

# Evaluation of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

2 June 2023  
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## INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function *“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;”* ([General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B](#)).

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## Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) and its predecessor, the United Nations Mission in Colombia (UNMC), and their contribution to their mandated areas of work during the 2016-2022 period. The evaluation used a mixed-method approach.

*Relevance:* UNVMC was highly relevant and played an instrumental, integral and unique role in the implementation of the “Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace” (the Final Agreement) between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People’s Army (FARC-EP). UNVMC was highly responsive to the priorities and needs of the parties to the peace agreement and it consistently went above and beyond its very specific role to support the peace process through proactive verification and comprehensive considerations of the different elements of the peace agreement.

*Effectiveness:* UNMC successfully supported the ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms during the 2016-2017 period. It laid the foundation for the work of the second phase of the Mission, i.e., UNVMC. UNVMC played a crucial role in maintaining support for the peace agreement among national and international stakeholders and was highly effective in supporting the peace process amidst many persistent challenges. UNVMC consistently supported the economic, social and political reintegration of the ex-combatants through its verification, reporting and advocacy, and provided consistent verification, reporting and advocacy on security guarantees for ex-combatants. Furthermore, pending sentences by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), UNVMC contributed to awareness raising and confidence building on restorative sentences and institutional capacity development.

However, the sustainability of productive projects remained of concern and there were also persistent, major challenges related to the security of ex-combatants. Moreover, most Persons in the Process of Reintegration (PPRs) living outside the former Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration (TATRs) felt left behind by the largely TATR-focused work of the Mission. At the same time, communities and victims considered the Mission to be too focused on ex-combatants and it needed to strengthen community engagement.

*Coherence* - UNVMC personnel were clear about their mandates, but there were several internal issues regarding internal coordination, staffing and capacity. The Mission had a strong partnership with a variety of stakeholders although challenges remained in achieving coherence with the UN Country Team (UNCT).

*Sustainability* - Several results supported by the Mission were sustainable although significant sustainability gaps remained, mainly for productive projects and security guarantees for ex-combatants.

*Cross-cutting strategies* - UNVMC consistently mainstreamed gender, human rights and disability inclusion, and to some extent environment considerations.

OIOS makes four important recommendations for UNVMC to:

- i) Better address the needs of the PPRs who live outside the former TATRs;
- ii) Enhance awareness raising activities on the restorative sentences pillar;
- iii) Address issues related to the management of the Mission; and
- iv) Strengthen programme coherence and coordination with the UNCT.

## I. Introduction and objective

1. The overall objective of the evaluation was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) and its predecessor the United Nations Mission in Colombia (UNMC),<sup>1</sup> with a particular focus on their achievement of expected outcomes. The evaluation topic emerged from a two-tier risk assessment that identified UNVMC from among the 11 Special Political Missions (SPMs) in Thematic Cluster III<sup>2</sup> and a further scoping exercise to identify specific areas of UNVMC to be evaluated. The risk assessment and scoping exercises are described in the evaluation inception paper.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation conforms with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations System.<sup>4</sup> OIOS has not previously evaluated UNVMC.<sup>5</sup>
2. UNVMC management response on the draft report is included in Annex I.

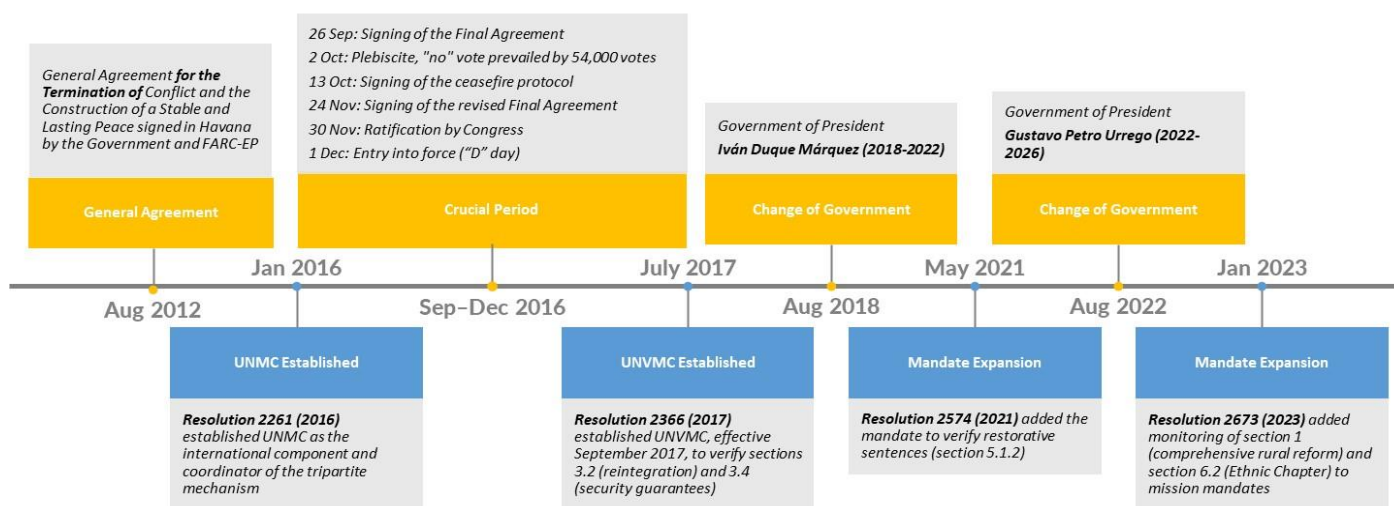
## II. Background

### Mandate and objectives

3. UNMC was established by the Security Council resolution 2261 in 2016 as an SPM to support the implementation of the “Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace” (the Final Agreement) between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People’s Army (FARC-EP).<sup>6</sup> It was responsible for monitoring and verifying the laying down of arms, definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. UNMC completed its mandate in September 2017 and was succeeded by UNVMC, established by Security Council Resolution 2366 in 2017. UNVMC roles were also provided in Section 6.3.3 of the Final Agreement.

4. Figure 1 provides the key timeline of the Final Agreement and the mandates of UNMC and UNVMC to support its implementation.

**Figure 1: Key timeline of the Final Agreement and Mission mandates**



Source: Desk review.

<sup>1</sup> UNMC and UNVMC are also referred to as the “Mission in Colombia” and the “Verification Mission”, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> See A/76/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.4.

<sup>3</sup> OIOS-IED Inception Paper IED-22-0013, 2 September 2022.

<sup>4</sup> [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\)](#). Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> OIOS conducted an audit of UNVMC in 2018, but this is the first OIOS evaluation of UNVMC.

<sup>6</sup> See S/2017/272 for full text of the Final Agreement.

5. UNVMC was mandated to verify two key aspects of the Final Agreement: (1) the reintegration of FARC-EP members into political, economic and social life (Section 3.2); and (2) the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures for ex-combatants, communities and organizations in the territories (Section 3.4). This mandate was expanded in May 2021 by Resolution 2574 (2021) to verify compliance with the sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) (Section 5.1.2). In January 2023, Resolution 2673 (2023) further expanded the mandate to monitor the implementation of Section 1 on comprehensive rural reform and Section 6.2 on the ethnic chapter.

6. The objective of UNVMC is to advance the effective implementation of the provisions of the Final Agreement concerning reintegration, security guarantees and restorative sentences through:

- a) Applying a proactive and inclusive approach to verification, which includes advocacy, good offices and close engagement with the parties to the Final Agreement, relevant institutions and authorities at the national, regional and local levels;
- b) Conducting independent verification and participating, jointly with the parties, in key forums and institutions created for the implementation of the Final Agreement; and
- c) Promoting constructive dialogue and trust-building between the Government and Comunes (the political party that emerged from the FARC-EP) to address pending issues and maintain constant coordination and dialogue with key interlocutors.

7. The Mission's work was intended to contribute toward three results:

- a) Institutional continuity and strengthened security guarantees for communities, human rights defenders and ex-combatants;
- b) Acceleration of sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants; and
- c) Timely and effective implementation of the restorative sentences issued by the SJP.

### Leadership structure

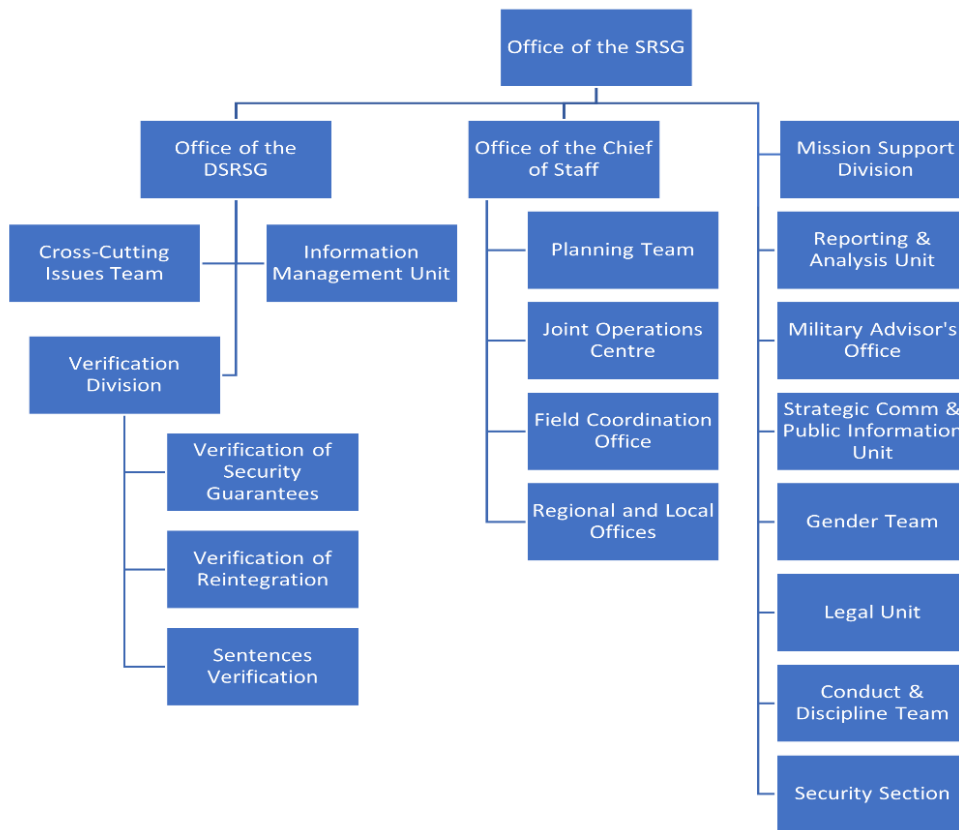
8. UNVMC was headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) at the level of an Under-Secretary-General who was supported by a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG). The substantive component of the Mission's mandate was carried out by the Verification Division comprising of three pillars (reintegration, security guarantees and restorative sentences).

9. The Mission has 11 regional offices across Colombia to implement its programme of work in the field and a backstopping team in New York which is integrated within the Americas Division of the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Peace Operations (DPO) shared structure. Figure 2 illustrates an abridged organizational structure of UNVMC.<sup>7</sup>

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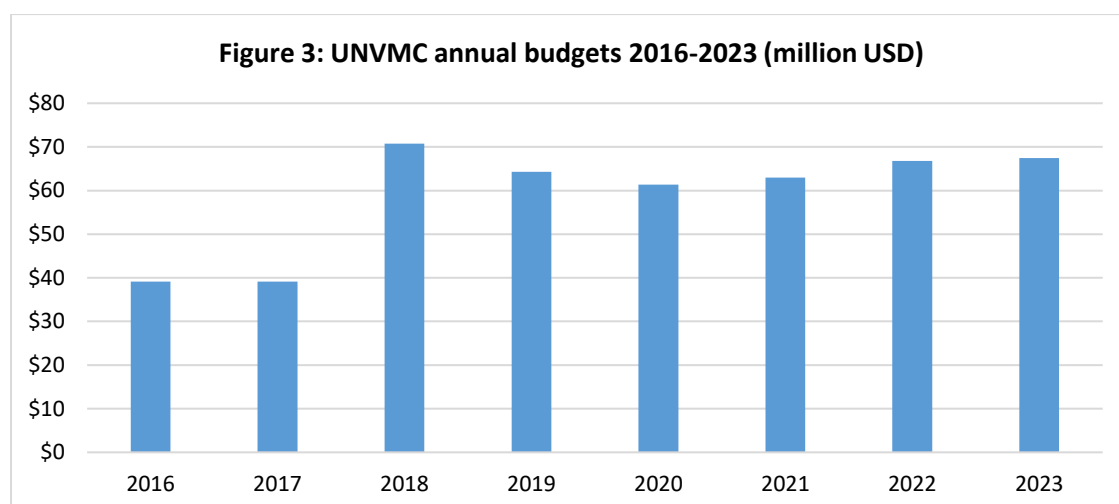
<sup>7</sup> Source of organizational chart: A/77/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.4, Page 149.

**Figure 2: UNVMC organizational chart**



**Resources**

10. The UNVMC 2023 budget was \$67.5 million, with 615 personnel including 171 international and 183 national positions, 141 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and 120 international observers. Over the 2016-2023 period, the total budget of UNMC and UNVMC was approximately \$472 million (\$59 million per year) (Figure 3). The Mission also implemented 747 small projects during 2018-2022 with a total budget of \$3.68 million from an extrabudgetary trust fund managed by DPPA.



### III. Scope and Methodology

11. The evaluation covered the 2016-2022 period and excluded the new mandates on comprehensive rural reform and ethnic issues added in January 2023.<sup>8</sup> It used a mixed-method approach incorporating the following data sources:

- a) **Desk review** of key programme documents and performance data including budgets, quarterly Secretary-General's reports, evaluation and other oversight reports, Security Council proceedings, reports and resolutions, other UN and external materials.
- b) **167 interviews<sup>9</sup>** with:
  - Persons in the Process of Reintegration (PPRs) and Comunes party officials (20)
  - Government officials at the national, regional and local levels (41)
  - Civil society organizations (CSOs) (14)
  - UNVMC and DPPA personnel (40)
  - Other UN entities (29)
  - Member States (19)
  - Other international organizations (4)
- c) **Eight Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** with PPRs, Comunes party officials and CSOs<sup>10</sup>
- d) **Three surveys** of:
  - UNVMC personnel: 297 responses (48 percent women).<sup>11</sup>
  - Stakeholders: 115 responses (56 percent women) from other UN entities, Government officials, CSOs and non-government organizations (NGOs), embassies, donors and others.<sup>12</sup>
  - PPRs/ex-combatants (in-person and online): 246 responses (35 percent women).<sup>13</sup> Eighty-four (34 percent) surveys were in-person and the rest via on-line questionnaire. There was no significant difference in responses between the in-person versus the online surveys. Forty percent of the respondents (98) lived in the former Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration (TATRs) and 60 percent lived outside the TATRs.
- e) **Field visits** to seven regional and local offices (Bogotá, Florencia, San Vicente del Caguán, Popayán, Medellín, Cúcuta and Icononzo).

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<sup>8</sup> UNVMC mandate during October 2017-January 2018 to verify the temporary ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army as provided in resolution 2381 (2017) was also outside the evaluation scope.

<sup>9</sup> Including 36 group interviews with a total of 290 participants, 41% of whom were women.

<sup>10</sup> 59 total participants, 42% of whom were women.

<sup>11</sup> Deployed during October–November 2022 to 501 UNVMC personnel (59% response rate).

<sup>12</sup> Deployed during November 2022–January 2023 to 466 stakeholders (25% response rate).

<sup>13</sup> Deployed during November 2022–January 2023 to 374 PPRs/ex-combatants (66% response rate, with a 5% margin of error of a population size of 13,600).



f) **Observation of** the TATRs, productive projects, Works and Actions with Reparative and Restorative content (TOARs)<sup>14</sup> and the quarterly Security Council discussions.

12. *Limitations:* Accessing a higher number of PPRs and Government officials during the prior Government for consultation was challenging. The evaluation mitigated this challenge by: (a) visiting different regions and meeting as many PPRs as possible in group settings both inside and outside of TATRs; and (b) meeting with Government officials at the technical and operational levels that generally experience minimal turnover after a change in Government. The evaluation consulted a wide variety of many stakeholders to triangulate evidence and minimize any potential bias in stakeholder’s response.

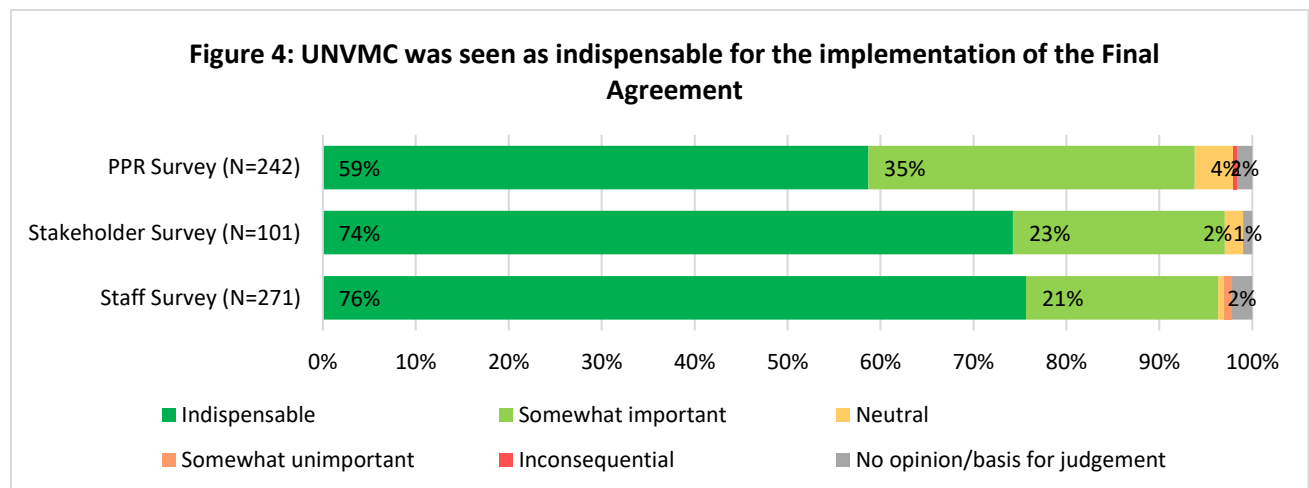
## IV. Evaluation Results

### Relevance

A. UNVMC was highly relevant through its instrumental role in enabling the implementation of the Final Agreement, its responsiveness to the needs of parties to the agreement and the alignment of its activities to its mandate

*UNVMC played a unique and integral role in the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia*

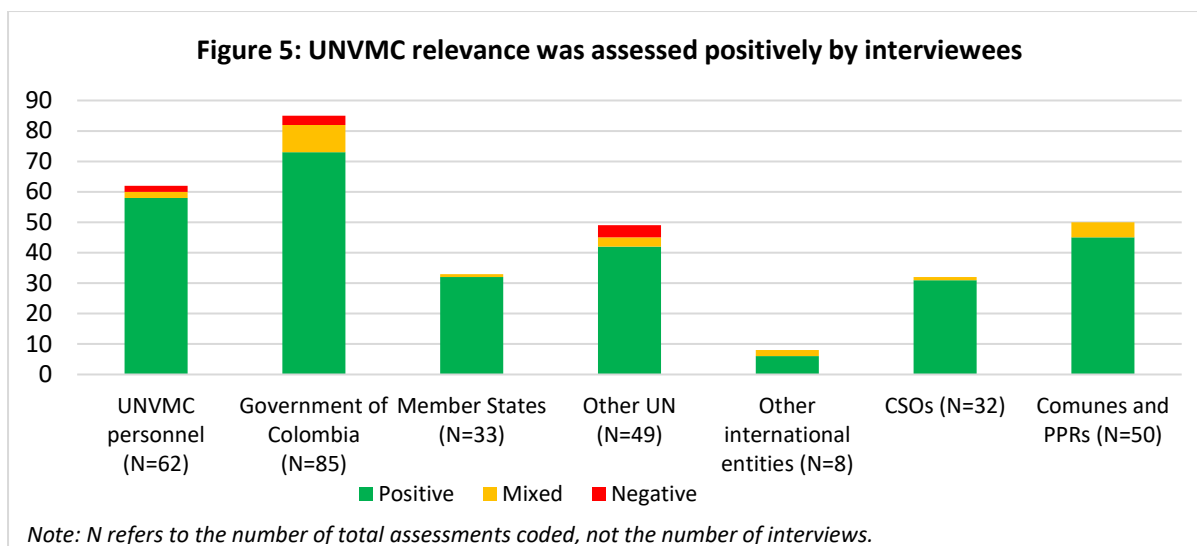
13. UNVMC played a crucial role as an impartial and honest broker in facilitating the process for implementing the Final Agreement, which sought to end the six-decades of armed conflict that cost Colombia an estimated 450,000 lives and 8 million displaced between 1985 and 2018.<sup>15</sup> The agreement required former enemies of war — FARC-EP and the Government security forces — to have mutual respect and initially live in harmony in neighbouring camps. Most survey respondents assessed the role of the Mission as being indispensable in the peace process (Figure 4).



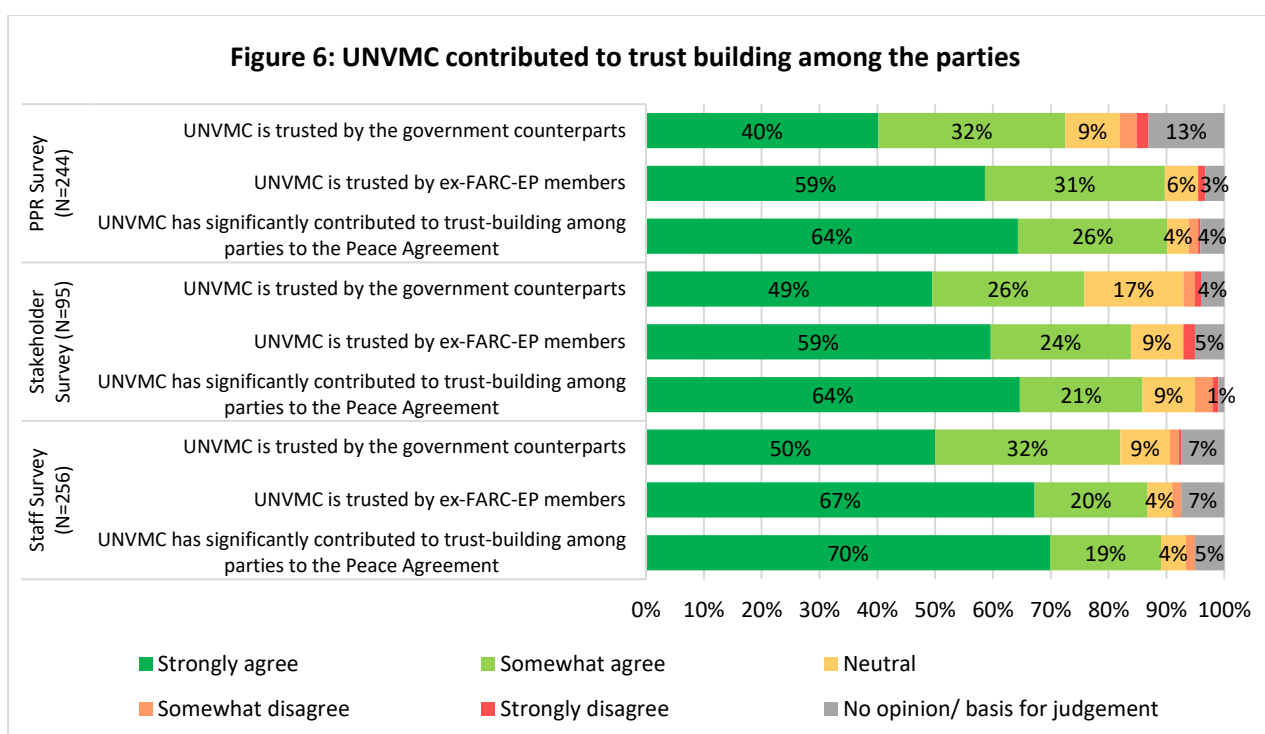
14. Similarly, most interviewees (90 percent) assessed UNVMC relevance in the peace process positively, as shown in Figure 5. They identified the Mission’s comparative advantages as including neutrality; independence; resources; technical capacity; extensive field presence; high-level representation; active engagement with the Security Council and the international community supporting the peace process; and in building trust among stakeholders.

<sup>14</sup> Trabajos, obras o actividades con contenido reparador - restaurador (TOAR) in Spanish.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/>



15. Most surveyed respondents perceived the Mission as being trusted by the parties who also acknowledged its significant contribution to trust-building among them, as shown in Figure 6. Importantly, 90 percent of the ex-combatant respondents trusted the Mission.

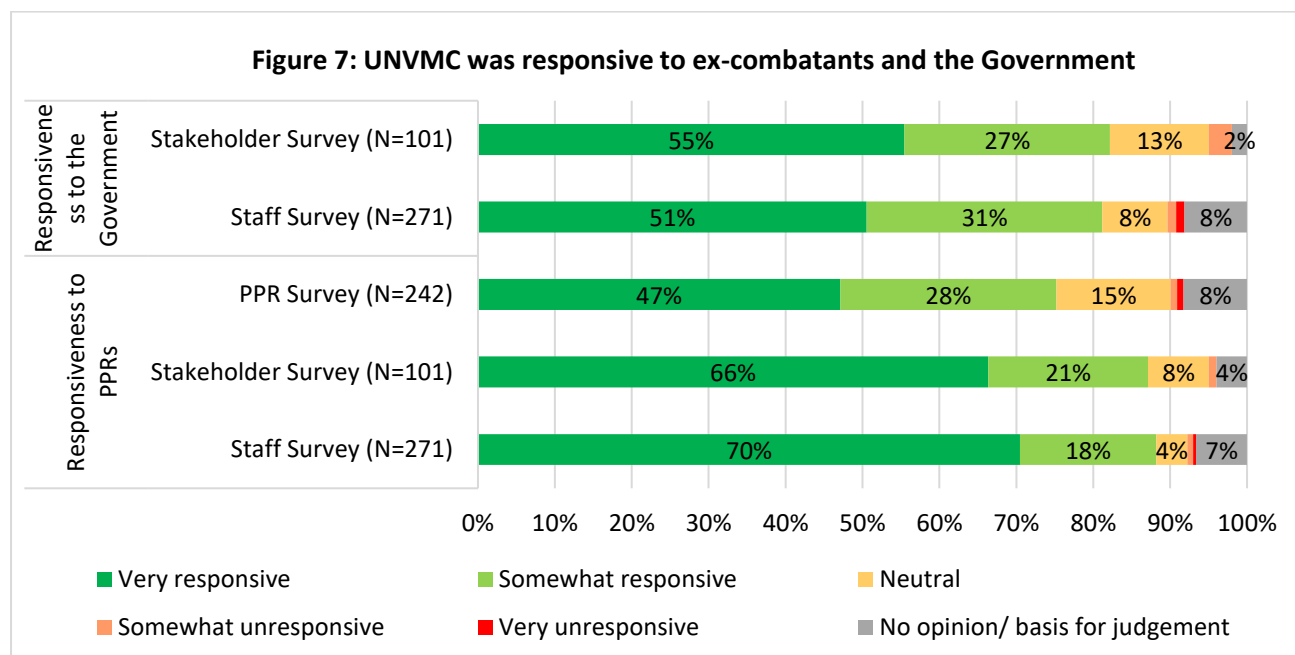


16. Stakeholders interviewed particularly acknowledged the Mission's important contributions in preserving the Final Agreement through political changes in Colombia since 2016, especially during the 2018-2022 period. The Mission continued to actively accompany ex-combatants and Government institutions to comply with the agreement, reported on progress and pointed out gaps and challenges through its quarterly reports. Its field presence in remote territories with limited State presence and active engagement with a wide range of stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels further added to the Mission's credibility, contributed to trust and confidence building among stakeholders and facilitated access for other UN agencies and international actors in those territories. Nearly half

of 249 documents<sup>16</sup> reviewed (45 percent) emphasized the importance of trust and confidence building in the peace agreement implementation, to which UNVMC contributed through its dispute resolution and confidence-building work.

*UNVMC was highly responsive to the priorities and needs of the parties to the peace agreement*

17. Most survey respondents assessed the Mission to be very or somewhat responsive to the priorities and needs of the PPRS and the Government (Figure 7). Similarly in interviews, both PPRs and Government officials largely considered the Mission to be responsive to their respective needs.<sup>17</sup> While the former viewed the Mission as a guarantor of their rights, the latter appreciated its facilitation, follow-up, technical assistance and convening role.



*UNVMC activities were highly aligned with its mandates, and the Mission consistently went above and beyond to support the peace process through proactive verification and comprehensive considerations of the different elements of the peace agreement*

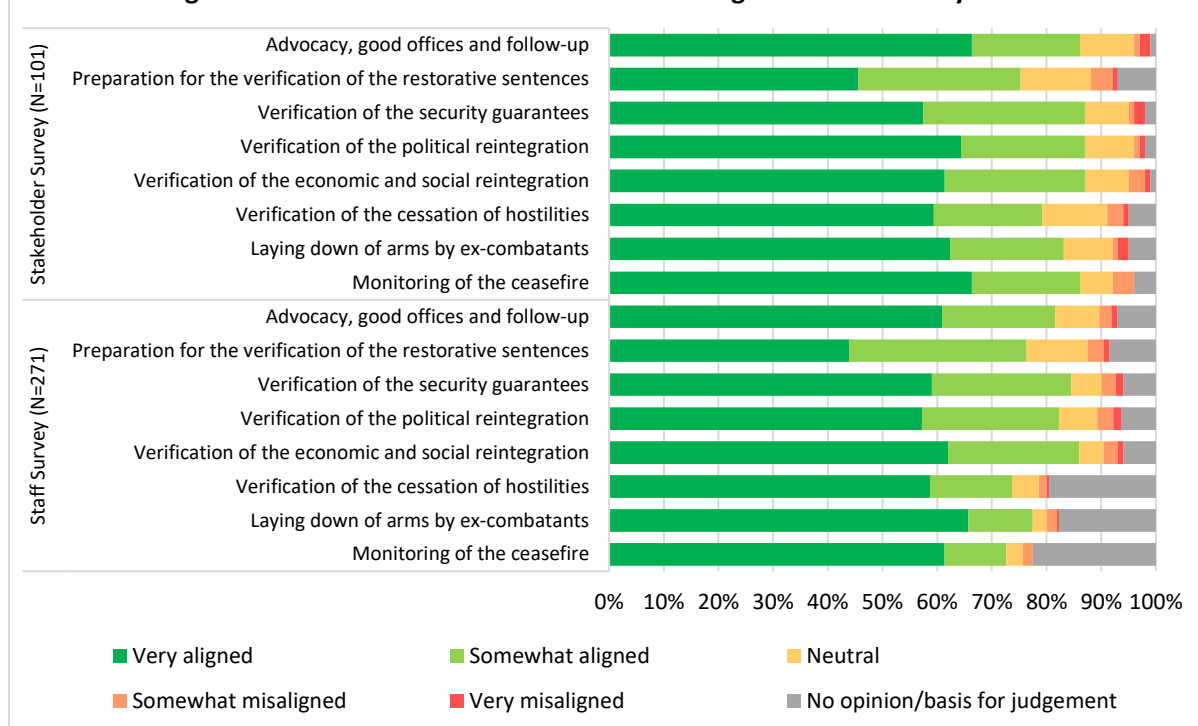
18. Most stakeholder and staff survey respondents (82%)<sup>18</sup> deemed UNVMC activities to be very or somewhat aligned with its mandates as illustrated in Figure 8. Interviewees were also overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the alignment between the Mission’s activities and mandates.

<sup>16</sup> Including Secretary-General’s reports, UNSC resolution, presidential and press statements, Member States’ statements, SRSG statements, code cables, etc.

<sup>17</sup> There were 24 interviews involving 54 PPRs and Comunes officials and 41 interviews with 62 Government officials.

<sup>18</sup> Calculated as the sum of averages of all “very aligned” (60%) and “somewhat aligned” (22%) assessments across the two surveys.

**Figure 8: UNMC and UNVMC activities were aligned with their key mandates**



19. Stakeholders interviewed considered that the Mission’s proactive verification and strategies<sup>19</sup> contributed to all areas of the Final Agreement, including those not within the Mission’s mandate.<sup>20</sup> The Mission consistently reported progress and challenges on interconnected issues such as rural reform, political participation, ethnic issues and various mechanisms, institutions, policies and plans provided for in the Final Agreement that were not part of its mandate but were essential elements for comprehensive implementation of the agreement. Furthermore, through its active presence in the political and civic spaces, the Mission played an active role in the “total peace” initiative of the new Government by accompanying the various dialogues and negotiations, which some stakeholders considered a testament to its role as a credible and neutral partner and its success in supporting the Final Agreement.

## Effectiveness

### B. UNMC successfully supported the ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms during 2016-2017 and laid the foundation for the work of UNVMC

20. UNMC helped to ending the conflict through operationalizing the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) with the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP to monitor and verify the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. It facilitated the drafting of key protocols concerning the rules of the ceasefire, the functioning of the MVM and the security of its members. The Mission: organized the operations of the mechanism (through the coordination of tasks, threat analysis and logistical requirements); monitored the local sites, security zones and redeployed army units; and visited the FARC-EP camps and neighbouring population centres to interact with the local population and authorities. Working with the parties, the Mission identified prospective local sites and organized the MVM at the national level and in eight regional and 26 local

<sup>19</sup> See paragraph 6 for more information on the strategies.

<sup>20</sup> The Final Agreement had 578 interconnected stipulations in six chapters, but UNVMC mandate was only in three sub-chapters, which accounted for about a quarter of the Agreement based on word count.

sites, where the laying down of arms took place. Nearly 9,200 former FARC-EP combatants moved into these sites, which would later be transformed into TATRs.<sup>21</sup>

21. During the nine months of its operation, the Mission supported the accreditation of 13,623 former FARC-EP members, including 3,143 women, by the Colombian authorities. It also successfully completed laying of arms by collecting:

- 8,994 arms
- 1,765,862 ammunition rounds
- 38,255 kg of explosives
- 11,015 grenades
- 3,528 antipersonnel mines
- 46,288 electric detonation caps
- 4,370 mortar rounds
- 51,911 metres of detonating cord and fuses, and
- undertook 182 operations in coordination with the FARC-EP to remove arms and destroy explosives from 750 arms caches.<sup>22</sup>

22. Coordinated by the Mission, the MVM was an innovative and invaluable confidence-building tool, providing assurance to both parties of fairness and neutrality. The mechanism also verified 473 out of 491 incidents requested for verification by the parties and documented 142 incidents of non-compliance with the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities protocols due to misinterpretations or lack of coordination.

23. The activities related to the ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms were completed successfully with minor incidents and despite significant logistical challenges in remote places. This was due to genuine commitment from both parties and the instrumental support from the Mission. Interviewees also considered the long experience, good practices and resources of the Colombian authorities to carry-out such disarmament efforts as key contributing factors.<sup>23</sup>

24. UNMC effectiveness was rated highly. Stakeholders confirmed UNMC contribution with an average of over 90 percent strongly or somewhat agreeing that the Mission played a key role in operationalizing the peace process (Figure 9).

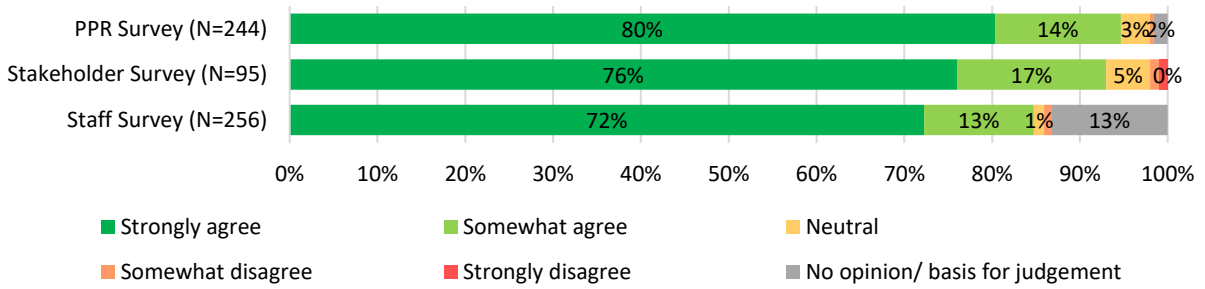
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<sup>21</sup> Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. Five Years of Peace Agreement Implementation in Colombia: Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities to Increase Implementation Levels, December 2016 - October 2021. <https://doi.org/10.7274/0c483j36025>.

<sup>22</sup> S/2017/801.

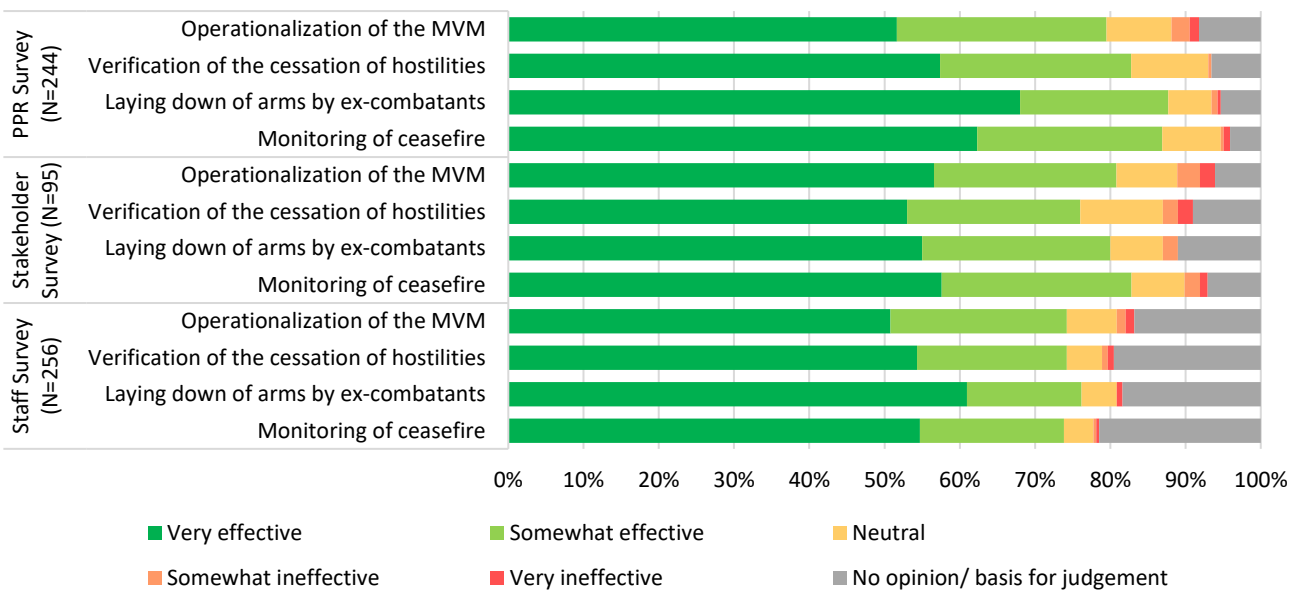
<sup>23</sup> The Colombian Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) was a co-chair of the UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Training Group.

**Figure 9: UNMC was a key player in operationalizing the peace agreement by overseeing the laying down of arms and cessation of hostilities**



25. Also, UNMC effectiveness in key areas of its mandates was high. On average, 80 percent of respondents assessed the Mission as very or somewhat effective (Figure 10). Among the three groups, the PPRs were the most appreciative of the Mission’s support in the laying down of arms, monitoring of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

**Figure 10: UNMC was highly effective in key areas of its mandate**



26. Furthermore, 18 interviewees directly involved in the process had highly positive assessments of the Mission’s contribution. The Mission helped build confidence among parties and with the communities, and for a period it was the only entity allowed in the communities where the ex-combatants lived. Through its mediation efforts, the Mission helped bring the parties together and resolved differences. Several Government officials<sup>24</sup> considered this to be the most important work of the Mission, and PPRs considered the Mission’s roles as a precondition for their laying down of arms.

<sup>24</sup> Four officials in two interviews.

C. UNVMC was highly effective in carrying out its mandate to support the implementation of the peace agreement amidst many persistent challenges

*UNVMC consistently supported the economic, social and political reintegration of former FARC-EP combatants through its verification, reporting and advocacy, but the sustainability of productive projects remained a significant challenge*

27. In support of the political reintegration of ex-combatants, the Mission consistently verified and reported on the challenges faced by ex-combatants running for office or exercising their voting rights and actively participated in resolving any incidents with the authorities. This contributed to most ex-combatants voting in the 2022 and 2018 legislative and presidential elections, the 2019 local elections and supported the FARC-EP in its transition into a political party (now Comunes) in 2017, which had ten members serving in the Senate and the House.

28. UNVMC routinely monitored, verified and reported on the implementation of the key institutional provisions<sup>25</sup> and social and economic reintegration support for the PPRs as per Section 3.2. This included a basic monthly income equivalent to 90 percent of minimum wage,<sup>26</sup> a one-time normalization allowance of 2 million Colombian Pesos (COP) and economic support of 8 million COP to start a productive project. It also provided for social security (health care and pensions) and social programmes for formal education and vocational training, housing, culture, recreation and sport, environmental protection, psycho-social support, family reunification and measures for the protection and care of children.

29. Accordingly, as of December 2022, ex-combatants were receiving their monthly allowances, and 75 percent of them (10,193) participated in 121 collective and 5,227 individual projects (Table 1) with a total estimated funding of over 95 billion COP.<sup>27</sup> Approximately 84 percent of this funding was provided by the Government, and 14 percent was contributed by the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) for Sustaining Peace in Colombia. The Mission also reported on the progress and challenges on access to land, housing, education and training, environmental protection and health services by the PPRs.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1: Productive projects of ex-combatants as of December 2022**

Project type	Total projects	Approximate budget (billion COP)	Ex-combatant participants	Women participants	% Women
Collective	121	48	3,898	1,087	28
Individual	5,227	47.26	6,295	1,542	24
Total	5,348	95.26	10,193	2,629	26

Source: UNVMC.

30. As noted, the Mission contributed to reintegration initiatives through its proactive verification, independent reporting and constructive dialogue between the parties by helping them

<sup>25</sup> For example, the establishment of the National Reintegration Council (NRC) as the key mechanism for dialogue and coordination of reintegration matters, the establishment of a social and economic solidarity organization (Ecomun) by FARC-EP, creation of a centre for political thought and education, transformation of the Colombian Agency for Reintegration into the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, a presidential decree on socioeconomic reintegration and a social and economic census of FARC-EP members.

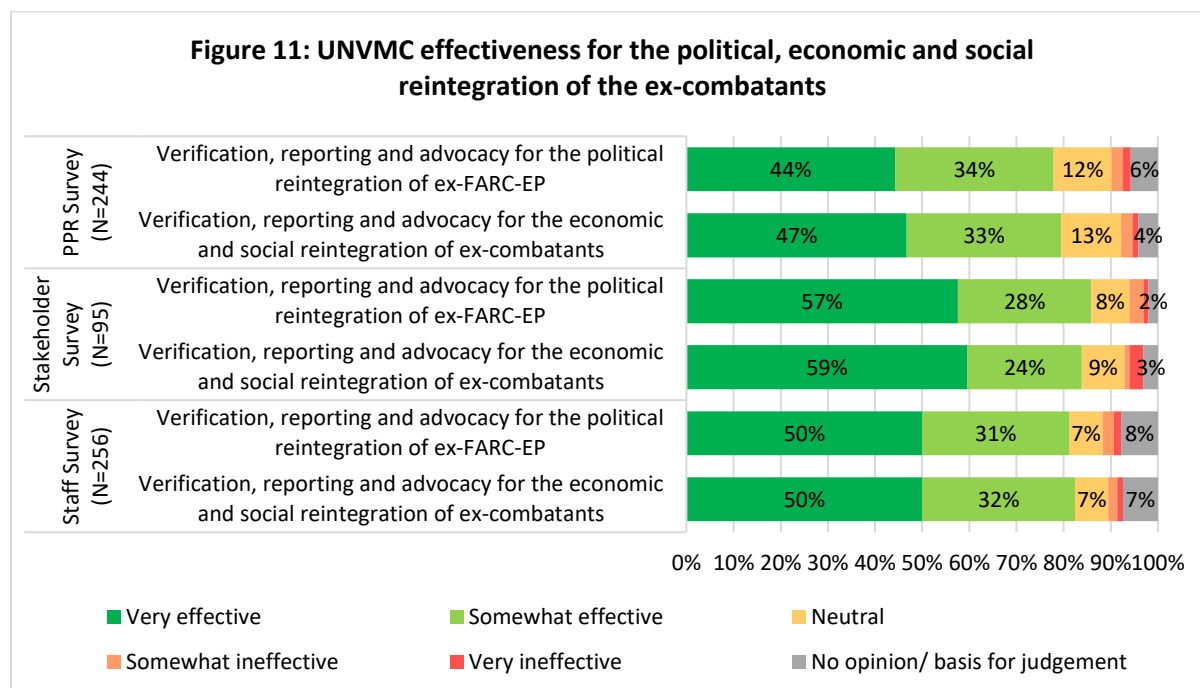
<sup>26</sup> 900,000 Colombian pesos (approximately US\$ 190).

<sup>27</sup> Approximately US\$20.5 million.

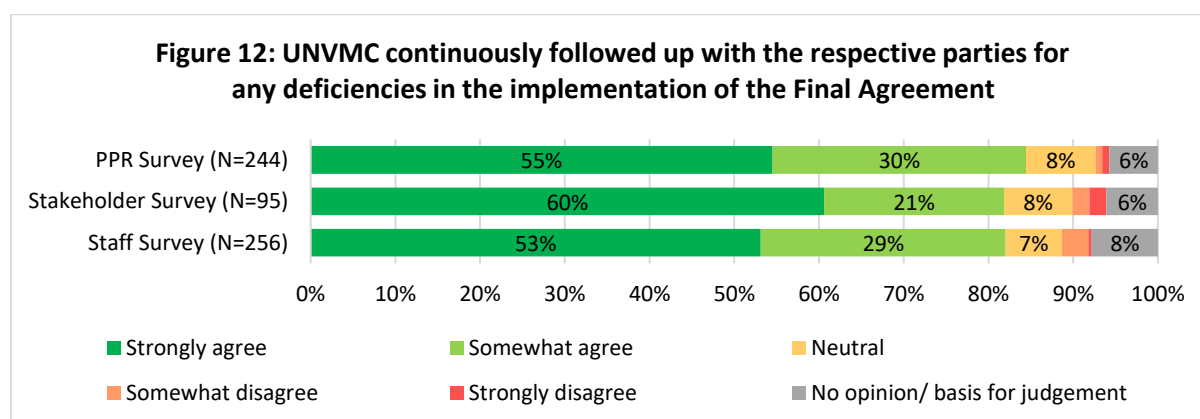
<sup>28</sup> As of December 2022, ten out of the 24 former TATRs had their own land, and housing projects were underway in three. The education programme had a total of 14,770 graduates, including 3,545 ex-combatants.

overcome obstacles, flagging high impact and strategic improvement areas and offering recommendations. It also relied on the strength of its field presence and local networks and by leveraging partnerships with Colombian and international interlocutors.

31. The Mission’s consistent accompaniment, follow-up with the parties and reporting on progress or lack thereof significantly contributed to the process. Survey respondents largely assessed its contribution in the reintegration of ex-combatants as very or somewhat effective (Figure 11).



32. Figure 12 further shows that an average of 82 percent of the survey respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that the Mission continuously followed-up with the parties on any deficiencies in the implementation of the Final Agreement.

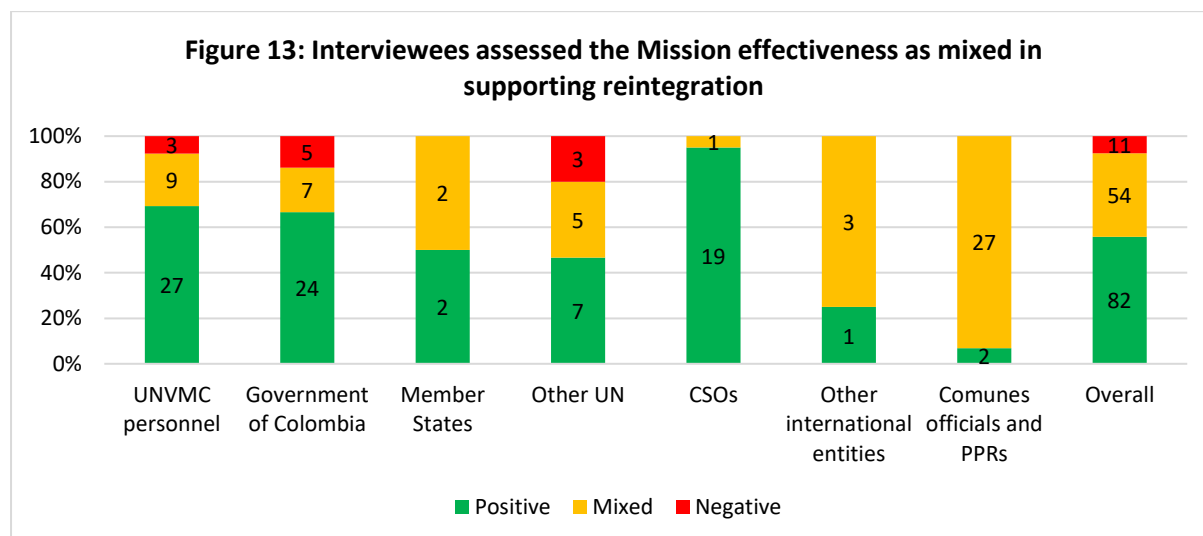


33. PPRs in interviews and surveys provided numerous vivid testimonies of how their lives had changed, including their transition into civilian life, participation in productive projects, improved security conditions, opportunities for education and training, enjoyment of peace and freedom, community participation, being reunited with family or starting a family.

34. On economic reintegration, interviewees provided a somewhat mixed picture in comparison to the surveys as shown in Figure 13. While positive overall (56 percent), 37 percent of the assessments were mixed and seven percent negative, which highlighted challenges to sustainability.



Much of the “mixed” rating referred to the challenges with the implementation of the Final Agreement, notably, the shortcomings and inconsistencies in resource commitments from the Government throughout the period, which were mostly outside the Mission’s mandate and control.



35. Another challenge was the uncertainty of the monthly basic income, currently extended up to June 2023. It provided a vital lifeline and was often the only income source for PPRs. An external 2021 survey found 72 percent of PPRs in Bogotá relied on this income for their livelihood.<sup>29</sup> Stakeholders agreed that there was a higher risk of recidivism if PPRs could not support themselves, which posed threats to the peace process.

36. The most significant challenge to economic reintegration was the sustainability of productive projects which the mission advocated for and flagged in their quarterly reports.<sup>30</sup> A December 2022 joint assessment concluded that only around one-third of the 81 collective projects assessed were on track to become sustainable. The remaining two-thirds required additional support on access to markets, training, land, security, strengthened sustainability plans and follow-up mechanisms. Furthermore, the PPR survey discussed in the previous paragraph found that 68.3 per cent of those participating in productive projects did not generate any income through them.

*The effectiveness of productive projects was also constrained by other challenges*

37. Other challenges affected the effective implementation of productive projects. Key interviewees<sup>31</sup> considered the planning of productive projects and associated assumptions as weak, often compounded by lack of PPR vocational training, limitations in technical assistance, lack of rigorous plan scrutiny by Government entities, and the rush to approve projects or secure funding from the MPTF.<sup>32</sup> Lack of sufficient resources was identified as an additional challenge for productive projects. Although the effects of the pandemic and worsening security situation in Colombia made

<sup>29</sup> Censo de Personas en Proceso de Reincorporación en la Ciudad de Bogotá, Pastoral Social, August 2021.

<sup>30</sup> The Mission prioritized access to land as key to the sustainability of the reintegration process not only for productive projects but also for housing projects and the rooting of the PPR population in the host communities. As a result of the Mission’s advocacy work and donor support, the National Land Agency activated existing laws to grant access to land for reintegration purposes, which was one of the main demands of the PPRs.

<sup>31</sup> Key interviewees involved in the process included heads of sub-offices, field officers and other UN officials.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the PPRs involved in a fish cultivation project in Icononzo were considering taking legal action against one of the UN entities for allegedly misleading them.

matters worse, one senior official considered the performance of UN System entities “very lightweight” in supporting economic reintegration.

38. With over three-quarters of its personnel consisting of international observers, UNVs and local staff, the Mission lacked the technical capacity and expertise on the diverse productive projects which were to be provided by the Government or other UN entities, but it varied greatly. The Mission often faced challenges in accessing dispersed rural areas with security risks to verify and report on productive projects. The PPRs also reported social stigmatization within the community against them, particularly those living outside the TATRs.

39. In broad terms, the lowest level of implementation of the rural reform chapter (four percent after five years of implementation)<sup>33</sup>, of provisions on political participation, illicit drugs problem and on victims created bottlenecks and a lack of investment in rural areas in terms of land allocation, agrarian reform, voluntary substitution of coca crops, reconciliation and a violence free environment for political participation. This created challenges to socioeconomic reintegration.

*Despite the Mission’s consistent verification, reporting and advocacy on security guarantees, major challenges persisted*

40. The Mission contributed towards security guarantees provided in Section 3.4<sup>34</sup> through ensuring institutional continuity, strengthened security measures and constant vigilance on the parties’ commitments through its proactive verification, advocacy, follow-up and dialogue with the parties. Several trust-building tripartite mechanisms were facilitated by the Mission to strengthen PPRs’ confidence and trust in state institutions. Examples of Mission activities are listed in Table 2.

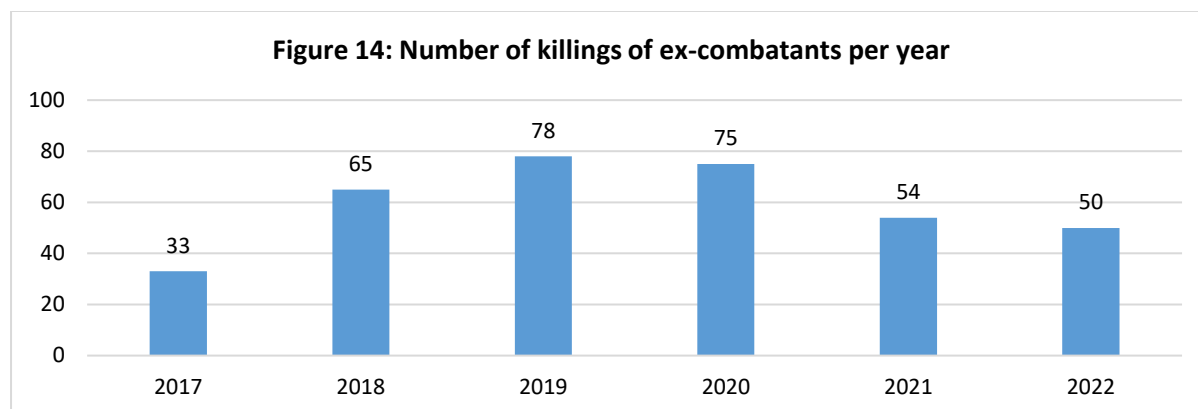
**Table 2: UNVMC activities to support security guarantees**

Coordination of tripartite mechanisms for security guarantees at national and sub-national levels and accompaniment of parties
Verification of security incidents
Near real-time reporting of progress and challenges on all security guarantees provisions
Provide immediate support to victims and their families, and referral to relevant service providers
Advocate for national-level policy and mechanisms on security guarantees, including with institutions created for the implementation of the Final Agreement
Follow-up with the relevant Government offices and security forces for protection and prevention measures such as security perimeter, command post for life and close protection for individuals
Follo-up on status of cases in terms of investigation and prosecution
Support relocation of ex-combatants under security risks
Engage with communities through constructive dialogue and trust-building
Utilize prompt communication channels with officials, ex-combatants and other stakeholders

<sup>33</sup> Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. Five Years of Peace Agreement Implementation in Colombia: Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities to Increase Implementation Levels, December 2016 - October 2021. <https://doi.org/10.7274/0c483j36025>

<sup>34</sup> Section 3.4 of the Final Agreement provided for the personal and collective security guarantees for ex-combatants, communities, human rights defenders, and organizations in the territories.

41. Nevertheless, 355 ex-combatants were killed as of end 2022, representing 2.6 percent of the total.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, there were 110 attempted homicides and 27 disappearances. Although the number of killings decreased since 2020 (Figure 14), the threats against ex-combatants remained acute as there was a 65 percent increase in the number of emergency relocations of ex-combatants.<sup>36</sup>



Source: UNVMC.

42. The activities listed in Table 2 above contributed to the implementation of various policies and measures by the Government and investigations and prosecution of the cases. The Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General investigated 418 cases, achieving 60 convictions.<sup>37</sup> The National Protection Unit (NPU) of Colombia supported 206 relocations of PPRs under threats in 2022, and security perimeters were established in most TATRs. The Government also adopted an emergency plan for protection of social leaders and PPRs, incorporating 29 measures recommended by the Mission for the first 100 days of the new Government. Additionally, there were numerous examples of Government decrees, policies and actions supported by UNVMC.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, an external survey found UNVMC as the second most trusted organization in terms of security matters.<sup>39</sup>

43. Perceptions of the Mission’s effectiveness in supporting security guarantees was largely positive, as 80 percent of survey respondents assessed the Mission as very or somewhat effective (Figure 15). Notably, over one-fourth of the PPRs (26 percent) did not assess the Mission as effective on this part of the mandate. Also, approximately half (49 percent) of the interviewees provided positive assessment of the Mission’s effectiveness on security guarantees, while 33 per cent had a mixed assessment and 11 per cent were negative. Assessments varied markedly by type of interviewees, as illustrated in Figure 16.

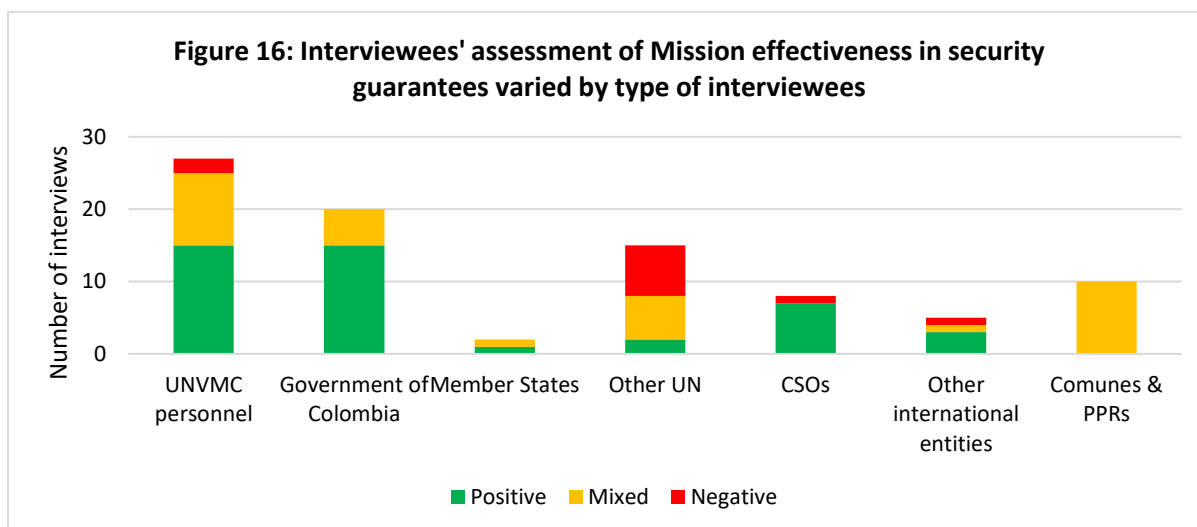
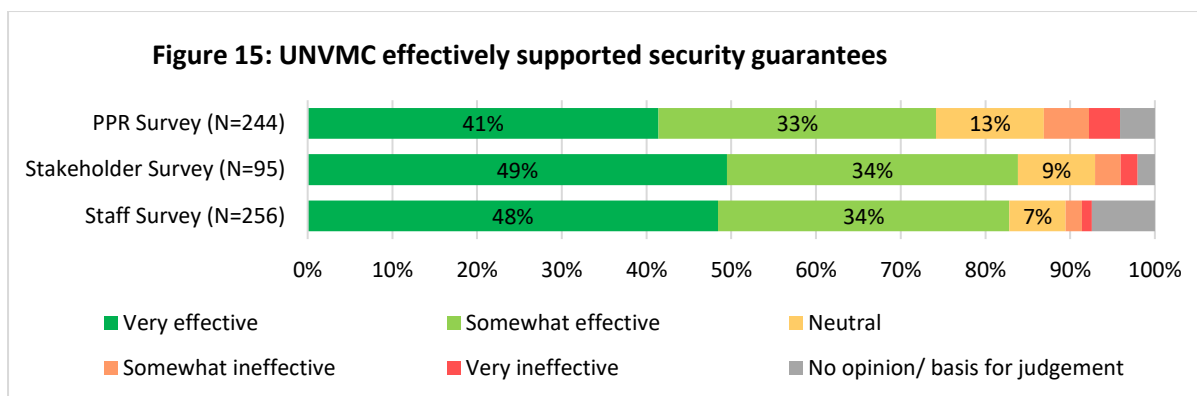
<sup>35</sup> This included 11 women, 48 Afro-Colombian and 33 indigenous ex-combatants.

<sup>36</sup> From 125 in 2021 to 206 in 2022.

<sup>37</sup> An additional 57 cases were in the trial phase and 391 arrest warrants were issued.

<sup>38</sup> For example: (i) Emergency plan of the Government for protection of social leaders and people in reintegration process; (ii) Official circular by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence on implementation of regional and local Unified Command Post; (iii) Draft of decree by the Ministry of Interior for regularizing the Tripartite Mechanism of Protection & security; (iv) Government decrees no. 902 and 660.

<sup>39</sup> Resultados preliminares de la encuesta longitudinal de situaciones y percepciones de riesgo de seguridad para organizaciones que participan en la JEP, Departamento de Ciencia Política, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, November 2022.



44. PPRs interviewed acknowledged the positive and continuous efforts of the Mission, noting that without the support of the international community, especially UNVMC, the situation would have been much worse. One PPR, voicing a common perspective, stated “if it were not for the Mission, they would have killed us all by now”. Government interviewees also noted the positive contributions of UNVMC in improving coordinated efforts by all State institutions, logistical support, protection of victims, and serving as the guarantor of PPR safety.<sup>40</sup> Senior military and police officials (13) were also highly appreciative of the continuous discussion and the constructive engagement facilitated by the Mission.

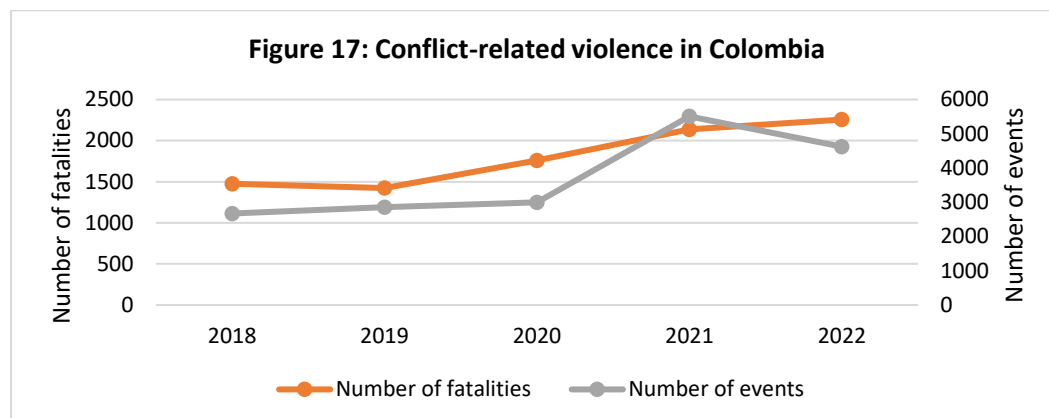
45. Similarly, all 12 municipal and local Government officials interviewed highly appreciated the Mission’s work. The mayor of a conflict-affected municipality observed that 43 ex-combatants’ families were moved to that municipality but there were no homicides since their transfer which he regarded as the clearest example that accompaniment worked.

46. Despite these positive assessments of the Mission’s work, ensuring the security of ex-combatants and their communities was among the most challenging aspects of the peace agreement implementation. The Secretary-General observed that the Final Agreement was effective in ending the conflict and the laydown of arms led to a reduction of conflict-related violence during the early stages of implementation. However, initial gains on security were increasingly in jeopardy.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> This included support in meetings and forums, training, prompt verification of reported incidents, alerting of national agencies and coordination of the tripartite discussion.

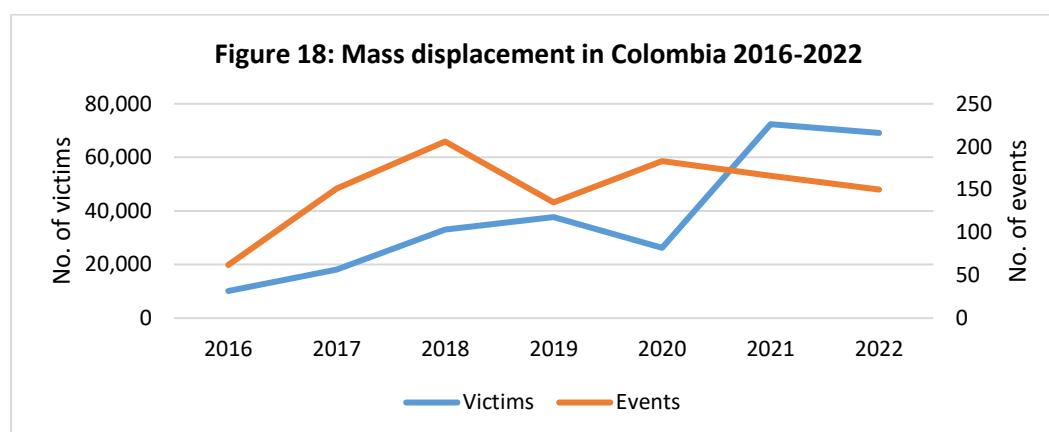
<sup>41</sup> This was because the security strategies by the State to consolidate its comprehensive presence in areas historically affected by the conflict was insufficient. Consequently, security threats emerged from the proliferating armed groups and criminal organizations, including FARC-EP dissidents, the effects of illegal economies whereby armed groups competed for

Consequently, conflict-related violence, shown in Figure 17, mass displacement and human rights violations generally worsened during the subsequent period.



Source: *The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)*.<sup>42</sup>

47. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also reported an increasing trend of mass displacement since 2016 (Figure 18). Similarly, the number of massacres verified by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) grew constantly to the highest recorded number in 2022.<sup>43</sup> Other UN interviewees observed that while the Mission’s work was focused on the ex-combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders, the deteriorating security and serious protection issues affected the whole country.



Source: OCHA.

48. Finally, despite UNVMC continued advocacy on the issue, the National Commission on Security Guarantees was not fully functional. The Mission’s work contributed to several precautionary measures for ex-combatants ordered by the SJP<sup>44</sup> and the declaration by the Constitutional Court of an “unconstitutional state of affairs” boosting the implementation of the security guarantees provisions, the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations as stipulated in the Final Agreement was not yet adopted.

control of land, illegal mining, coca cultivation and drug trafficking routes in a security vacuum created by the demobilization of the FARC-EP and exacerbated by limited State presence and institutional capabilities in some regions.

<sup>42</sup> Data accessed on 23 January 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Source: Data compiled from OHCHR Colombia annual reports and the quarterly UNVMC reports. OHCHR defines massacres as three or more persons executed in a single incident or during incidents related by responsibility, place and time (E/CN.4/2000/11, para. 27).

<sup>44</sup> This led to improved security measures, e.g. increased resources for the NPU.

*Pending sentences by the SJP, UNVMC continued to set up its verification mechanism and contributed to awareness raising, confidence building and institutional capacity development on restorative sentences*

49. The Mission's progress on setting up the verification of restorative sentences<sup>45</sup> was well on track. This included the verification of compliance by individuals (including members of former FARC-EP, security forces, State agents and third-party) with the terms of their restorative sentences to be given by the SJP<sup>46</sup> and to verify that the Colombian State established the necessary conditions for their implementation.<sup>47</sup> The SJP issued concluding resolutions in two of its cases<sup>48</sup> in late 2022 for which the final restorative sentences were expected in late 2023,<sup>49</sup> which will be the first to be verified by the Mission.

50. In preparation for this mandate, the Mission engaged extensively with external and internal actors at national, regional and local levels to coordinate the respective roles once the sentences are issued.<sup>50</sup> The Mission supported the SJP in its field visits across Colombia to enhance awareness about SJP work<sup>51</sup> and signed a protocol with SJP establishing the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for restorative sentences, under which about 20 workshops were held to put in place necessary information exchange systems and other relevant matters.

51. Mission activities also focused on building effective relationships and trust with victims, individuals subject to the SJP, magistrates, lawyers, CSOs and relevant State institutions. The Mission supported or participated in 38 SJP public hearings or proceedings, conducted 185 advocacy activities with the SJP and 129 activities with individuals subject to the SJP across Colombia since May 2021. The Mission also supported the security guarantees of individuals subject to the SJP. Additionally, the Mission supported 45 small projects on transitional justice, including 22 TOARs, with a total budget of approximately \$38,000 from the DPPA trust fund.

52. Internally, UNVMC recruited and trained key personnel and engaged on strategy and plans for the implementation of this new mandate. Stakeholders generally assessed the Mission's preparation for the verification of the restorative sentences as effective. On average, 70 per cent of the nearly 600 respondents assessed the Mission as very or somewhat effective in its preparation (Figure 19).

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<sup>45</sup> Examples of proposed restorative sentences included: the construction of memorial parks; measures to vindicate reputations of victims and their communities, reforestation and watershed recovery actions, supporting the search for missing persons, mine action and activities to preserve historical memory.

<sup>46</sup> The SJP is the judicial component of the transitional justice system to investigate, prosecute and sanction serious violations committed during the conflict. It had ten macro cases grouped by category of violation, victims or most affected region. See <https://www.jep.gov.co/Paginas/Inicio.aspx> for more information.

<sup>47</sup> The restorative sentences subject to verification were the TOARs that individuals should carry out as reparation to victims and conflict-affected communities and the restriction of freedoms and rights, including movement restrictions, in a defined geographical area during the sentence period.

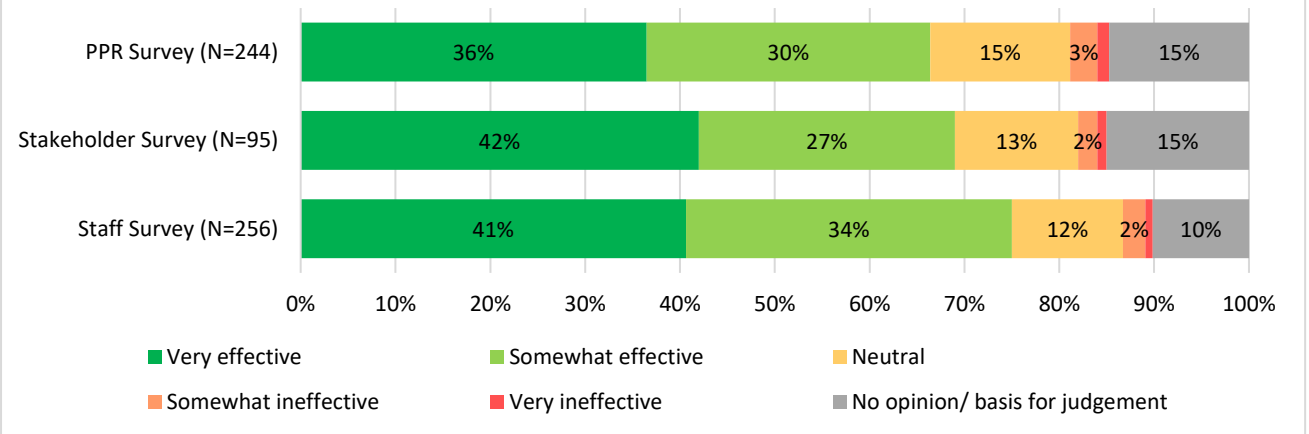
<sup>48</sup> Case 01: on hostage-taking, other serious deprivations of liberty and other concurrent crimes by the FARC-EP (7 former top commanders) and Case 03: on killings and forced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by State agents (22 members of the Army and one civilian).

<sup>49</sup> S/2021/1090 (they were expected in 2022 at the time of mandating).

<sup>50</sup> This included the SJP and other national relevant institutions, representatives of ex-combatants and member of the public security forces subject to the SJP, local Government officials, UNCT and UNVMC offices.

<sup>51</sup> UNVMC also conducted high-level advocacy at the national level and participated in regular meetings with key actors across Colombia supporting the work of the SJP as well as the Truth Commission and the Special Unit for missing persons.

**Figure 19: UNVMC preparation was effective for verification of restorative sentences**



53. Over half of the interviewees (52%) responding to the question (31) assessed the Mission’s preparation and its work on restorative sentences as positive, and 45 per cent had mixed assessments. All interviewees (8) from the three entities of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition at both national and local levels had very high appreciation of the Mission’s work and noted the substantial benefits from the Mission’s advocacy, technical and logistical support and access to ex-combatants and their communities.

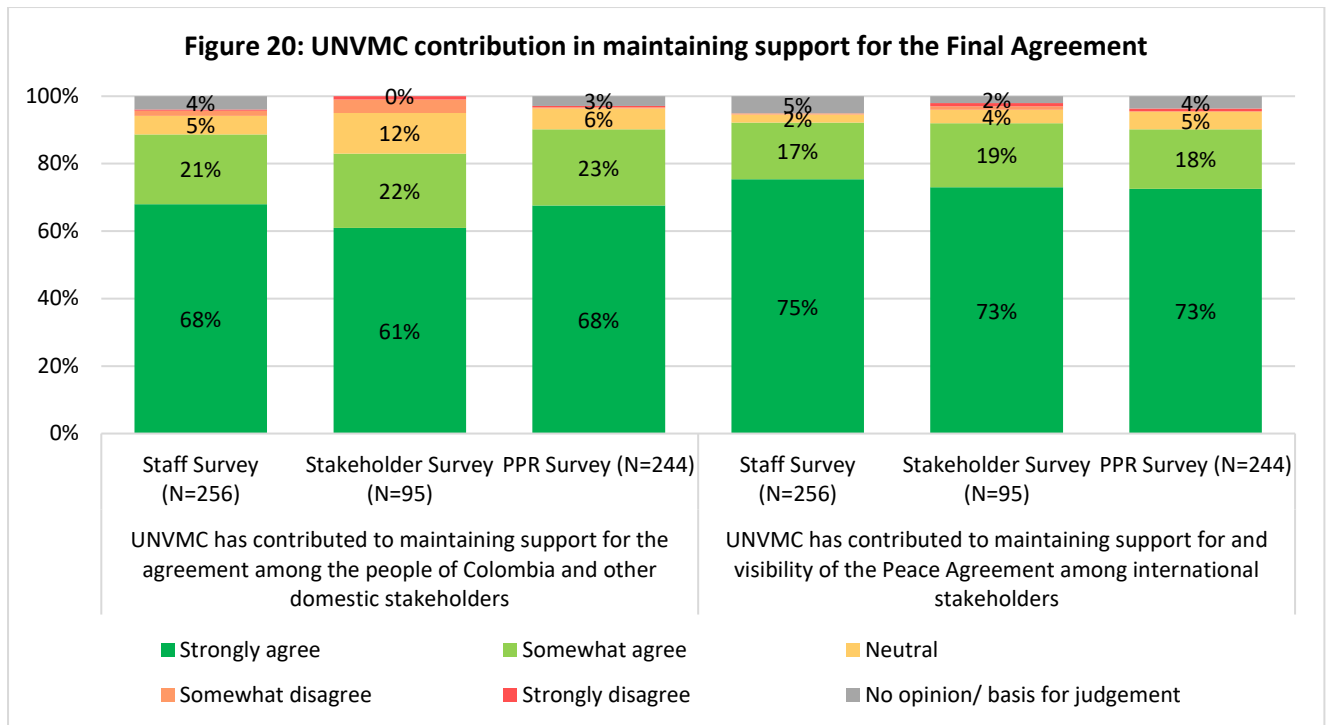
54. Ex-combatants expressed concerns regarding their security, legal certainty and fear of retributive rather than restorative sentencing. Part of these uncertainties arose from prior polarization and divisions concerning SJP (discussed in para 57). Mission personnel and other UN interviewees expressed a lack of clarity on the progress with sentencing by the SJP and the Mission’s preparation for verification.<sup>52</sup> They noted that strengthening the Mission’s outreach, sensitization and communication strategies on this mandate would help address these concerns.

*UNVMC played a crucial role in maintaining support for the peace agreement among national and international stakeholders*

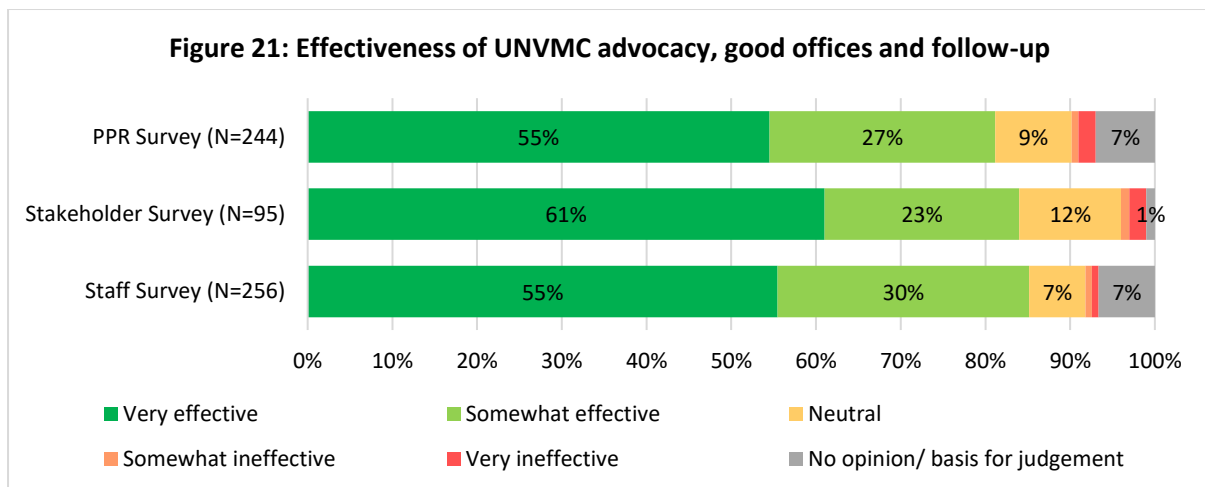
55. A key contribution of the Mission that most stakeholders acknowledged was its crucial role in maintaining support for the Final Agreement among domestic and international stakeholders through the changing political climate toward the Final Agreement. On average, 90 percent<sup>53</sup> of the 595 total respondents strongly or somewhat agreed on the Mission’s contribution, illustrated in Figure 20.

<sup>52</sup> They further pointed to many confusions at the grassroots level about the legal status of TOARs and about the SJP process in general.

<sup>53</sup> Calculated as the sum of averages of all “strongly agree” (70%) and “somewhat agree” (20%) assessments across the three surveys.



56. Similarly, when asked to assess the effectiveness of the Mission’s advocacy and good offices work to support the implementation of the Final Agreement, 82 per cent or more of all respondents rated it as very or somewhat effective (Figure 21).



57. Sixty-eight percent of interviewees with an opinion also assessed the Mission’s contribution to trust and confidence building through advocacy and good offices positively. Interviewed Member States expressed great satisfaction with the work of the Mission: in 19 interviews with 25 representatives of Member States in New York and Bogotá, including Security Council members and guarantor countries of the peace process, interviewees expressed a very positive assessment of the Mission’s effectiveness (85%).

58. Member States interviewees especially appreciated the Mission’s regular consultations and near real-time reporting on progress and challenges through the Secretary-General’s quarterly reports, which helped them carry-out their own advocacy and good offices. For example, in early 2019 when the then President of Colombia announced his objection to six articles in the statutory law of the SJP, and several weeks of sharp public debate, protests and divisions followed, the Mission raised the alarm that to ensure its proper implementation, the integrity of the Final Agreement as an



interlocking set of commitments was essential. In the following Security Council debate in April 2019, statements from the Security Council and its members all echoed the same message. This contributed to the Government enacting the statutory law of the SJP in June 2019 while preserving the independence and autonomy of the SJP. The Mission also had unanimous support from the members of the Security Council who highly appreciated the quality of work of the Mission personnel, especially the senior leadership.<sup>54</sup>

59. Stakeholders interviewed in Colombia also considered the Mission's role essential in preserving the Final Agreement, with at least 18 interviewees stating that the peace process would have failed without the Mission's support. Ex-combatants also shared similar views in interviews with statements such as "without the UN Mission there would be no peace process" and "if it were not for [UNVMC], 90% would have had to return to arms".

*There were lingering challenges related to the PPRs living outside the former TATRs and community engagement*

60. Most of the PPRs, living outside the former TATRs, felt left behind from the largely TATR-focused work of the Mission and other actors. Over 77 percent of PPRs (10,566) lived outside the former TATRs, including 2,561 women. Approximately one third of them lived in 75 new areas for reintegration (NARs) and the rest lived in urban and rural areas. While this was a positive sign from the viewpoint of demobilization and normalization, those PPRs faced specific challenges related to security,<sup>55</sup> lacked productive opportunities, received uneven institutional support and felt left out of the process.

61. In interviews, those PPRs shared the view that most of the benefits and work of the various agencies were concentrated in TATRs including health services, food rations, land and housing, education, security and support for productive projects. They thought that the leaders of TATRs controlled everything and received the most benefits, including in some instances close protection and vehicles. They expressed a desire to be free and ordinary Colombians as promised in the Final Agreement without affiliation to any political party or structure. They considered that the Mission was also heavily focused on the TATRs and communicated mostly with the Comunes party leadership.

62. UNVMC consistently flagged the specific risks and needs of the ex-combatants living outside the former TATRs in its quarterly reports and advocated for strengthened institutional support for them. This contributed to the new administration's technical team recommending that the NARs and former TATRs be identified and formally recognized through a decree. The Ministries of Interior and Defence have also taken measures to strengthen the deployment of public security forces in NARs. However, while the Mission made significant efforts to engage the PPRs living outside the TATRs, during interviews and FGDs, those PPRs expressed several areas of improvement to further enhance their contribution to the peace process.

63. Furthermore, affected communities and victims' organizations expressed high appreciation of the peace process and the contributions made by the Mission. However, in interviews, they often viewed the Mission and other UN entities as largely focused on the rights and security of the ex-combatants — the very group they saw as among those responsible for the conflict. They saw insufficient opportunity and resources for their engagement in the process, despite it being called a victims-centred peace process. During visits to three TOAR sites, including a road construction project in a school and a municipal sports centre, members of the community and victims considered these TOARs as having high restorative impact on the communities with very small investments. While

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<sup>54</sup> For example, 17 Security Council Press Statements on Colombia reiterated the "full and unanimous" support of the Council for the peace process in Colombia. The Mission mandates were also unanimously extended.

<sup>55</sup> Majority of ex-combatants killed lived outside TATRs.

UNVMC mandate was explicitly linked to the verification of the Final Agreement and thus with the ex-combatants, it was the most visible part of the UN system in remote places. However, implementing community-based initiatives to enhance peace dividends for the communities and victims through small scale activities and TOARs as a way of strengthening social reintegration continued to be a challenge, despite the Mission's efforts to draw attention to their needs. The mandates and resources of the UNCT and partnership with the Government entities, international community and private sector remain to be fully leveraged.

## Coherence

### D. While UNVMC personnel were clear about their mandates, and the Mission had a strong partnership with a variety of stakeholders, internal coherence within the Mission and external coherence with the UNCT faced challenges

*While Mission personnel had a clear understanding of their mandate, there were challenges regarding internal coordination, staffing and capacity*

64. Ninety percent of staff survey respondents agreed that the Mission's mandate and activities were very or somewhat clear, but nonetheless identified several challenges related to internal coordination, communication, strategic planning, results monitoring, resources and workload. Although there were regular coordination meetings, and strategic and guidance documents and resources for prioritization and verification, field office personnel interviewed especially noted that information on strategies and priorities were not systematized and shared across Mission headquarters, field offices, leadership, substantive pillars and Mission support. Additionally, the ECAP database<sup>56</sup> was only used by the Security Guarantees pillar but not by the other pillars to improve cross-pillar information sharing and comprehensive verification of all mandates.

65. Lack of institutional memory due to frequent staff turnover, a high staff vacancy rate (25%) and recruitment delays contributed to field offices being understaffed and overworked. Key staff interviewees also considered the reporting burden on activities to be very high and stated that these reports were often unused. One manager, expressing a common view, observed that the expansion of the mandates without corresponding resources and instructions on work approaches for field offices posed a risk for the Mission to become a victim of its own success. Furthermore, despite changes in its mandates, conflict dynamics and more importantly the movement of PPRs, the Mission's geographic presence has remained relatively unchanged over the years. While the mission reported conducting inter-pillar analyses to define its field presence, field office composition was also not informed by an analysis of the number of PPRs in the regions.

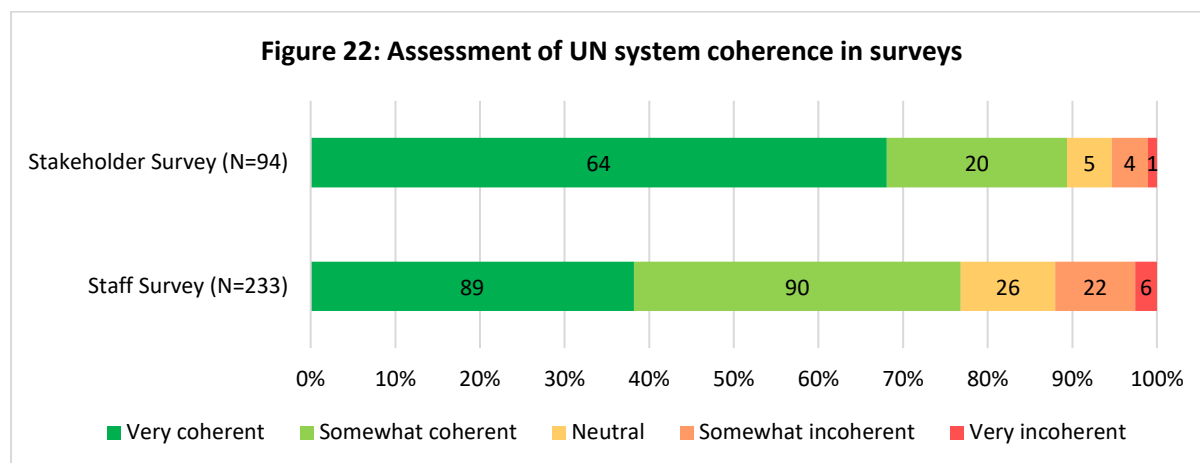
66. The Mission also lacked in capacity for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, lessons learning and best practices, since these functions either did not exist or remained unstaffed. Staff interviewed also expressed the needs for targeted training on their areas of work and learning from best practices across field and local offices. Field office reporting lines to Chief of Staff and lack of management team meetings left some heads of field offices feeling side-lined, disconnected and lacking clear guidance from headquarters; one staff interviewed voiced a common view that field offices operated more like consulates than part of an integrated office.

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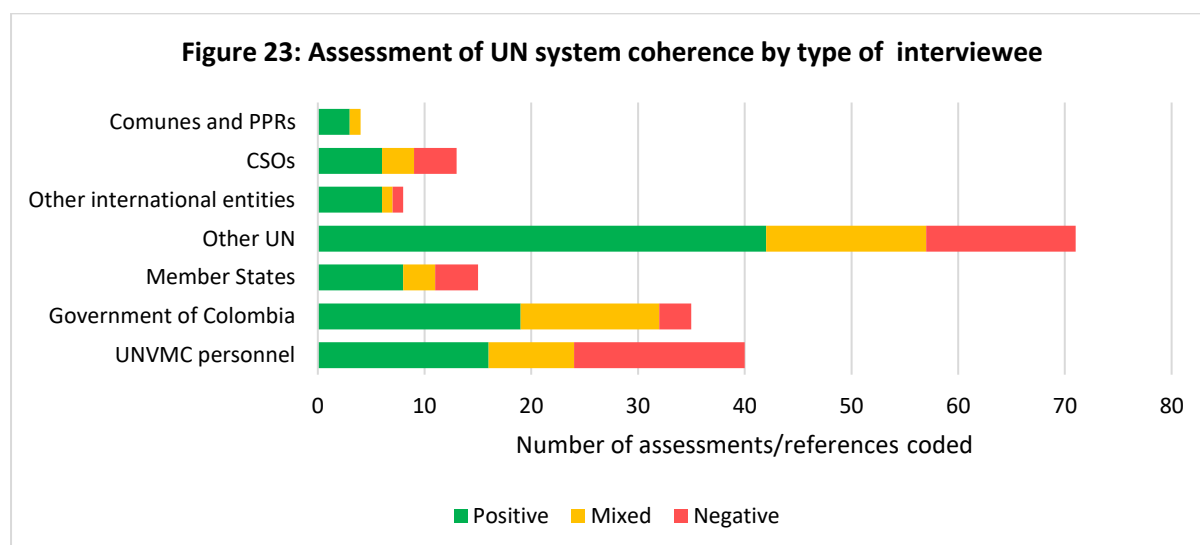
<sup>56</sup> Event and Flash Capture Application.

*UNVMC worked with a wide range of stakeholders who were largely appreciative of the partnership, although coherence with the UNCT needed strengthening*

67. UNVMC collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders, including majority of the 28 UN entities in Colombia, most of whom had a positive assessment of UN system coherence in the country, as shown in Figure 22.



68. Fifty-four percent of all interviewees also positively assessed coordination among UN entities. However, nearly 60 percent of UNVMC and 40 percent of other UN interviewees' assessments were mixed or negative, indicating there was opportunity for improvement. Figure 23 shows the number of positive, mixed and negative assessments by type of interviewee.



69. Although UNVMC was not an integrated Mission with the UNCT and not a signatory to the UN cooperation framework in Colombia, it generally had a good relationship with the UNCT. Interviews and document review indicated that multiple mechanisms existed at the national and regional levels for collaboration and coordination between UNVMC and UNCT entities, including thematic task forces and working groups (e.g., on peace, reintegration, security guarantees, gender, ethnic issues), monthly coordination meetings and frequent information sharing. Interviewees from other UN entities especially noted how their operations benefited from the Mission's visibility, credibility, logistical capability, convening power and strong network, and importantly, its access in the territories. They also appreciated the incorporation of their work in the Mission's quarterly reports. Overall, inter-

agency coordination was rated more positively by UN system interviewees in the regions than in the capital.

70. Nevertheless, the lack of coordination between UN entities in the country and the Mission was frequently mentioned as a key challenge by interviewees and survey respondents. Some UNCT entities have been present in Colombia for five decades, but their expertise on some relevant topics was not always fully leveraged. For example, the Mission delivered policy recommendations for the first 100 days to the new Government in 2022, but UNCT entities were not consulted.

71. The Mission also had a mandate overlap with OHCHR concerning security guarantees for social leaders, human right defenders and communities. The OHCHR role, also provided for in the Final Agreement (Section 6.3.4), was to monitor the human rights dimensions of the peace agreement implementation. While the two entities coordinated related initiatives and activities, they had not yet agreed on formal coordination guidelines which sometimes caused tension and confusion in the field.<sup>57</sup>

72. There were concerns about potential overlap regarding some areas of the Mission's work although the Mission's verification work was complementary to that of UNCT entities that were implementing programmes or providing technical assistance to Government entities. For example, several UNCT entities were also working on the reintegration and restorative sentences issues, including supporting the ARN and the SJP. A few interviewees raised the potential for similar duplication with other UNCT entities on rural reform and ethnic issues since the Mission's mandate has been extended to cover these issues.<sup>58</sup> The Mission was seen by some UNCT entities as stepping outside of its mandate and getting involved in issues where it lacked expertise or did not have enough resources to follow through; the UNCT was therefore somewhat hesitant about the expansion of the Mission's mandate because of the risk of duplication and possible impact on the sustainability of the peace process. The Mission has stated that it will continue to implement the new tasks with the same proactive approach and in close coordination with the UNCT entities.

73. In 2018, an integrated strategic framework<sup>59</sup> was jointly developed to guide the overarching coordination between UNVMC and the UNCT, including mapping of related activities, areas of complementarity and overlap, respective roles and coordination mechanisms. It has not, however, been mainstreamed in the Mission's activities, and has not been updated to consider the Mission's expanded mandates.<sup>60</sup>

## Sustainability

### E. While several results supported by the Mission were sustainable, significant challenges remained

74. Staff and stakeholders largely considered the Mission's contributions to be sustainable. Most staff and stakeholder survey respondents considered the Mission's contributions to key areas of its mandate as very or somewhat sustainable (Figure 24).

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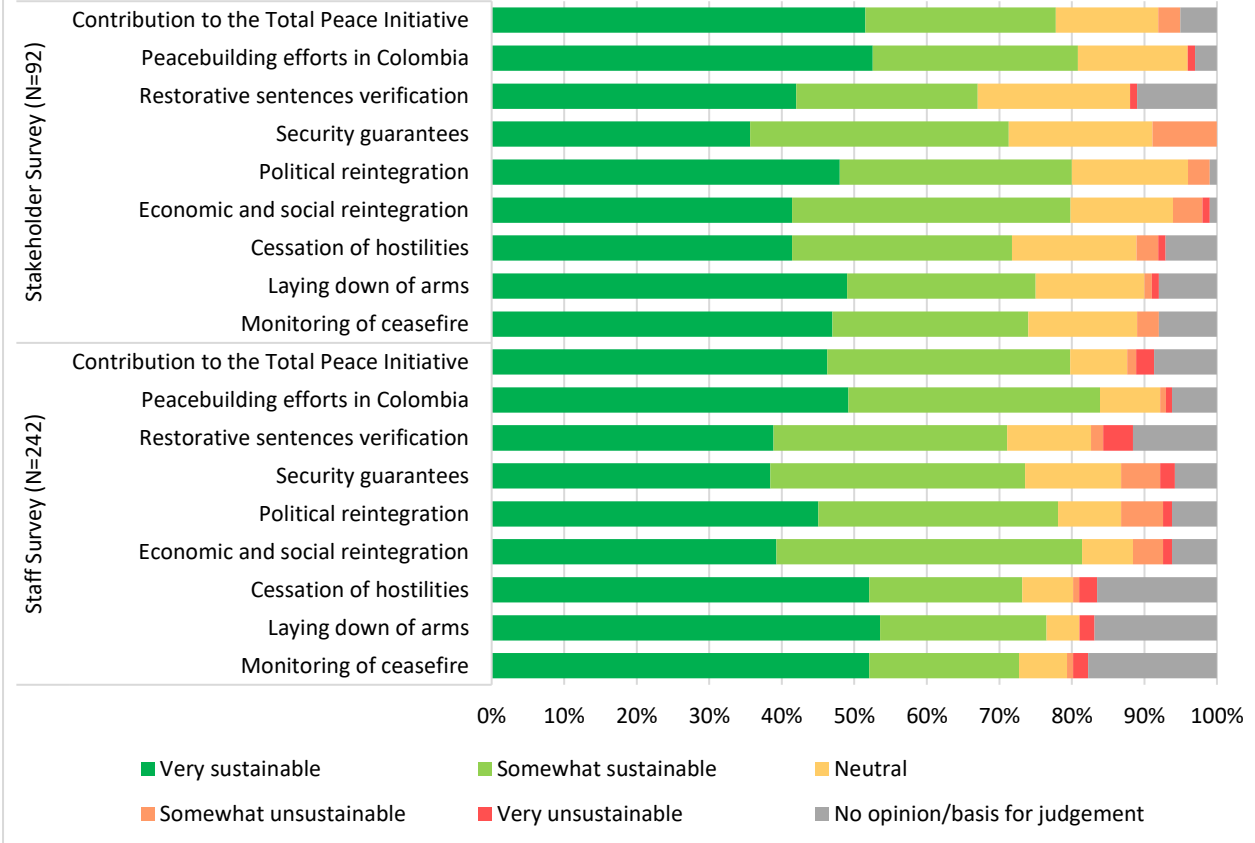
<sup>57</sup> Draft coordination guidelines between UNVMC and OHCHR was under discussion, but an agreement was not yet reached.

<sup>58</sup> See S/2022/940 (pages 6-7) for list of entities working on rural reform and ethnic issues.

<sup>59</sup> An Integrated Strategic Framework for the UN System in Colombia, December 2017.

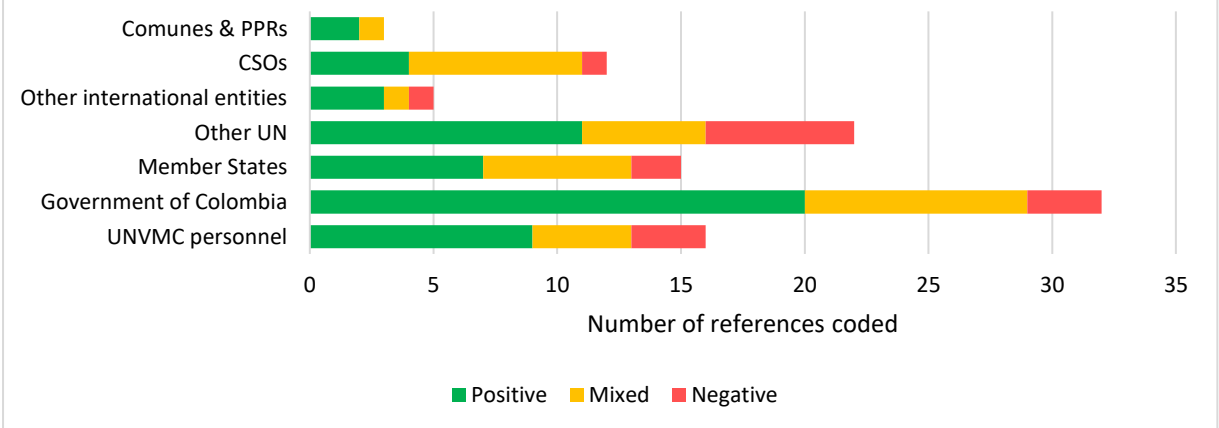
<sup>60</sup> A new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2023-2027 was under development.

**Figure 24: UNVMC contributions to key parts of its mandate were sustainable**



75. Most interviewees (53 percent) similarly assessed the results achieved or supported by UNVMC as sustainable, as shown in Figure 25. Notably, Government interviewees had the most positive assessment of sustainability of the Mission’s work.

**Figure 25: Sustainability of UNVMC results as assessed by interviewees**



76. Examples of notable Mission contributions in the peace efforts that were sustainable are included in Table 3.

**Table 3: Notable UNVMC contributions in the peace process**

Support to the negotiations and signing of the Final Agreement
Successful ceasefire and laying down of arms
Conversion of the Western Hemisphere’s largest and oldest guerrilla organization into a political party
Transition of 13,623 ex-combatants into civilian life
Preservation of the Final Agreement through the fluctuating domestic political support
Trust and confidence building among parties and across stakeholders
Technical support to State institutions
Mobilization of international support
Near real-time monitoring and reporting on the status of implementation

77. Several indicators suggested sustainability of the Mission’s accomplishments. First, the ongoing momentum in the implementation of the Final Agreement after six years of its signing was notable given that about 50 percent of peace agreements globally break down within five years.<sup>61</sup> Also, the majority of PPRs still remain in the process, with a defection rate of under four percent.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the willingness of other armed groups to join the total peace initiative of the Government and the parties’ desire for the continued engagement of the Mission in that process were a testament to its credibility and the sustainability of the peace process. The current enabling national political environment has also increased the likelihood of more sustained peacebuilding efforts in Colombia.

78. However, as discussed previously, persistent challenges remained regarding the sustainability of economic reintegration efforts and security guarantees, as well as with systemic and interconnected issues such as rural reform and illicit economies. At the same time, there was a perception among interviewees, especially among PPRs, that if the Mission left or political will diminished, the whole peace process could be at risk of falling apart due to polarized public opinion, weak government compliance, the presence of other armed groups and persistent security threats against PPRs and communities.

79. With a 15-year time frame, the Final Agreement originally foresaw the need of the verification mission for a period of three years. However, in its sixth year of operation and with an expanded mandate, the Mission has not yet started discussions on an exit strategy with the UNCT, including identifying strategies to redouble system-wide efforts to strengthen economic reintegration, and to identify and focus on its areas of strengths with a view to long-term sustainability of the peace process.

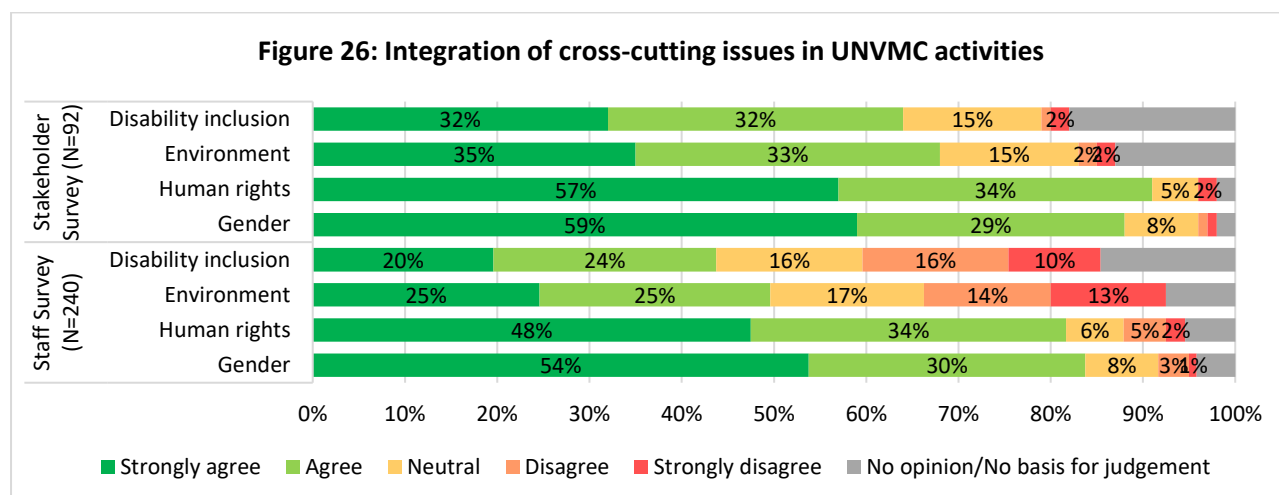
<sup>61</sup> <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/03/new-evidence-build-peace-include-women-start> and [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/pp\\_womeninmediationrecommendations\\_iis\\_2011.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/pp_womeninmediationrecommendations_iis_2011.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> As of December 2022, there were 12,749 PPRs as per ARN data and 355 PPRs were killed. The total of 13,104 accounted for 96.2% of the total 13,623 accredited PPRs. Therefore, the rate of defections was under 4%.

## Cross-cutting issues

### F. UNVMC consistently mainstreamed gender, human rights and disability inclusion but was less consistent on mainstreaming the environment

80. Most staff and stakeholder survey respondents positively assessed the Mission’s integration of cross-cutting issues into its activities, as shown in Figure 26.



81. The Final Agreement was recognized as an example of a gender-inclusive peace process with over 100 gender provisions and 51 indicators. The Mission consistently reported on the limited progress of these indicators in the Secretary-General’s quarterly reports and included gender-disaggregated data where relevant. It also closely monitored the reintegration and security guarantees for women ex-combatants.<sup>63</sup>

82. Regarding human rights, the Mission highlighted the issues relevant to indigenous and ethnic groups in its work and maintained a strong network with ethnic groups, who trusted the Mission. Additionally, the issues of children, youth and minorities<sup>64</sup> were also consistently incorporated in the Mission’s reports. The Mission also had a focus on the security guarantees for human rights defenders.

83. Regarding disability inclusion, approximately one in ten (1,222) ex-combatants lived with disabilities, and 98 percent of them received certification to access services. As such, the challenges of reintegrating ex-combatants with disability were highlighted in nine Mission quarterly reports. However, environmental issues were relatively less incorporated into the Mission activities although there were a few examples of discussion on environmental challenges.<sup>65</sup>

## V. Recommendations

84. OIOS-IED makes four important recommendations, all of which were accepted by UNVMC.

### Recommendation 1: (Result C)

<sup>63</sup> For example, all the Mission’s quarterly reports and infographics consistently highlighted the issues and challenges related to women ex-combatants.

<sup>64</sup> Such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and intersex community.

<sup>65</sup> The Mission’s work was based on the provisions in the Final Agreement where environmental considerations were not as strong as gender issues. Environmental issues were referenced in six quarterly reports discussing the effect of the conflict on the environment.

85. To better address the needs of PPRs living outside the former TATRs and not affiliated with the Comunes party, UNVMC should:

- a) Create teams focused on dispersed PPRs, including in urban areas; and
- b) Increase engagement with PPRs who are not aligned with the Comunes party or do not occupy leadership positions within the party.

*Indicators of achievement: Enhanced strategy developed and implemented on increasing participation of PPRs living outside the former TATRs.*

**Recommendation 2: (Result C)**

86. UNVMC should enhance its awareness raising activities on the restorative sentences pillar through the creation of socialization spaces about the SJP, the sentences to be issued, legal status of TOARs and the role of the Mission, including development of a communication strategy tailored on this mandate.

*Indicators of achievement: Awareness raising and communication strategy on the restorative sentences verification pillar developed and implemented.*

**Recommendation 3: (Results C and D)**

87. UNVMC should address the internal management issues identified in the report, including:

- a) Enhance communication across substantive pillars, headquarters and field offices including through strategic guidance and clear reporting lines for heads of field offices as well as regular and periodic management meetings;
- b) Expand the ECAP database to include other pillars as relevant;
- c) Strengthen strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation, lessons learning and best practices functions; and
- d) Reassess the Mission's footprint and field presence according to Mission priorities, new mandates and needs (e.g., number of PPRs).

*Indicators of achievement: Standard operating procedures and guidance on communication and reporting lines; revised planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies and plans; and revised field presence.*

**Recommendation 4: (Results C, D and E)**

88. UNVMC should strengthen coherence and coordination with the UNCT focusing on:

- a) Updating the integrated strategic framework in view of the new mandates and mainstream the framework in Mission activities;
- b) Agree on coordination guidelines with OHCHR on security guarantees for social leaders, human right defenders and communities;
- c) Minimize duplication of efforts and create synergies with the UNCT entities, including in the newly mandated areas, and enhancing the visibility of large projects implemented by UNCT entities where relevant and feasible;
- d) Comprehensive UN system-wide plan for enhancing the sustainability of productive projects and discussion with parties on the criteria for graduation and completion of the reintegration process; and



- e) Strengthen mission capacity and expertise on productive projects and increase peace dividends for communities and victims through small projects and activities as a way of enhancing social reintegration of PPRs and through leveraging the capacity and resources of the UNCT.

*Indicators of achievement: (a) integrated strategic framework updated; (b) coordination guidelines agreed with OHCHR; (c) strategies and plans for the other identified areas jointly developed with the relevant UNCT entities.*

## Annex I: UNVMC management response on the draft report



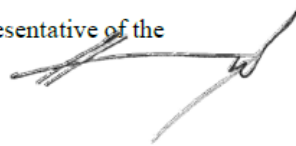
TO: Mr. (Eddie) Yee Woo Guo,  
A: Director Inspection and Evaluation Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

DATE: 29 May 2023

REFERENCE: UNVMC-SRSG-2023-026

THROUGH: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General,  
S/C DE: Office of Internal Oversight Services

FROM: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the  
DE: Secretary-General and Head of the  
United Nations Verification Mission



SUBJECT: **Draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of the**  
OBJET: **United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia**

1. With reference to your memo dated 2 May 2023 on the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the Evaluation of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), we are pleased to inform you that UNVMC has no further comments on the report.
2. UNVMC will work with the OIOS-IED team to prepare an action plan with a clear timeline to implement the recommendations contained within the aforementioned report.
3. We wish to express our appreciation for the evaluation team for their dedication to the report and the rigorous evaluation which they conducted.

### Copy to:

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