

The Colombian people say no to the peace agreement

But hopes for a solution remain

SUMMARY

The signature of the Final Peace Agreement in Colombia on 26 September 2016 was thought to have brought a successful end to the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group. Negotiations between the two sides had started in Havana four years ago, and agreement had been announced on 24 August, followed by the declaration of a definitive ceasefire from 29 August 2016. This had raised expectations for a rapid end to the longest-running conflict in modern Latin America.

Nevertheless, the whole process has stalled after the Colombian people said no to the agreement in the plebiscite held on 2 October 2016. The most unpopular part of the deal, the transitional justice system, as well as the low turnout, seem to have been decisive for the outcome. But there are still hopes for re-opening the negotiations, as both the 'yes' and 'no' camps have expressed their will to end the conflict; moreover the efforts have been recognised in the award of the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize to President Santos. International actors have played a major role since the beginning of the process, and are ready to continue to do so in the future. In particular, the United Nations and some of its agencies, UNASUR, the Organisation of American States, and the European Union (which has appointed a special envoy), are involved.

This updates a briefing published in advance of the referendum, ['Decisive step for Colombian peace agreement'](#).



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Glossary

FARC (or FARC-EP): Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The main guerrilla group in the country and the key actor in the current peace process.

ELN: National Liberation Army. The second most important guerrilla group, with whom negotiations have yet to be held.

AUC: United Self-Defences of Colombia. The main paramilitary group, demobilised between 2002 and 2006.

Bacrim (short for bandas criminales, or 'criminal gangs'): New paramilitary groups, mostly made up of former members of the United Self-Defences of Colombia and increasingly involved in drug trafficking and organised crime.

The peace agreement has been rejected in referendum

Since the start of the current peace process, President Santos had promised a popular referendum on the final agreement, so that its legitimacy could be confirmed by the Colombian people. This proposal finally became law in December 2015, and was approved by the [Constitutional Court](#) in [July 2016](#). Although the FARC were initially [opposed](#) to the plebiscite, they finally accepted the idea. Just after the official announcement of the final peace agreement, President Santos set the official date for the referendum as 2 October 2016. Voters would be posed the [question](#): 'Do you support the final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and durable peace?'. To be binding, a 'yes' vote had to be supported by at least [13%](#) of the electorate (4 396 626 votes). The Organization of American States ([OAS](#)) and Unasur acted as observers, and the European Parliament also sent a delegation.

Some experts signalled [similarities](#) with the UK vote on EU membership: Santos, like then United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron, [was not obliged](#) to hold a referendum with an uncertain outcome; the referendum was a yes/no vote on a complex deal; and despite the broad international support for the agreement, the subject elicited an emotional response among many voters, with transitional justice the main point of contention. It was also argued that, in the Colombian case, the referendum had wisely been placed at the end of the process, after inspection by the Constitutional Court and approval by Congress.

The only party that fully rejected the agreement was ex-President Uribe's [Democratic Centre](#), which considered that it posed a [serious risk](#) for democracy. The [main argument](#) raised against the agreement was the controversial transitional justice system, and the absence of proper jail penalties. Former President [Andrés Pastrana](#) ([Conservative Party](#), which officially supported the agreement but had some members in the 'no' camp) had also [expressed](#) his objections, as had some [human rights actors](#).

Opinion polls showed different scenarios,¹ ranging from a clear 'yes' victory, to a clear 'no' win, and even a near tie, but all the final polls suggested the agreement would be approved. President Santos had [announced](#) that he would not try to negotiate a new agreement if the accord did not gain approval.

But in the end voters [rejected](#) the agreement by a [narrow margin](#) of 50.2% to 49.8% (that is, a difference of around 54 000 votes out of almost 13 million cast) and the peace process is now at a stop. It is worth noting that the ['yes' vote](#) won in many of the [regions](#) and areas worst affected by the conflict, while the 'no' was ahead in most urban areas. The main [reasons](#) given in explanation of this result were:

1) due to the final polls, many potential 'yes' voters did not bother to go to vote (the abstention rate reached 62.5%); 2) the transitional justice system was considered unfair by too many Colombians; and 3) the [strategy](#) followed wrongly divided the country between friends and enemies of peace, while a broad consensus was required.

Nevertheless, there is still hope for peace, as both [President Santos](#) and [FARC leaders](#) have expressed their will to respect the ceasefire – which has now been extended until [31 October](#) – and to 'rectify' the peace agreement in order to reach a broader consensus. The main representative of the 'no' camp, former president Álvaro Uribe, has also [declared](#) his will to 'contribute to a big national pact' in order to introduce 'corrective measures in order to respect the Constitution'. [President Santos](#) has called on all Colombian political forces – including those opposed to the agreement – to find common ground, naming negotiators for [bilateral talks](#) with Uribe's Democratic Centre Party, and sent the heads of the government's negotiating team back to Havana to inform FARC negotiators about this political dialogue and hold emergency talks. The Colombian President has already held a [first meeting](#) with Álvaro Uribe, who emphasised the need for 'adjustments and proposals'; and also with the other former president opposed to the deal, [Andrés Pastrana](#), who declared that the Peace Agreement was a good basis to work from, and that in the referendum, 'the winner was peace, and not war'. The government has stated that the decision to reopen talks lies now with the FARC leadership.

Background

The current [Colombian conflict](#) has continued uninterrupted for more than [fifty](#) years, which makes it the longest-running conflict in Latin America, and one of the oldest in the world. Conflict was generated by a combination of factors, such as the political exclusion of left-wing parties by the bipartisan [National Front](#) alliance after 1958 and their subsequent radicalisation, and the progressive settlement of remote rural areas by poor peasants in search of land. These areas, which escaped government control, were breeding grounds for guerrilla movements and opposing right-wing [paramilitary groups](#). Among the guerrillas, the most prominent have been the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia ([FARC](#) – with an estimated [6 700](#) armed men – down from 20 766 in 2002 – designated as a terrorist organisation by the [USA](#) and the [EU](#) – this designation has been [suspended](#) as of 27 September). The conflict is [estimated](#) to have killed around [220 000 people](#) and [displaced](#) millions (of which many are still missing).

Human toll of the Colombian conflict (1958-2012)

- Around 220 000 dead (19% combatants, 81% civilians)
- Over 27 000 kidnapped
- 95 terror attacks, 1 556 victims
- 1982 massacres, 11 751 victims
- Over 25 000 victims of forced disappearance (1985-2012)
- Over 5 700 000 victims of forced displacement (1985-2012)

Previous peace initiatives

There have already been [three previous](#) negotiation [processes](#) between the Colombian Government and the FARC, all of which have failed:

- The first, in 1984, was led by President [Belisario Betancur](#). There was an amnesty for political crimes, a bilateral truce was agreed, and the [Patriotic Union Party](#) (UP) was created to represent the interests of the FARC. Nevertheless, the process was [interpreted](#) as a guerrilla victory by wide sectors of society, including in Betancur's own party, and failed due to paramilitary killings and FARC non-respect of the truce.

- The second negotiation process took place in 1991-1992 at Caracas and Tlaxcala, under President [César Gaviria](#) and with a new constitution. No agreement was reached due to the rigid positions of both parties.
- The third unsuccessful attempt was held between 1999 and 2002 at San Vicente del [Caguán](#) under President [Andrés Pastrana](#). Violence was then at its peak, as the FARC had continued their military reinforcement thanks to drug trafficking, and even [kidnapped](#) a Congressman and other political figures. A demilitarised zone ('*zona de despeje*') was established at the start of the process, which allowed the FARC to reorganise and continue their activities.

Nevertheless, negotiations with some other groups have succeeded, leading to the demobilisation of smaller guerrilla organisations [between 1990 and 1994](#),² and of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* ([AUC](#)) between 2002 and 2006 during the Presidency of [Álvaro Uribe](#). President Uribe also led an offensive that considerably weakened the guerrilla (the US-supported [Plan Colombia](#), [Policy of Defence and Democratic Security](#)) but failed to defeat it; this offensive was marred by the '[false positives](#)' scandal.³

Negotiations with the National Liberation Army ([ELN](#)) have yet to be held: the Colombian Government [announced](#) formal [peace talks](#) with the ELN, but this initiative has [stalled](#) due to recent kidnappings by this organisation. New violent paramilitary groups, [Bacrim](#), (short for *bandas criminales*, or criminal gangs) have emerged. As they are increasingly involved in drug trafficking and organised crime, experts consider they could pose the biggest problem for peace once the FARC have disarmed.

The current peace process

A new context and strategy

In 2012, facing a weakened guerrilla, President [Juan Manuel Santos](#) started a new [peace process](#) with the FARC, which has now stalled following the 2 October plebiscite. Negotiations ended successfully in Havana (Cuba), on 23 August 2016, with the conclusion of a final [peace agreement](#) and a ceasefire from 29 August 2016. The peace-building phase would have started soon thereafter, had the Colombian people given their consent to the accord in a popular referendum.

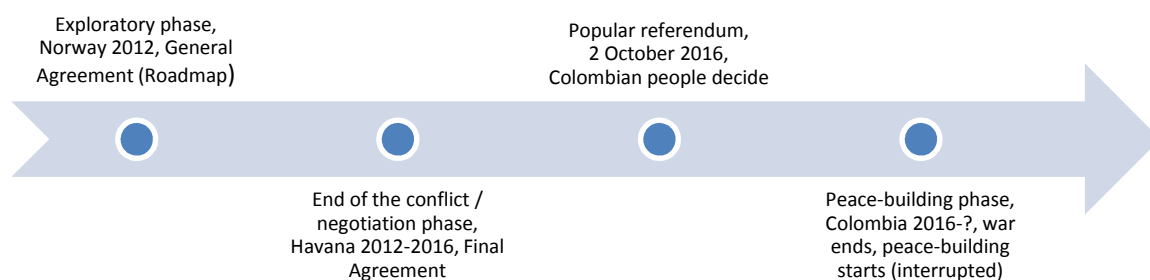
Despite the failure of previous negotiations, the social, historical and political context in Colombia seems to favour a [lasting solution](#) this time. Colombian society is tired of violence; a new generation has grown up with the conflict, influenced by the new communication technologies and is less ideologically polarised than their predecessors; and the economic situation has also improved greatly. The new political context was also reflected in the Congress of the Republic, allowing President Santos to create the [National Unity Roundtable](#) alliance, which ensured him a wide majority for this project, although weakened after his [2014](#) re-election. [Experts](#) consider that the main reasons for the current peace process are: political, to open a political space to those who claim not to have it; humanitarian, to end the bloodshed; and practical, it is deemed more efficient and less onerous to end the conflict through negotiation than to continue the fight.

A completely [new strategy](#) has also been followed this time:

- No previous truce was decreed, as public opinion was against easing pressure on the guerrilla and the Caguán experience advised against this;
- The number of participants at the dialogue table was limited to the negotiation committees, with Norway and Cuba as guarantors, and Chile and Venezuela as observers;

- A [Framework for Peace](#) was created as a legal base for the negotiations;
- The victims of both sides were fully recognised through the Law on Victims and Land Restitution;
- The process included three phases: exploratory, end of the conflict (which has just concluded) and peace-building (which has been interrupted after the referendum);
- The whole negotiation was based on the principle that **‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’**, which implied that partial agreements were only valid if the whole process was successful;
- The Colombian people would have the last word, as the peace agreement would be subject to a popular referendum (held on 2 October 2016).

Figure 1 – Phases in the current peace process



The negotiation process

The [General Agreement](#) for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace, signed on 26 August 2012 after a short exploratory phase of discussions, held in Norway, established a five-point [agenda](#):

1. Comprehensive [agrarian development](#) policy. It comprised four cornerstones: access to land and land use; special development programmes with a territorial approach; national plans to radically reduce poverty and eliminate extreme poverty; and a special food and nutritional security system. An agreement was reached in June 2013;
2. [Political participation](#). The agreement was reached in December 2013, built on three cornerstones: a new ‘democratic opening’ promoting political inclusion as a peace consolidation mechanism after the end of the conflict; greater citizen participation for peace consolidation, in the spirit of the 1991 Constitution; and ensuring that the link between politics and armed force is permanently broken.
3. End of the conflict. This point planned FARC disarmament, once stationed in specially designated zones; a definitive ceasefire and end of hostilities between both sides and against civilians; and the establishment of a verification mechanism.
4. Solution to the problem of [illicit drugs](#). The agreement was reached in May 2014, with four cornerstones: the substitution and eradication of illicit crops; countering use of drugs via an agreement to create a national comprehensive intervention programme regarding illicit drug use and a national attention system for illicit drug users; drug trafficking, and a comprehensive strategy to reinforce and extend the fight against organised crime and the promotion of an international conference within the UN framework; and a series of commitments by the government, to

implement policies and programmes, and the FARC, to contribute to resolving the problem of illicit drugs and to end any relationship with this phenomenon.

5. Victims. Negotiations were held with the following principles in mind: recognition of victims and responsibility; satisfaction of victims' rights; victim participation; elucidating the truth; victim reparation and guaranteeing their protection and security; guarantees of non-repetition; the principle of reconciliation; and a rights-based approach. An agreement was reached in November 2015.

The agreement also planned for the end of the negotiations with a sixth point:

6. Implementation, verification and counter-signature. With the signing of the final agreement, the implementation of all previous points would begin. This implied the establishment of implementation and verification mechanisms; help from the international community to achieve the goals; a schedule; a budget; a dissemination and communication tool; and a mechanism for the countersignature of the agreements.

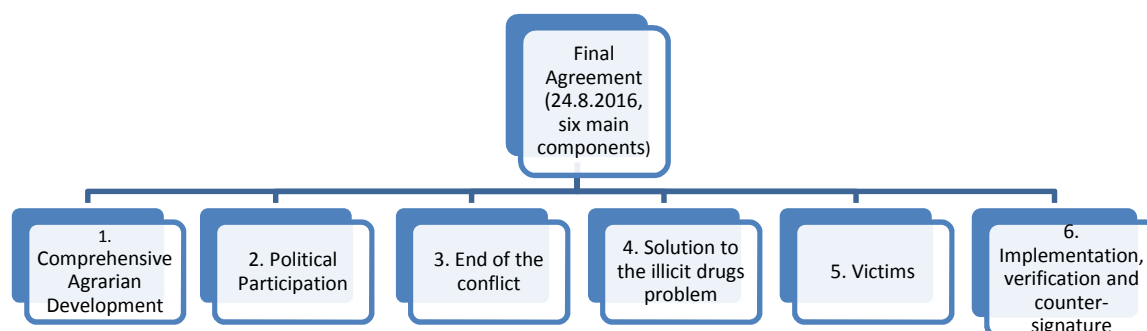
The signature of the final agreement therefore would mark the start of the implementation phase. In 2013 and 2014, [agreements](#) were reached regarding the first, second and fourth [points](#). After declaring a [unilateral truce](#) in July, on 15 November 2015 the FARC finally [agreed](#) on an [integral system](#) of truth, reparations, justice and non-repetition, thus concluding the negotiations on the fifth, and arguably the most difficult and controversial, point regarding the victims, and clearing the way for the end of the conflict, initially foreseen for 23 March 2016, and finally reached three months later.

The victims' agreement established a **truth commission**; aimed to search for missing persons and end the suffering of living victims; and formalised the new justice system agreed in September 2015 with the creation of a **special [ad hoc Court](#)** that would administer '**transitional justice**'.

This transitional justice system excluded extradition and jail sentences, but restricted the freedom of authors of war crimes or crimes against humanity for a limited period of up to eight years as long as they pleaded guilty, and proposed periods of community service for less important crimes. Jail sentences of up to twenty years were only contemplated if the accused did not cooperate by telling the truth.

The [gender perspective](#) was allocated considerable [relevance](#) in the peace process, with the establishment of a [Subcommittee on Gender](#) in the framework of the 'Discussion Table'. The agreement was seen as a historic opportunity to raise awareness and address the structural inequalities affecting women, and preventing them from exercising their rights. With the help of UN Women, the subcommittee made sure that the gender perspective and women's rights were included in the agreements.⁴

Figure 2 – Components of the peace agreement

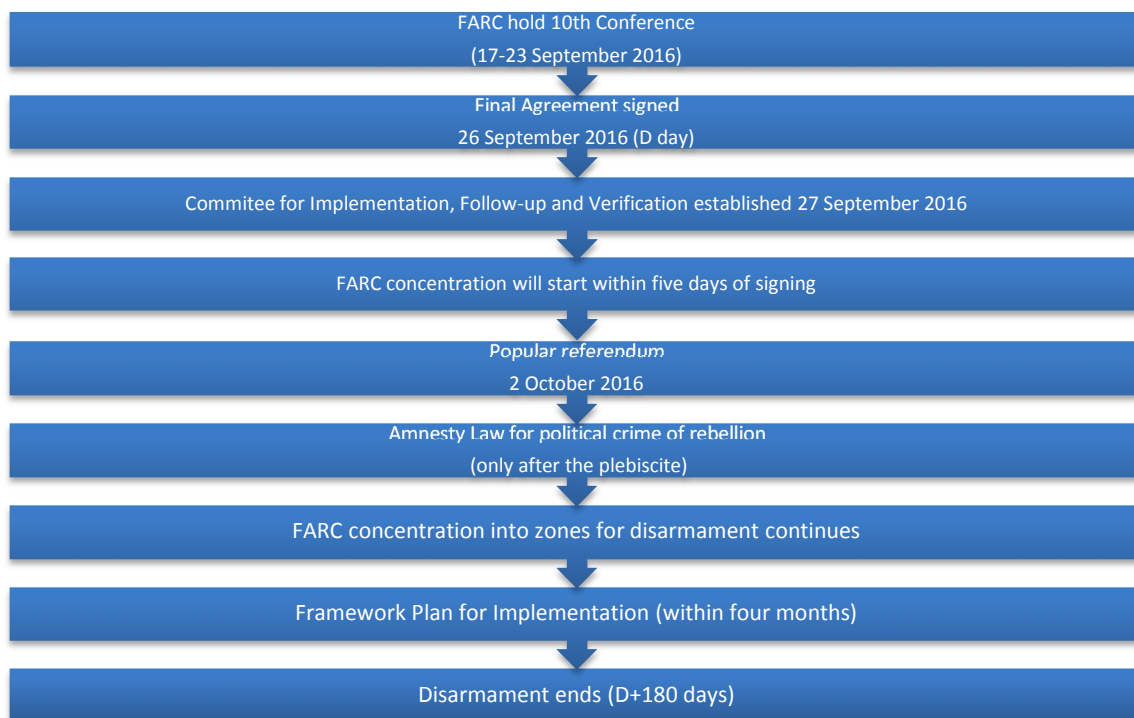


After more than 50 rounds of formal talks, the [final agreement](#) was announced on 24 August, and both the Colombian Government and the FARC [declared](#) a [permanent ceasefire](#) starting on 29 August 2016. The FARC held their [10th Conference](#) (and last as a guerrilla army) from 17 to 23 September in El Yará, and their members ratified the agreement on 23 September 2016. The agreement was [signed officially](#) by the parties on 26 September 2016 in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), in the presence of international dignitaries. And would be submitted to a popular [referendum](#) on 2 October 2016, aimed to endorse its legitimacy with a public mandate.

The peace-building process

The third [phase](#) – the actual peace-building process – would officially start from the day of the formal signing of the agreement (D+1, [27 September 2016](#)) and its continuation would be subject to a positive outcome from the referendum. An [amnesty law](#) for guerrilla fighters not accused of war crimes would have been adopted by Congress once the agreement had been approved by the Colombian people, providing FARC members with a legal guarantee that they would not be arrested after turning in their weapons. The disarmament process would then start: FARC members would concentrate in [31 gathering points](#) situated all over the country and would gradually, over a [180-day period](#), turn over their weapons to a monitoring and verification mechanism led by the United Nations. FARC members would then undergo a reintegration programme and the FARC would be transformed into a [political organisation](#) – the agreement guaranteed three representatives in each chamber of Congress, with a voice but no voting rights until 2018, followed by a minimum of five senators and five representatives for the next two terms, this time subject to elections. Meanwhile, those accused of war crimes would be subject to the transitional justice process.

Figure 3 – Approximate schedule of events



Sources: Final Peace Agreement and colombiapeace.org website.

Once these steps are completed, [experts](#) believe the real challenges will begin, as the FARC begins its exit from the [drug trade](#). According to some sources, the FARC control a large proportion of Colombia's coca crops, generating between US\$200 million and

US\$3.5 billion a year. Even if the FARC have not admitted to the traffic, the agreement may not mean the end of drug trafficking in Colombia, or that of the violent criminal groups involved in the trade. Experts note that most members of the current 'criminal gangs' (Bacrim) initially belonged to the United Self-Defences of Colombia (AUC) paramilitary group, who demobilised following a similar process ten years ago.

The role of international actors

International actors have been present during the whole peace process: the Colombian delegation has relied on international [advisors](#) with conflict-resolution experience (such as the UK's [Jonathan Powell](#), a key player in the Northern Ireland peace process, and the Salvadoran [Joaquín Villalobos](#)); Norway and Cuba have acted as hosts, as well as guarantors of the negotiation process; Chile and Venezuela as supporting countries; and the [United States](#) (a former 'Plan Colombia' ally against the FARC), [Germany](#) and the [European Union](#) have appointed special envoys. The [Peace Agreement](#) also ensured a strong international presence in the different parts of the implementation process: among others, the United Nations (and its agencies UNDP, UNHCR, UNDOC, FAO and UN Women), the EU, UNASUR, UNESCO, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Dutch Institute for Multi-party democracy, as well as state involvement by the United States, Switzerland, and Sweden. The Committee for Implementation, Follow-up and Verification (CSVR) could also invite institutions carrying out international accompaniment work to participate.

The United Nations

The [United Nations](#) (UN) has helped the parties to design a verification and monitoring mechanism and would play a particularly relevant role in the verification process. Its Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly, and the President of the Security Council attended the signature of the agreement. At the request of the Colombian Government, the UN would send a [mission](#) to Colombia (Security Council [Resolution](#) of 25 January 2016), composed of unarmed international observers, with the cooperation of members from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States ([CELAC](#)), to participate in the tripartite mechanism to monitor and verify the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and the surrender of arms. The mission had a 12-month (renewable) mandate, following the signature of the final peace agreement. [Spain](#) was the only EU Member State and [non-CELAC country](#) that had been invited to participate so far, and would contribute to the mission with up to 50 agents.

The Colombian Government will also [renew](#) the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights [in Colombia](#) for a three-year (renewable) period, and would ask them to include a special chapter on the implementation of the agreement regarding human rights in their annual report on Colombia. The United Nations would take custody of the totality of the FARC's arms, which would be used to construct three peace monuments. The UN had also created a new [multi-donor trust fund](#) to fund post-conflict reconstruction. In August 2016, the UN Secretary-General sent a [first report](#) on the UN mission to the Security Council, which reiterated its [commitment](#) to the peace process.

The following UN agencies and bodies are listed in the [final agreement](#) as participants in the peace process:

- Comprehensive Rural Reform (point 1): [FAO](#)
- Reintegration in civil life (point 3.2): [UNESCO](#) and [UNDP](#)

- Revision of the situation of persons imprisoned, prosecuted or sentenced for collaborating or belonging to the FARC-EP (point 3.3): [OHCHR](#)
- Fight for the dismantling of organisations (point 3.4): [UNODC](#)
- Security and staff guarantees (point 3.2): OHCHR
- Solution to the illicit drugs problem (point 4): UNODC
- Victims' Human Rights (point 5): OHCHR
- Gender focus: [UN Women](#)

Soon after the referendum results became known, UN Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#) declared that he was 'urgently' sending his special representative for the peace process, Jean Arnault, to Havana in order to 'support the negotiating parties' and 'continue his consultations'.

Regional organisations

The Union of South American Nations ([UNASUR](#)) has given its full support to the peace process since 2012 and has also contributed to the design of the verification and monitoring mechanism. The Union had also [considered](#), for the first time, deploying a [regional peacekeeping force](#) in the conflict area. More recently, UNASUR Secretary-General and former Colombian President [Ernesto Samper](#) proposed holding a [regional summit](#) for peace and integration – with the participation of heads of state of all South American regional blocs – to celebrate the conclusion of the agreement. The final agreement established that UNASUR would be asked to accompany the political participation chapter (point 2: democratic opening to build peace). [UNASUR's](#) General Secretariat sent an electoral observation mission to the Colombian referendum, and has renewed its commitment to support peace in Colombia

As mentioned previously, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States ([CELAC](#)) was expected to provide most of the agents for the UN Mission in Colombia.

The Organization of American States (OAS), for its part, has supported and accompanied peace efforts in Colombia since 2004 through its [Mission](#) to Support the Peace Process ([MAPP](#)). The Mission's mandate was extended in 2014, with a series of new tasks adapted to the current peace process. The OAS also [observed](#) the 2 October referendum, has recognised the democratic attitude of all parties involved, and wished that 'this attitude of concord would remain in the months ahead in the search for an effective way to achieve peace'.

The EU in the peace process

The European Union (EU) has been engaged in the support of peace in Colombia for over two decades, as its Humanitarian Office ([ECHO](#)) has provided over €200 million in assistance to the victims since 1994, and contributed €150 million to peace-building through the Development Cooperation Instrument ([DCI](#)) from 2002 to 2013. The EU has also promoted '[Peace Laboratories](#)' – programmes which support civil society in conflict regions – since 2002, and supported efforts to implement the 2011 [law](#) on [victims and land restitution](#). Currently, the EU supports projects related, among others, to the situation of women in the conflict, the forced recruitment of children, or the threats and challenges faced by human rights defenders. The EU already implements several [demining initiatives](#) in the country and will extend its support, together with international partners, through the [Global Demining Initiative](#) for Colombia.

At the [EU-CELAC Summit](#), on 10-11 June 2015 in Brussels, the EU [welcomed](#) 'the progress made on the peace process in Colombia', reiterated its support for the peace efforts and

expressed its 'readiness to provide assistance ... through the establishment of a trust fund in support of the post-conflict phase'.

On 1 October 2015, a [decision](#) was taken to appoint [Eamon Gilmore](#) – a former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ireland who was directly involved in the Northern Ireland peace process – as EU Envoy for the Peace Process in Colombia. [Gilmore](#) was appointed to 'convey the political support of the EU for the peace process, especially in the implementation phase', and to 'work with the Colombian Government and other stakeholders in Colombia, and with EU Member States and the European Parliament', so that the EU and Member States could give a coherent and coordinated response. The EU Special Representative was present at the official signing ceremony of the final peace agreement.

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, visited Colombia in May 2016, and announced an EU commitment to provide a [€575 million package](#) for the implementation of the peace process. The package comprises cooperation funds provided by the [EU Trust Fund](#), the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#) (€18 million) in support of the Colombian Government's Rapid Response Plan ([PRR](#)), and loans offered by the [European Investment Bank](#), together with ongoing cooperation (€67 million for 2014-2017). It also includes short and medium term measures, in the form of technical assistance, grants and loans. The grants provided through the trust fund are especially important, as the European Commission and ten Member States have already committed to contribute €90 million and the European Investment Bank (EIB) has linked a €400 million loan package to the actions financed by the fund.

Recently, HR/VP Mogherini made statements on the conclusion of a definitive and final [peace agreement](#) between the Government of Colombia and the FARC and on its [signing](#); and previously on the [announcement](#) of the ceasefire and end of hostilities agreement reached in June 2016. After the referendum, she [declared](#) that she had called President Santos to discuss the way forward, that the EU 'respected the sovereign choice of the Colombian people', and 'would continue to encourage, accompany and support all steps towards a sustainable solution'.

The final agreement provided for European Union [participation](#) on the following points:

- Comprehensive rural reform (Agreement 1);
- Reintegration to civil life (Agreement 3, 2nd point);
- Special Investigation Unit (Agreement 3, 4th point).

The European Parliament

President Santos visited the [European Parliament](#) (EP) in November 2014. At a [high-level seminar](#) organised by the EP's Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) Delegation in May 2015, the Ambassador of Colombia presented the progress of the peace process and thanked the EU for the support shown, underlining that the victims are at the heart of the process. VP/HR Federica Mogherini made a [statement](#) on the subject in the January 2016 plenary session, and the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) in support of the peace process on 20 January 2016, welcoming the agreements made to date between the Colombian government and the FARC. Parliament called on the ELN to enter peace negotiations, and reiterating 'its readiness to provide all possible assistance to support the implementation of the final peace agreement'. The EP also considered that the unprecedented establishment of a Subcommittee on Gender 'should be an inspiration to other peace processes around the world'.

President Schulz visited Colombia on 23 August 2016, [declaring](#) that the object of his visit was 'to give support to the peace process'. The President discussed the strengthening of bilateral relations and the importance of the international community in the post-conflict phase with President Santos, and made a [speech](#) before the Colombian Congress, [welcoming](#) the final agreement and reiterating EU support for the peace process.

At the invitation of the Colombian government, a [delegation](#) from the European Parliament, co-chaired by Luis de Grandes (EPP, Spain) and Ramón Jáuregui (S&D, Spain), observed the plebiscite on the peace agreement, and issued a declaration congratulating the Colombian people for the 'fully democratic, clean and transparent way the referendum was conducted', expressing their respect for the results and defending the continuation of the negotiations in a climate of peace. They also stated that the European Parliament 'has supported, supports and will support the peace process in Colombia', and will also support the 'preservation of the Trust Fund to support peace in Colombia' and 'the continuity of the EU Special Envoy for the Peace Process in Colombia, Eamon Gilmore'.

The Parliament held a [debate](#) on the latest developments in the peace process in plenary on 5 October 2016.

Outlook

Now that the Colombian people have rejected the recently signed peace agreement, the continuation of the process depends on the will of all the parties involved, including those who opposed the current accord, to reach a broad consensus on the way ahead. The implementation phase, which had just started following the official signature of the agreement, has been interrupted, and it seems clear that the accord will have to be renegotiated, in particular the controversial transitional justice chapter, which the 'no' camp considered too generous to repentant FARC members.

This could take months or several years, and the prospects of success are uncertain, but the initial statements of both the Colombian government and the FARC, as well as those who led the opposition to the agreement, give reason for hope. And even if all parties finally succeed to reach a new consensual agreement, the most challenging stage will still have to be achieved: the re-integration of former FARC members into Colombian society and their participation in political life. Even a partial failure in this reintegration process could again endanger peace. Of fundamental importance for this re-integration will be the successful implementation of measures aimed at alleviating the chronic problems of Colombia's remote rural regions, where the conflict has prospered, and to compensate victims.

International support will continue to be essential for the re-activation of the peace process and its final success, and the European Union will still have an important and welcome role to play, together with the United Nations and regional organisations. And there is no doubt that the decision to award the [2016 Nobel Peace Prize](#) to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos 'for his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end' contributes strongly to strengthening this support.

Main references

Final agreement for the end of the conflict and the construction of a stable and durable peace, available in Spanish on the [Mesa de Conversaciones website](#).

Learn about the [peace process in Colombia](#), Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2014.

[Colombia Peace](#): Monitoring progress in peace dialogues.

Colombia: the fraught end of a long war, [Strategic Comments](#), Volume 22, 2016 – Issue IV.

EPRS Plenary At a Glance, [The Colombian peace process](#), 14 January 2016.

Endnotes

¹ A July 2016 [Datexco survey](#) predicted 61% for the 'yes' vote and 29% 'no'; a June 2016 [Gallup](#) poll gave 'yes' 63%; a May 2016 poll by [Cifras y Conceptos](#) gave 61% to 'yes' and 29% to 'no'; a July 2016 [Ipsos](#) survey gave 'yes' 36%, with 36% abstentions and 25% 'no'; and an [August 2016 Ipsos](#) survey predicted 50% for the 'no' vote and only 39% for 'yes'. But all of the final polls had concluded there would be a 'yes' victory

² The guerrilla groups were the 19 April movement (M-19), the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and Quintín Lame. These processes influenced the establishment of the 1991 National Constituent Assembly, which reflected a shift away from the domination of the Liberal and Conservative parties in public bodies by allowing the participation of, until then, marginalised sectors (former guerrilla, indigenous people, social leaders, etc).

³ The 'false positives' were [extrajudicial killings](#) of thousands of civilians by the Colombian military, who dressed them as guerrillas to present them as combat kills. When, in 2008, prosecution investigators linked the bodies of presumed unidentified rebel fighters to civilians who had been reported missing, the government could no longer deny the killings.

⁴ The affirmative measures recommended by the subcommittee were accepted in eight areas. Among these were: equal access to and formalisation of rural property for women; guarantees of economic, social and cultural rights for women in the rural sector; promoting women's participation in spaces of representation; decision-making and conflict resolution; and balanced representation of women in the highest decision-making positions in the new bodies created. LGBTI rights were also taken into account.

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