

STATEMENT OF THE COLOMBIA WORKING GROUP OF CARITAS INTERNATIONAL

Bogota, November 27 2020

The Colombia Working Group (GTC in Spanish) is a platform made up of organizations of the Caritas International network in Europe and the United States, which together with the National Secretariat of Social Pastoral-Caritas Colombia, promotes actions in favor of peace and reconciliation in Colombia.

The GTC met from November 23 to 27 to discern challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding, the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, the migratory phenomenon, and the severe weather which some regions of the country are experiencing. In addition, on the occasion of commemorating four years since the signing of the Peace Accord that put an end to armed confrontation between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP guerilla movement, we recognize the advances in the construction of peace in different territories. However, we wish in particular to highlight the following with a view to strengthening peacebuilding and reconciliation in the country:

1. **We recognize the progress made by the signatories with regard to the implementation of the Peace Accord** on issues such as ceasefire; disarmament; and economic, social and political reintegration, as well as the setting up and territorial deployment of the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (SIVJRNR). Nonetheless, we also find opportunities to make further progress in the consolidation of peace, the need to increase the effective participation of civil society to increase legitimacy and trust, and to promote with greater force the commitments made in points 1, 2 and 4 of the Peace Accord, which are experiencing the most significant backlogs.
2. **There is a need to boost the crosscutting foci on Ethnicity, Gender and Territory set forth in the Peace Accord**, with the aim of guaranteeing implementation and peacebuilding that deals effectively with inequality, that recognizes the differences among and the diversity of the population, and **revives the centrality of the victims** with which the Peace Accord was conceived.
3. **Guarantees of security are required, especially in light of the reconfiguration of conflict dynamics**, the stagnation in the process of negotiation with the ELN, and the recomposition of armed actors which have generated increased violence around control of territory for the development of illegal economic activities, and the murder of both male and female social leaders. According to the Fundación Paz y Reconciliación (PARES) FARC dissidents have gone from operating in 56 municipalities in 2018 to 113 in August of 2020; the ELN has gone from operating in 99 municipalities to more than 160 in 2020; and Organized Armed Groups such as the Gulf Clan are currently operating in more than 200 municipalities. Since the signing of the Peace Accord some 1,000 social leaders have been murdered, 237 of whom were persons in the process of reincorporation.
4. **Urgent measures are needed to halt the increase in the exploitation of natural resources.** Currently, and thanks to the latest collection of regional data through the Colombian church, we have been able to observe that some form of extractive activity of natural resources, minerals or hydrocarbons is being carried out in 92% of the country's jurisdictions, an increase of 11% with respect to 2013.
5. **Colombia is in need of an answer to the migratory crisis based on the protection and guarantee of human rights.** The migratory situation has worsened due to the global health crisis. As of August 31, 2020 there were 1,722,919 migrants in the national territory. Furthermore because of

the pandemic 123,000 migrants returned to Venezuela without proper measures of protection and social distancing, generating situations of overcrowding and health crisis. But it is estimated that more than 80% of the population that returned to Venezuela due to the pandemic could return to Colombia in a context of economic crisis, unemployment and regional violence.

In light of these situations and taking into account the vital support the international community has played in the Colombian peace process, we call on the international community to continue with these efforts and in particular:

1. Urge the Colombian government to strengthen the implementation of the Peace Accord, with particular attention to the crosscutting foci on ethnicity, gender and territory; as well as points 1, 2 and 4, which present the greatest backlogs. In addition, to continue strengthen the autonomy of the SIVJRNR.
2. Monitor the implementation of the Peace Accord and its regulation at the international level, and emit the necessary alerts based on your respective roles, in order to continue fostering the political will of the Colombian state in the pursuit of peace and a negotiated end to the conflict with other armed actors such as the ELN.
3. Provide special follow-up with regard to the security risks and protection of male and female social leaders, persons in processes of reincorporation, and in general the communities of Nariño, Cauca, Choco, Bajo Cauca Antioqueño and Catatumbo where one finds the greatest reconfiguration of armed groups and of illegal economic activity.
4. Act jointly with the Colombian government in attending to the migratory crisis to create opportunities for the human and community development of the migrant population, heeding different social, economic and political vulnerabilities in the medium and long term.
5. Coordinate humanitarian response activities with different social and institutional actors to mobilize resources to respond to the emergencies raised by COVID-19 and the severe weather in Colombia, especially in terms of food security, protection and shelter, fostering minimum necessary conditions for the vulnerable population and promoting the restoration of rights.



Caritas
Alemania

 **Cáritas
Española**

CAFOD
Catholic Agency for
Overseas Development

caritas
LUXEMBOURG

 **Caritas
Norge**

CARITAS Schweiz
Suisse Svizzera
Svizra

 **SCIAF**
Uniting to end poverty
Caritas Scotland

 **Secours
Catholique**
Caritas France

 **Pastoral Social
Cáritas Colombiana**
Foro Colombiano y Latinoamericano