**30th session of the Universal Periodic Review**

**Review of Colombia**

10 May 2018

**Statement by Austria**

Austria warmly welcomes H.E. … and the delegation of Colombia and thanks them for their presentation and the national report.

Austria welcomes the important steps *[undertaken by Colombia]* to achieve peace, in particular the signature of a peace agreement in 2016, the disarmament and demobilization of the FARC and its transition to a political party. The peace agreement has contributed to a considerable reduction of violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about failures to fully implement the rights to truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition for all victims of the armed conflict, especially of women and girl survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by legal and illegal armed actors. *We are also worried by reports according to which illegal armed groups, including the ELN, and criminal organizations seek to take over illicit economies in rural areas formerly under FARC-EP control. This has led to the escalation of violence and rising homicide rates in the affected regions especially in the department of Chocó. An integrated approach to establish and restore State authority in these parts of the country is necessary to prevent further violence and to guarantee security and justice.*

*We were pleased that Colombia accepted a majority of Austria’s recommendations during its previous UPR examination and recognize the sustained efforts made to implement them.* We welcome the recent establishment of a Special Investigative Unit by the General Prosecutor’s Office (Fiscalía General) as an important step. Important challenges, inter alia, a dramatic rise in killings of human right defenders, as well as collective forced displacements, forced recruitment of children into illegal armed groups and sexual violence will continue to require urgent solutions. *The implementation of the peace agreement’s provisions on judicial accountability for past violations and war crimes remains deficient, and it would be important that the Special Peace Jurisdiction (JEP) became fully operational.*

*In Austria’s view, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogota has made an important and invaluable contribution to the improvement of the human rights situation in Colombia since its establishment in 1996.* In this regard it is very positive that the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogota was renewed until 2019~~.~~

In this context, Austria would like to offer the following recommendations:

* Ensure that the rights of children and adolescents, in particular, those who have been victims of forced recruitment and used by illegal armed groups are fully protected and that their special vulnerability is taken into account during their reincorporation into civil society.
* Employ the ongoing dialogue process with the ELN guerrilla as an opportunity to insist on the necessity of concluding a humanitarian accord to protect the civilian population in places of conflict *[such as the Chocó department].*
* Ensure that human rights defenders are protected while carrying out their important work and that the judicial authorities conduct full and impartial criminal investigations so that perpetrators are held accountable
* Ratify OP-CAT

I thank you.