

Brussels, 5 September 2019

**OIDHACO regrets decision by some FARC-EP commanders to return to arms and calls for international support for those who defend peace**

*On 29 August 2019, Iván Márquez, accompanied by other FARC-EP commanders, announced via video message their decision to return to arms. In light of this statement, OIDHACO reiterates the importance of continued support from the international community for members of Colombian civil society who are working for the implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP and are committed to building peace in Colombia.*

OIDHACO regrets the decision by a small number of FARC-EP commanders to return to arms. Despite this decision, OIDHACO would like to emphasise that the majority of former FARC-EP combatants as well as members of the FARC political party, continue to be committed to the process of reintegration and peace. We would also like to emphasise that wide sectors of civil society who have been working for decades for peace and a more equal society, continue to be committed to using political and non-violent means to do this. OIDHACO therefore considers that it is vital at this difficult moment for the peace process that civil society continues to receive all possible political and financial support from the international community.

These events demonstrate the fragility of the peace process between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government. It is therefore important that the European Union and other members of the international community – individual countries, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organisations – continue their firm support for this process, both politically and financially, and rigorously and continuously monitor its progress.

Although OIDHACO has made many statements reiterating the risks of setbacks to and non-fulfilment of the implementation of the peace process, we reject the return to arms as a response to this. The escalation of the conflict will result in further victims from Colombian civil society. It will also place social leaders and human rights defenders at even greater risk, as well as former FARC combatants who continue to be committed to their reintegration into civil society. It will also hamper the process of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition for the millions of victims of the conflict and put their rights at risk.

Given this situation, it is essential that the United Nations Monitoring and Verification Mechanism can maintain its presence in Colombia, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

OIDHACO urges the international community to continue supporting peace building efforts in Colombia, now more than ever. The peace process brought an end to 52 years of armed conflict, a conflict which left some 9 million victims, mostly from civil society. Progress made towards peace must not be lost.

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