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FARC and GOC agree on ceasefire and disarmament, most significant agreement to date

On Thursday, June 24, the FARC and the GOC announced agreement on a final, bilateral ceasefire, the process for laying down arms,¹ security guarantees,² and the plebiscite mechanism for public endorsement of the Final Agreement, dependent upon approval by the Constitutional Court. The signing ceremony in Havana was attended by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the presidents of Chile, Cuba and Venezuela and the foreign minister of Norway as witnesses, among other high-profile figures.

On Friday, the Ministry of Defense released the list of sites where the FARC will gather its forces at 23 'transitional zones' and 8 smaller 'camps' for a six-month process,³ during which they will lay down their arms, in phases, and begin their reincorporation into civilian life.⁴ The UN verification mission will be responsible for monitoring the process and collecting the arms. A first group of 23 UN observers arrived to Bogota following the announcement, joining another 20 members of the 'advance group' working to set up the verification mission.⁵

The announcement was greeted with excitement and optimism by the international community; numerous heads of state, senior UN officials and social leaders have reiterated their support for the peace process in Colombia.⁶ At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that more work remains before a Final Agreement is reached. Key final issues in the peace talks include 'reincorporation' of the FARC into civilian life, transformation of the guerrilla group into a political movement, and monitoring and implementation mechanisms.⁷

ELN states the GOC is 'freezing' their peace process, calls for inclusion in ceasefire

The ELN, Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, called on Sunday for inclusion in the bilateral ceasefire agreement announced with the FARC. This is despite continued delays in the start of the formal peace talks between the GOC and FARC, announced in March and since delayed due to a precondition by President Santos that the ELN halt kidnapping practices and release all hostages.⁸ The group has insisted that this precondition is an 'imposition', and insists that talks should begin while simultaneously seeking solutions to various 'humanitarian issues', including kidnappings, in order to create a more "a favorable climate" for seeking solutions. The group claims the GOC is moving forward with the FARC while 'freezing' the process with the ELN.⁹