



**UN Special Representative Pramila Patten
renews her support to Colombia on the prevention and response to conflict-
related sexual violence**

Press Release: For Immediate Release

New York, 01 June 2023: The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), Ms. Pramila Patten, welcomes the opportunity to renew her Office's engagement with Colombian authorities to support efforts on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

"I am pleased to visit Colombia for the first time since I took Office in 2017 and hear from government officials the determination to advance towards the consolidation of peace, including through the "Total Peace" policy and the efforts to fully implement the 2016 Peace Agreement. These actions can play a pivotal role in reducing the impact of armed conflict on civilians, including sexual violence, and deliver the dividends of peace that will improve the living conditions of communities".

SRSG Patten met with the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Defense, the Presidential Counsellors for National Reconciliation, Human Rights and Gender Equality, the Attorney General's Office, the Ombudsman and the Victims' Unit, as well as other institutional counterparts, including the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. She also met with the Head of the UN Verification Mission, the UN Resident Coordinator, other UN officials, members of the diplomatic community, and civil society organizations. In Bogota and Cartagena, she met with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence who shared their concerns and the challenges they have endured to access services, justice, protection and reparations.

Despite significant initiatives to achieve sustainable peace and development in Colombia, a number of interlocutors highlighted that sexual violence remains a prominent feature of the conflict, especially in territories under control of armed groups, disproportionately affecting indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, members of the LGBTIQ+ community and women' leaders. "I am also very concerned about a worrying spike in cases of trafficking of persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation by armed groups and criminal networks", added Special Representative Patten.

SRSG Patten was encouraged by the work carried out by the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition of Colombia in integrating a survivor-centered and gender-sensitive approach. "The landmark report of the Truth Commission summarizes a catalogue of cruelty on women's bodies since the start of the armed conflict that we must not forget. We must respond with solidarity to survivors, and we must do all that is necessary to ensure their long-lasting harms are mitigated and healed" stated the Special Representative. SRSG Patten also commended the decision of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open a dedicated case on conflict-related sexual violence and offered the full support of her Office to advance on this case.

SRSG Patten participated in the commemoration of the National Day for the Dignity of Victims of Sexual Violence of the Armed Conflict, which takes places every year on 25 May, since 2014, and



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called for sustained support to survivors of sexual violence of the armed conflict in Colombia and those supporting them on the frontlines.

As the 2016 Peace Agreement is being implemented and new peace efforts advance, the Special Representative emphasized the need to ensure that sexual violence remains excluded from the scope of amnesty provisions; to guarantee that ceasefires cannot be comprehensive if patterns of sexual violence persist; and to ensure that specific provisions for truth, justice and reparations for victims of sexual violence are included. “The voices of survivors should be at the absolute center of any policy or operational discussions in any current or future peace process”, stated the Special Representative.

The Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the United Nations reiterate their commitment to continue to support Colombia as it enters a new period driven by decisive action for peace and reconciliation.

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