized during ex-President Uribe's administration will not receive additional benefits as a result of the transitional justice model to be implemented in the case of an agreement with the FARC. Santos also said that whatever transitional justice mechanisms are applied to the guerrilla groups as the result of a peace agreement will also be available for the armed forces.⁴³

Report on sexual violence in the armed conflict

ABColumbia released a report on sexual violence in the armed conflict. The document is titled 'Colombia: Women, Sexual Violence in the Conflict, and the Peace Process', and calls for more action to be taken against sexual violence perpetrated by the armed forces, guerrilla groups, and other illegal armed groups. The report states that 98% of attacks go unpunished, and calls on the GOC to ensure that sexual violence be discussed in the peace talks.⁴⁴

⁴¹ www.elmundo.com/porta/noticias/derechos_humanos/las_mujeres_levantaran_su_voz_por_la_participacion_en_procesos_de_paz.php

⁴² http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/farc-reclutaron-ms-de-1000-nios-en-10-aos_13647296-4

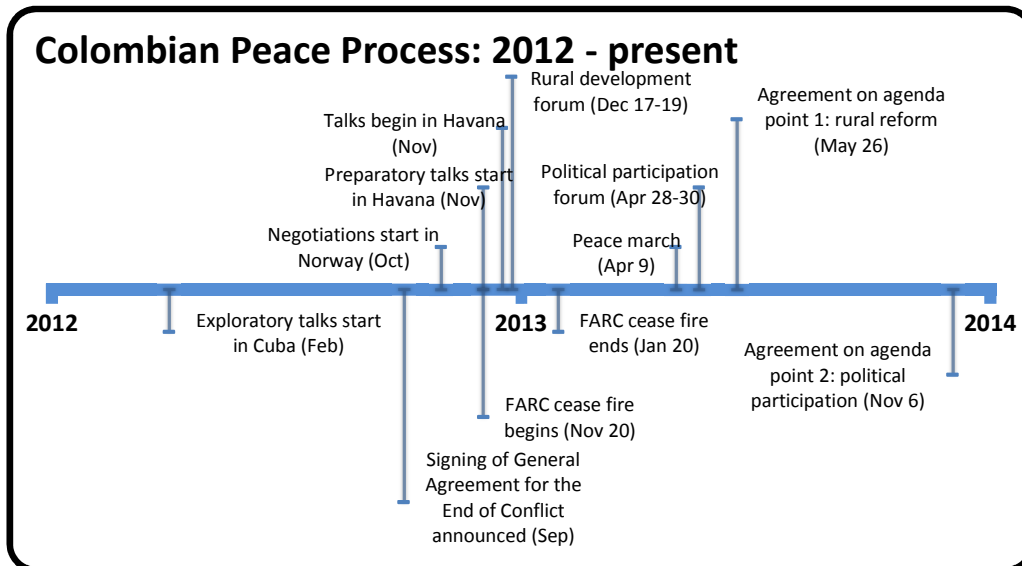
⁴³ http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/santos-descart-nuevos-beneficios-para-los-paramilitares-desmovilizados_13640065-4

⁴⁴ <http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/informe-sobre-violencia-sexual-en-el-conflicto-y-el-proceso-de-paz-13676555-4>

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7. Timeline



8. Further Reading

Continued concern over discussion of armed forces in peace talks

Admiral David René Moreno, president of the Army high level reserve forces, expressed his concern over the perception that the armed forces are being considered on the same level as the guerrilla groups in the peace talks. He also stated that the situation of the armed forces must not be negotiated in the dialogues.⁴⁵

Semana infographic on the role of art in post-conflict

Semana Magazine interviewed artists and art experts on the role of the arts in post-conflict, based on a document published by the GOC dialogue team leader, Humberto de la Calle. Responses focused on historical memory, art therapy, and peacebuilding.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ <http://www.vanguardia.com/actualidad/colombia/251265-se-debe-defender-la-institucionalidad-en-el-proceso-de-paz>

⁴⁶ <http://www.semana.com/enfoque/articulo/el-papel-de-las-artes-en-el-postconflicto/380641-3>



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1. Background

On September 4, 2012, President Santos announced the signing of a General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, setting in motion the fourth official peace talks with this group. The initial agenda includes: 1) integrated rural reform; 2) the guarantee of functional political opposition and civic participation; 3) the end of the conflict (laying down arms and reintegration into civilian life); 4) drug trafficking; and 5) rights of victims. Preparatory talks started in Oslo on October 17, 2012 and substantive dialogues, in Havana, on November 19, 2012. Two agreements have been reached so far: one on the first point on the agenda, integrated rural reform, on May 26, 2013; and the second on the next point, political participation, on November 6, 2013.

2. Key Developments from March 19th to March 25th

More united FARC support for dialogues?

A rumor circulated that alias 'El Paisa' of the FARC Teófilo Forero mobile column would be joining the guerrilla dialogue team. This met with criticism from elected senator, Alvaro Uribe, but was denied by the FARC leaders in Cuba. A demobilized member of that column did confirm that 'El Paisa' is hoping for a GOC-FARC peace agreement. This could represent previously unexpressed support from 'El Paisa', who is known as one of the most ruthless commanders whose Southern Bloc of the FARC is historically one of the most involved in drugs trafficking.⁴⁷

FARC request suspension of megaprojects

The FARC requested that the GOC suspend hydroelectric megaprojects and the hand-over of mining concessions. This request is part of the new mining and energy policy they proposed, which aims to avoid the exploitation of Colombia's natural resources by international corporations and facilitate the redistribution of mining income to the rural population.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/movidas-de-teofilo-forero-de-farc-espaldarazo-al-proces-articulo-482098> and <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/pablo-catatumbo-niega-planes-de-llevar-alias-el-paisa-h-articulo-482382>

⁴⁸ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-exigen-suspender-proyectos-hidroelectricos-y-conce-articulo-482800>



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3. Dialogues & Agenda

Santos emphasizes peace agreement in election campaign

President Santos' re-election campaign began with an expression of commitment to reach a peace agreement by the end of this year. The leader stated his optimism with respect to the progress of the dialogues. Meanwhile, the next round of talks began in Havana on Thursday.⁴⁹

FARC recognize responsibility

The FARC published a communiqué admitting responsibility for illegal crop cultivation, stating that this activity responded to the needs of the peasant population. This included the planting of illegal crops and collection of "revolutionary taxes" or tribute. The guerrilla group stated that acting as "mediators" of drug cultivation has been their "great sin" in drugs trafficking.⁵⁰

In addition, after admitting responsibility for the deaths of two policemen, the FARC stated there have been many deaths in the conflict and that this is an important motivation for reaching a peace agreement in the peace talks. This statement comes after the GOC reiterated its stance that the FARC will be held accountable for war crimes committed in the conflict.⁵¹

4. International

Victims' Unit reports progress in peace process in London

Representatives of the GOC Victims' Unit spoke at London School of Economics. In addition to highlighting the situation of victims, they discussed progress made in the peace talks, including the proposed political and land reforms resulting from partial agreements already reached.⁵²

5. Other Voices

Peasant reserve zone does not recognize indigenous land

Peasant reserve zones are being planned around the country in response to the partial rural reform agreement reached in May 2013. These zones are populated by peasant population and are currently highly affected by conflict and other social issues, and require special attention. One

⁴⁹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/gobierno-y-farc-buscan-nuevo-acuerdo-medio-de-desconfia-articulo-481870> and <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/acuerdo-farc-antes-de-fin-de-ano-objetivo-del-president-articulo-481954>

⁵⁰ <http://www.pazfarc-ep.org/index.php/articulos/tras-la-noticia/1798-cuarto-punto-cuando-la-solucion-esta-en-todas-partes.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/son-muchos-los-muertos-el-conflicto-armado-colombia-adm-articulo-482638>

⁵² <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/unidad-de-victimas-expone-londres-avances-del-proceso-d-articulo-482019>



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of these zones is currently being planned in Norte de Santander. These plans state that there are no indigenous groups in the area of coverage. However, the Motilón Bari indigenous group has protested this, highlighting that they have lived in the area for centuries and would face extinction if the reserve zone does not respect their land and autonomy.⁵³

Andrés Pastrana: FARC are trying to recover their international support

Ex-President Andrés Pastrana stated that the FARC are attempting to reclaim the international support they once received. The ex-leader said that the guerrilla group is using the peace process and the international attention it receives as a platform to call attention to themselves and recover the support they lost during his mandate.⁵⁴

6. Emerging Challenges & Responses

Public policy reforms to consolidate peace

The GOC has given José Antonio Ocampo (currently Director of the Economic and Political Development Program at SIPA, Columbia University) and a pool of experts, the responsibility of leading a working group to design of public policy to consolidate peace. The focus of this policy will be the closure of the development gap between rural and urban areas in Colombia.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, plans are progressing to create a Ministry of Post-conflict to support peacebuilding and post-conflict initiatives. These would focus on the increase of state presence in conflict-affected areas where the guerrilla and illegal drugs cultivation are currently prevalent.⁵⁶

⁵³ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/los-peros-indigenas-zona-de-reserva-del-catatumbo-articulo-482447>

⁵⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/andres-pastrana-dice-farc-quieren-recuperar-peso-intern-articulo-482707>

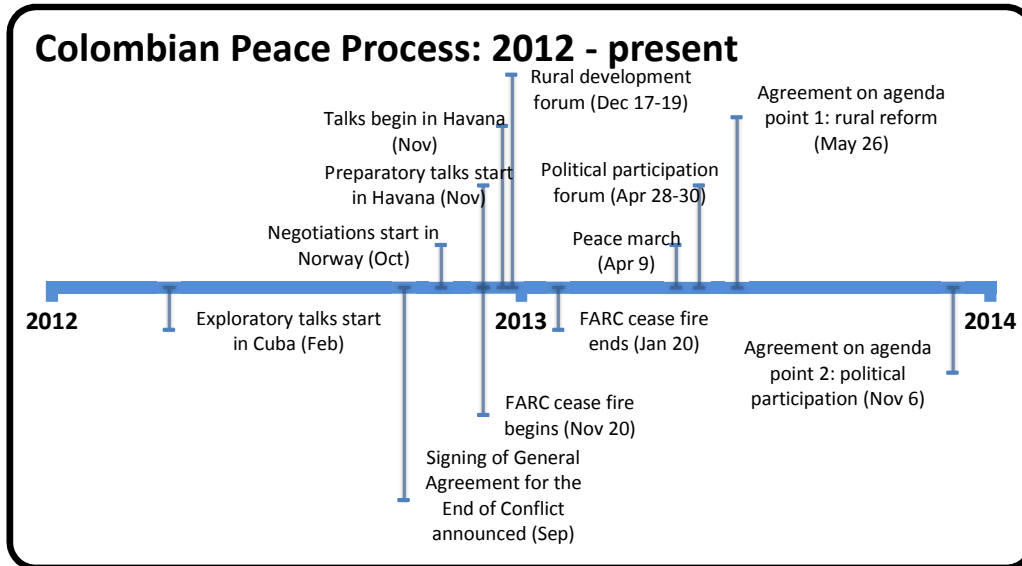
⁵⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/economia/se-quieren-politicas-consolidar-paz-articulo-482274>

⁵⁶ <http://m.dinero.com/edicion-impres/pais/articulo/como-financiara-paz-colombia/193560>

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7. Timeline



8. Further Reading

HRW releases report on violence in Buenaventura

Human Rights Watch published a report on abuses in Buenaventura port town, where criminal groups operate “chop-up houses” to dismember abductees before dumping them in the sea.⁵⁷

Ex-member of the FARC published book

Yezid Arteta Dávila was a member of the FARC for twelve years before being injured and captured, then sent to jail in 1996. When he was released in 2006, he started to work for peace and reconciliation. He also wrote a book, launched last week, recounting his experiences in the guerrilla group. El Tiempo published a chapter on their website.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/03/20/crisis-buenaventura>

⁵⁸ http://www.eltiempo.com/entretenimiento/libros/excombatiente-de-las-farc-presenta-un-libro-sobre-la-crueldad-del-conflicto_13715417-4