

SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL PEACE CONSTITUENCIES (CTEP) & THE FAST TRACK DELIBERATIONS

The Colombian Congress began its last session on July 20th, which will run through December 1st. On the priority fast track agenda are two items in particular related to the implementation of the peace accord signed on November 24, 2016: electoral reform, and the creation of Special Transitional Peace Constituencies (CTEP). The latter originates in Point 2 (Political Participation) of the Final Accord and attempts to increase the level of representation that historically underrepresented populations have had in the national legislative body, and to ensure that those areas most affected by the armed conflict have a seat at the table for the next two terms that will bring a great deal to bear on the implementation of the final accord.

The CTEP would produce 16 additional, temporary seats in the House of Representatives during the following two voting periods (2018-2022 and 2022-2026), comprising clusters of 167 distinct municipalities. One candidate would be selected for each geographic constituency, and no political parties – including the emergent FARC party – would be able present candidates for the CTEP. Instead, citizen committees, social organizations, and ethnic communities in the selected territories will be the only entities free to nominate candidates for these special seats. At the level of social organizations, the CTEP purport to provide a means for local social organizations in the territories to connect to traditional political dynamics and party machinations to ensure greater representation.

Voting for the CTEP would have no bearing on normal voting processes for congress persons – i.e., voting-eligible residents of these 16 CTEP would be able to vote twice in the upcoming elections, once for the regular candidate, and a second time for the additional CTEP candidate. All of the candidates will come from rural areas, and those larger municipalities that have more than 50,000 voting residents will only see voting occur in the rural sectors, and not in the more densely populated centers.

The emphasis on the rural vote comes on the heels of a long history of marginalization of these populations in political life, as evidenced by a 2015 Electoral Observation Mission (MOE) study in Colombia, which found, among other things, that densely populated regions are disproportionately responsible for selecting representatives, that rural areas suffer from a handicap in voting infrastructures (e.g., one voting center covering an expansive geographic region), and that the current Congress is not sufficiently representative of the interests of Colombian citizenry.

By the end of the last congressional session, one of four debates related to the legal project had successfully concluded (that which approved the report delineating the proposed terms of the initiative). The session ended with



Map Source: *El Heraldo*

concrete next steps for subsequent debates. In the polarized political climate, Minister of the Interior, Guillermo Rivera confirmed that a strategy of intense dialogue with the various political factions is essential for reaching agreement on the critical legal project.

By five days into the final session, the Senate had approved the CTEP initiative with nine additional proposals. The modifications address threats against voters, sufficient representation of victims of the armed conflict among candidate options, and the restriction against any demobilized person from becoming a candidate, among other things. The third and fourth debates remain to follow.

Though the proposal is one of a temporary boost for those who are ostensibly affected most by the accord implementation policies that the GoC will produce over the next two political terms, the underlying ambitions are far more lofty in nature in that it is one of the core aspects of the peace accord that - instead of merely attempting to achieve a cessation in hostilities, reincorporation of former guerrillas, and repair of damage caused to victims - works to overcome some of the more deeply rooted socioeconomic and political disparities that gave rise to and perpetuated the armed conflict to begin with.

EVOLUTION OF THE LEGAL PROJECT FOR 16 SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL PEACE CONSTITUENCIES

Final Accord 

Point 2.3.6 “Promotion of political representation for populations and zones especially affected by the conflict and (state) abandonment”

Purpose: 

Serve as one aspect of reparations and peacebuilding.

Promote better inclusion and political representation of these populations, including effective enjoyment of their political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights

Better integrate into formal political life the areas of the country particularly affected by the armed conflict, state abandonment, and weak institutional presence.

Candidate Requirements: 

Regular residents of these territories, or returning after having been displaced from these zones.

Registered by significant organizations or citizen groups in these territories (farmers’, victims’, women’s, and other social sectors’ organizations, etc.)

Additional Details in the Legislative Act Under Consideration

“By means of which 16 Special Transitional Peace Constituencies for the House of Representatives are created in the periods 2018 - 2022 and 2022 – 2026”

Additional Details:

Geography of the 16 Special Transitional Peace Constituencies – 167 municipalities (see map on first page for more detail).

If the voting population in an area is greater than 50,000, only the rural voting sites (and not the more densely populated ones) will be included.

Guarantees for the real and effective participation of ethnic communities through identification registry, voting pedagogy, and the pedagogies of the various movements and parties.

THE CENTRAL DEBATES & POINTS OF CONTENTION

Principle opposition debates, typically emanating from representatives of the Centro Democrático political party, argue that these 16 Special Transitional Peace Constituencies coincide to geographies where the FARC has been historically very strong (which would make sense if the purpose of these CTEP is to involve those most war-torn regions of the country) and that they represent “terrorist fiefdoms” intended to serve as strongholds for the former guerrillas, who may engage in democratically repressive tactics.

Others argue that it is unlikely that the 16 CTEP will result in FARC control over politics in these zones. The three dominant political parties in the CTEP are the Liberal Party (58 of the 167 municipalities), the U Party (the current President’s political affiliation, and 38 of the 167 municipalities), and the Conservative Party (30 of 167). A more predictable challenge will be achieving congruency among the broad

dispersion of candidates across various interest groups, parties, and ethnicities. With this comes the two-pronged concern of 1) the original purpose of improved representation (many small parties undermine a vision of more comprehensive representation), and 2) control by illegal armed groups in general (campaign finance reform is not sufficiently regulated to prevent illegal financing sources). In addition to these issues, there are more localized forms of political control that can undermine the representation ideal of this project – i.e., local political families and elites, and powerful clientelism networks.

As a result of this debate, a new article was introduced on July 26th, which would impede the involvement of any illegal armed group in the CTEP.

KEY DATES



Registration for candidates for the 2018 election cycle begins **November 11**, and campaigns officially may begin **December 11th**. As such, though the full Congressional session runs through **December 1st**, it is widely known that productive dialog will end in the early days of November due to the election cycle, putting additional pressure of the fast track process for the legal project undergirding this initiative.

Sources: [Legal Project for the Creation of the CTEP, Final Accord](#), [Centro Democrático Publications](#), [Electoral Observation Mission](#), [Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation](#), [Razon Pública](#), [El Tiempo](#)., [RCN Radio](#)