

January 2025

PEACE BREAKFASTS:

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perspectives through dialogue



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Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD) is a transnational civil society network that supports a comprehensive and inclusive peace through strengthening the culture of dialogue.

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This report is an academic initiative of Rodeemos el Diálogo, with the support of Chevening Alumni Programme Fund (CAPF) and does not represent the official views or position of the British Embassy in Colombia or the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Acknowledgements

This document reflects the outcomes of a collective effort, born from a proposal presented by Chevening alumni Lucía Mesa Vélez, María Fernanda Sierra, and Andrei Gómez-Suárez to the Chevening Alumni Programme Fund (CAPF), aimed at building bridges of dialogue between Chevening alumni and other social sectors across four cities in Colombia. As Lucía, María Fernanda, and Andrei have been members of Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD), the proposal sought to extend ReD's Peace Breakfasts—an initiative that has been held for more than a decade in Bogotá—to other regions of the country. We are deeply grateful to Lucía and María Fernanda for being part of this dream.

We recognise the contributions of those who offered their time, knowledge, and perspectives in supporting the Peace Breakfasts and the development of this document: Laura Acosta Hankin in Dabeiba, Antioquia; Sofía Mora, Sebastián

Mutis, and Yuliet Bastidas in Pasto, Nariño; Beatriz Vejarano and María Eugenia Díaz in Bogotá. Without their contributions and comments, this work would not have been possible. Any errors in this document are solely the responsibility of the authors, but the success of this initiative is a collective achievement.

A special thanks goes to all the volunteers of Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD) who participated in organising the Peace Breakfasts in each territory. Their dedication and passion transformed these gatherings into genuine spaces for dialogue and reflection. In Nariño, the tireless work of Sebastián Mutis, Yuliet Bastidas, Sofía Mora, Danna Caicedo, Laurence Antao, Alejandra Guerrero, Juan Romero, and Lorena Mallama brought these events to life with contagious energy. In Dabeiba, the generosity of Laura Acosta Hankin enabled these transformative gatherings from the very beginning; it was with Laura's help that we finalised the proposal for Chevening. In Bogotá, Beatriz Vejarano, María Eugenia Díaz, Natalia Vesga, Sara

Martín, and Juliana Franco Calvo not only made the breakfasts possible but also contributed to creating an atmosphere of trust and active listening.

We express our gratitude to the invited experts who enriched the dialogues with their experiences and knowledge. Their commitment to peacebuilding and reconciliation serves as an inspiration for the nation.

Finally, we extend our thanks to the many Chevening alumni who enthusiastically attended some of the breakfasts, sharing their experiences and perspectives, and to all the participants whose reflections nourished this process. With your stories and voices, you are the driving force behind creating a culture of dialogue in our country.

Executive Summary

This document summarises the outcomes of the Peace Breakfasts, outlining practical recommendations and proposals shared by the participants to strengthen peacebuilding in Colombia. The conclusions highlight six key elements that can guide decision-makers and strategic actors—both national and international—in promoting actions condensed into seventeen recommendations aimed at fostering a more inclusive, transformative, and sustainable peace.

The Peace Breakfasts brought together a wide range of actors, including representatives of the state, civil society, Chevening alumni, local communities, and international stakeholders, to engage in dialogue on critical issues related to peacebuilding in Colombia. Across 16 sessions held in Samaniego and Pasto (Nariño), Dabeiba (Antioquia), and Bogotá, these dialogues were centred around four key themes: peace education, the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, the Total Peace policy, and social dialogue. These conversations created spaces for critical reflection, enabling the identification of both progress and persistent challenges in Colombia’s peacebuilding process.

Introduction

The Peace Breakfasts have been one of the most successful initiatives of Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD). The project has endured for over a decade as a space to foster dialogue and critical reflection in Colombia. Through a participatory and affective methodology, these gatherings have succeeded in bringing together actors from a variety of social, political, and academic sectors, creating a unique forum to address the challenges of peacebuilding in the country.

Dialogue is an essential tool for peacebuilding; it has the transformative power to reshape relationships and change how we understand ourselves and others. In one of the dialogue-focused sessions, participants shared words such as “transformation”, “empathy”, “encounter”, “recognition”, “construction”, “openness”, “silence”, “renunciations”, and “listening.” Each term reflects the profound impact that dialogue can have on our emotions, perspectives, and actions, contributing to the creation of a culture of peace.

However, dialogue must go beyond being a mere exchange of words; it should become an exercise of self-criticism and recognition. In a context of deep inequality like Colombia, dialogue should open the door to reconfiguring relationships between actors, regardless of their power or influence. The power of dialogue lies in its ability to foster deep human connections that transcend ideological, political, or social barriers. When conflict actors are able to recognise each other’s humanity, including under the most difficult circumstances, dialogue becomes a powerful tool for generating new possibilities and perspectives.

This series of Peace Breakfasts, organised in partnership with Chevening Alumni Colombia, took place between September and December 2024 in four regions of Colombia: Samaniego and Pasto (Nariño), Dabeiba (Antioquia), and Bogotá. These events tackled crucial topics for peacebuilding, including peace education, the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, the Total Peace policy, and social dialogue. The Peace Breakfasts created spaces to reflect on the past, understand the present, and collectively imagine a more just and transformative future for Colombian society.

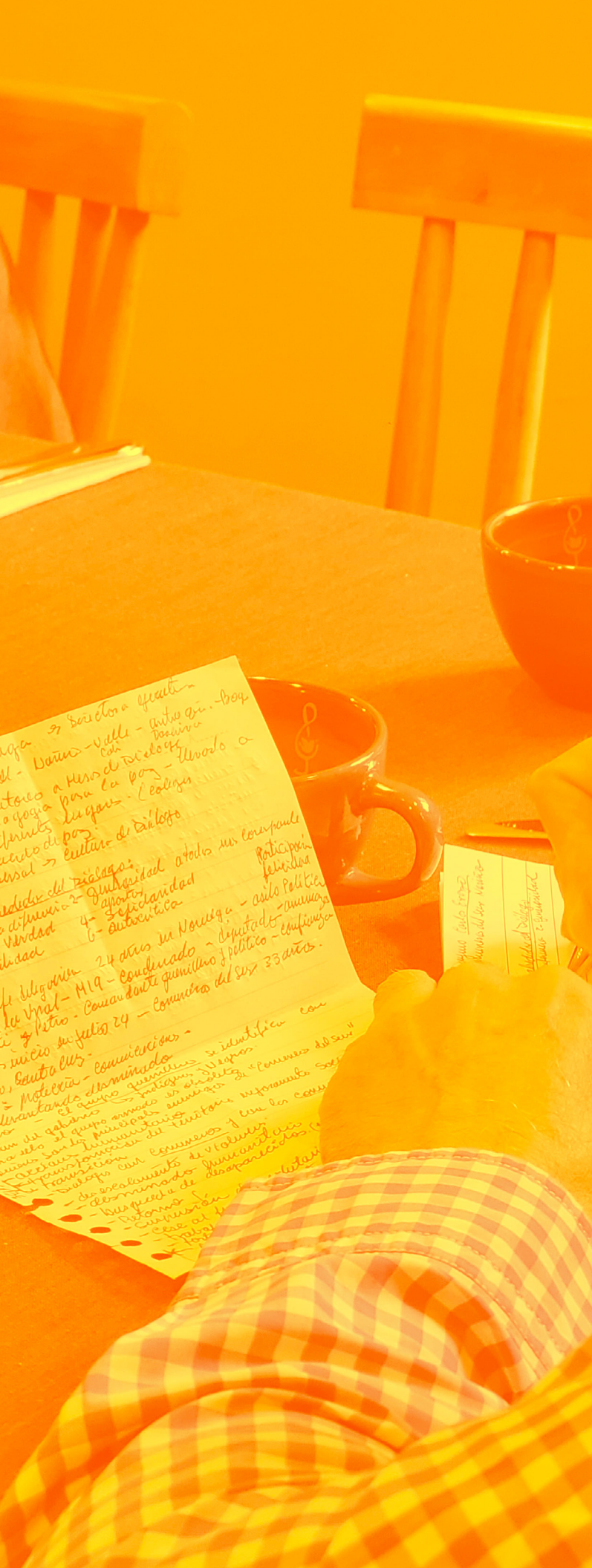
In total, over 400 people participated in these events. Each Peace Breakfast brought together a

diverse range of voices, including conflict victims, government officials, academics, representatives of international organisations, Chevening alumni, and members of local communities. This plurality of perspectives enriched the exchanges, fostering a shared understanding of both the challenges and opportunities in peacebuilding. Participants discovered that peace is an ongoing, profound, and human process in which the whole of society plays a crucial role. In an increasingly polarised world, the capacity to engage in dialogue, recognise our differences, and build together is what will ultimately allow us to advance towards the peaceful transformation of those differences.

This document is structured around the themes discussed during the Peace Breakfasts. The first section highlights the importance of peace education, examining how education and the promotion of a peace culture are essential to transforming Colombian society. The second section focuses on the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, evaluating both progress and the barriers faced at the local level. The third section addresses the Total Peace policy, exploring its potential and limitations for achieving lasting peace. The fourth section discusses social dialogue and participation, emphasising the need to strengthen the inclusion of all sectors of society in peace processes. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations synthesise key cross-cutting insights that emerged during the breakfasts and outline concrete actions to advance the implementation of peace in Colombia through dialogue.

Methodological Note

The Peace Breakfasts were structured with the aim of creating an open and horizontal space for dialogue, fostering an atmosphere of reflection and collaboration around peacebuilding. The approach of these gatherings was to establish an environment where participants’ ideas and perspectives could emerge freely and fluidly, without hierarchies, in a format closer to deep conversation than a traditional academic event or formal panel discussion. From the outset, the importance of openness and trust—essential elements for fostering genuine dialogue—was emphasised. The goal was to invite participants with diverse experiences, knowledge, and visions who could enrich the dialogue process. Guests were strategically selected to include social actors, academics, community leaders, and representatives



of organisations that have a direct impact on peace processes and social transformation in the country. The participants included individuals from various sectors, such as academics, activists, and those affected by the armed conflict, who actively engaged in the dialogues.

Each breakfast began with a brief introduction, a welcome, and an explanation of the purpose of the event. Facilitators stressed that the objective was not to listen to a guest expert on the topic in question but rather to enable all participants to reflect, share, and learn from one another's experiences.

In the next step, participants introduced themselves by sharing their names, roles, and a word or emotion that the topic of peace evoked in them. This exercise, far from being a simple formality, was intended to nurture a sense of closeness and trust among all attendees. It helped each person to feel integrated into the space, regardless of their professional or social background.

A semi-structured dialogue followed, with an expert guest on the topic. A member of ReD chaired the dialogue with flexibility, ensuring that the topics were driven by participants' concerns and contributions. This approach kept the dialogue dynamic and adaptable to the immediate priorities of the attendees rather than adhering to a rigid or predefined script.

Throughout the breakfast, confidentiality and respect were fundamental principles guiding the exchanges. Participants could express themselves freely, knowing that their opinions would not be attributed or quoted without their consent, which fostered an atmosphere of openness and sincerity. Furthermore, organisers ensured all participants spoke in their personal capacity, without representing any institution or organisation. This enabled greater freedom of expression and authenticity in the discussions.

The development of the conversations and interactions among participants was guided by the

principles of ReD, which were introduced at the beginning of the meetings:

- **Respect:** Recognising the dignity of every individual and the value of all beings, regardless of their worldview, and therefore be able to listen to others with openness.
- **Generosity:** Offering and giving the best of ourselves to meet the needs of others while being mindful of the present.
- **Honesty:** Understanding who we are, our principles, and our judgments so we can share our thoughts and feelings authentically.
- **Solidarity:** Connecting with our empathy in order to prioritise the common good over individual interests.
- **Co-responsibility:** Acting on our shared role in society to contribute to the co-construction of the country through diversity and collective efforts.
- **Self-criticism:** Applying the principle of honesty inwardly, acknowledging our own imperfections and biases, and nurturing humility so that we are open to the possibility of being wrong, fostering growth and transformation.

The methodology of the Peace Breakfasts was not only based on the exchange of ideas but also on fostering a sense of community, where diverse perspectives could come together to generate a collective commitment to peace. The breakfasts served as spaces to learn, share, and, above all, recognise that peacebuilding requires the active and genuine participation of all sectors of society.

The positive impact of this methodology was evident in the creation of a space of trust where participants could openly share their opinions and experiences. It also strengthened collaboration and empathy among the social actors present. Throughout the sessions, personal and institutional connections were established, which will enhance joint efforts in peacebuilding. Common challenges

and collaborative solutions involving diverse actors were also identified.

Nevertheless, the challenges were significant. Some participants expressed difficulty in managing the differences that arise in such diverse contexts, while others emphasised the need to overcome the historical mistrust caused by decades of armed conflict. Despite these obstacles, the methodology proved to be an effective tool for addressing these challenges, offering a safe space for reflection and constructive dialogue. Creating an inclusive environment and giving voice to all perspectives were vital aspects for advancing the construction of genuine dialogue.



1. Peace Education

Talking about peace education involves not only revisiting curricular content but also addressing how experiences, emotions, and memories of conflict can be integrated into educational settings. To this end, experts in education and key actors from various fields were invited to enrich the dialogue. In Bogotá, Oscar Sánchez, former Deputy Minister of Education and former Director of the Educapaz Programme, shared his perspective. In Pasto, Martha Andrade Acosta, a social sciences teacher and director of the school-based Memory Museum “Recuerdos de mi Wayco”, contributed her experience with integrating historical memory. In Dabeiba, Alba María Torres Borja, a teacher at I.E. Madre Laura, emphasised emotional pedagogy. Meanwhile, in Samaniego, Marco Aurelio Martínez, a lawyer and coordinator of the Peacebuilding Programme of the Social Pastoral, offered insights from the perspective of popular education.

Across the four events for this theme, participants included students, teachers, popular educators, women, and members of social organisations, all with experience or interest in peace education. These individuals, actively involved in educational processes within their territories, shared their experiences and reflections on how peace education is being implemented in different contexts. These discussions also helped identify both challenges and opportunities for advancing a culture of peace, providing a deeper understanding of peace education from diverse viewpoints and local realities.

1.1. Pasto: Territorial Pedagogy and Historical Memory

In Pasto, the dialogue on peace education took a territorial approach, focusing on how educational institutions can contribute to peacebuilding through historical memory, raising awareness about the armed conflict, and preventing the recruitment of child soldiers. Martha Andrade highlighted the work of the Policarpa Salavarrieta Educational Institution, where teachers have made efforts to collect the stories of conflict victims through artistic expressions such as theatre and music. These stories, beyond documenting pain,

aim to raise community awareness about violence and its destructive effects, helping to denaturalise war.

The session included a significant number of teachers and students, which allowed for an enriching dialogue on the crucial role of education in peacebuilding. Key ideas that emerged included the importance of promoting education that addresses not only academic learning but also specific territorial challenges through awareness and emotional engagement with students. Creating artistic works, such as theatre productions and museum exhibits, was seen as a powerful strategy for involving the community in the transformation of perceptions of violence and conflict.

Participants also reflected on the need to rethink rural education in Colombia. They discussed that rural schools, particularly those in conflict-affected areas, must adapt to students’ emotional needs. The normalisation of violence in many of these regions requires educators to work not only on knowledge transmission but also on managing young people’s emotions, fostering a sense of belonging to their territory, and creating spaces that promote self-care for both educators and students.

The Peace Breakfast in Pasto shed light on the significance of the “Recuerdos de mi Wayco” Memory Museum project, which has transformed students’ lives through acknowledging local history. Experiences of resistance to armed conflict and the innovative potential of art in working with memory demonstrate that local initiatives, when adequately supported and promoted, can generate profound community change, contributing to the denaturalisation of violence and the cultivation of a culture of peace.

1.2. Samaniego: Popular Education and Peacebuilding

In Samaniego, Marco Aurelio Martínez explored peace education from the perspective of popular education—a pedagogical approach that emphasises the active participation of communities in their own education and social transformation. This approach, centred on self-organisation and

awareness, considers schools as spaces not only for academic learning but also for the collective construction of knowledge and the transformation of structures of power and violence.

The session included participants from various sectors, including teachers, students, social leaders, victim representatives, and members of the productive sector. This diversity enabled a comprehensive analysis of how popular education can drive transformation in the region. One key idea that emerged was the need to deconstruct entrenched cultural concepts that perpetuate violence and, instead, foster relationships based on empathy, respect, and reconciliation.

Popular education was also directly linked to historical memory and conflict awareness. Participants emphasised the importance of young people and communities learning to recognise violence in its various forms—not just as a past phenomenon but as a structural reality that requires change through daily and collective actions. In this regard, peace education must be rooted in local territories, acknowledging the history and experiences of communities affected by conflict.

Additionally, participants highlighted the role of social leaders in peacebuilding, noting that their legitimacy stems from their ability to engage with communities, listen to their needs, and foster reconciliation and peace processes from a local perspective. In Samaniego, peace education was understood not only as a tool for change within schools but also as a comprehensive process involving the entire community in creating a culture of peace.

1.3. Dabeiba: Emotional Pedagogy for Peace

In Dabeiba, Alba María Torres Borja emphasised the importance of emotions in peacebuilding. Drawing from her teaching experience, she has integrated emotions into her peace curriculum, understanding that emotional work is fundamental to healing the wounds of armed conflict. Participants in this session included teachers, social leaders, peace counsellors, conflict victims, youth, and representatives from the Agency for Reintegration

and Normalisation (ARN). This diversity allowed for a comprehensive reflection on how emotions and values should form the foundations of peace education.

One of the main conclusions was that peace education cannot be limited to a formal curriculum; it must involve active community participation and focus on individuals' emotional well-being. Participants agreed that peace should be understood as a healing process involving both body and mind. Peace education must provide tools to manage emotions related to violence, suffering, and the restoration of affective relationships.

The dialogue also reflected a pragmatic view of peace, highlighting the importance of tolerance and respect in daily coexistence. Youth were identified as key actors in this process due to their greater flexibility and openness to discussions on peace and reconciliation. However, the need to involve adults was also discussed, as a lack of tolerance and listening skills among many remains an obstacle to peaceful coexistence.

Finally, participants in Dabeiba emphasised that peace education must be seen as an overarching effort that extends beyond classroom activities into the everyday life of the community. Peace should become a vocation that encompasses territory, heart, and daily living.

1.4. Bogotá: National Reflections on Peace Education

In Bogotá, Óscar Sánchez approached peace education from a national perspective, integrating territorial experiences with a critical analysis of the challenges and prospects for implementing peace education in Colombia. This session included government representatives, civil society actors, academics, teachers, and international stakeholders, fostering a broad discussion on the current state of peace education and its challenges nationwide.

A key conclusion was that peace education in Colombia does not have a single definition or model.

It should be understood as a dynamic and diverse process that must adapt to the particularities of each region. In this context, the need to transform children's and young people's perceptions of violence was highlighted so that they can learn to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Participants acknowledged the resistance to incorporating conflict education in classrooms, particularly in war-torn areas. Fear and insecurity in many regions hinder the implementation of educational projects addressing historical memory, peace, and reconciliation. Furthermore, it was emphasised that peace education must be integrated across all educational levels and that teachers require institutional support and adequate resources to carry out these transformative processes.

In terms of recommendations, the importance of supporting teachers—who often work under precarious conditions without sufficient backing—was stressed. Strengthening socio-emotional education programmes was also suggested as essential to forming citizens committed to peace and reconciliation.

Final reflections

Peace pedagogy in Colombia continues to be fundamental for building a lasting peace. From the territorial focus taken in Pasto, popular education discussed in Samaniego, the emotional work undertaken in Dabeiba, through to the national reflection that occurred in Bogotá, each experience contributes to a complementary vision of how education can be used to heal the wounds of conflict and build a peaceful future.

Cultural resistance, the lack of resources and the need to adapt to the specific local context all represent obstacles that must be overcome in order for peace education to be effective. Nevertheless, local experiences show that, when peace pedagogy is adapted to the realities of the region, when victims are included in the process, and when there is a focus on people's emotions, paths open to reconciliation and the construction of a culture of peace.

2. Implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement

To evaluate how the 2016 Peace Agreement has been implemented and the obstacles that persist, experts and key actors were invited to share their perspectives and experiences. In Bogotá, Gloria Cuartas, Director of the Implementation Unit of the Final Agreement (UIA), provided an institutional analysis. In Pasto, Ronald Urbina, professor and researcher of peace studies and former official of the Truth Commission, contributed his experience in reincorporation processes. In Dabeiba, Miladis Córdoba from the National Network of Afro-descendant Women addressed territorial and ethnic approaches. In Samaniego, Margoth Botina, Coordinator of Redepaz Nariño and Departmental Peace Councillor, shared her perspective on popular education and peacebuilding.

Participants noted that peace signatories face constant risks, including assassinations, which complicates the reintegration process. This is exacerbated by a lack of clear support from the current government, which prioritises its own projects over the continuity of the 2016 process. Legislative obstacles in Congress further complicate the approval of laws that would benefit peace signatories.

Despite these challenges, advances were noted in the inclusion of reintegrated individuals in health and education systems, demonstrating that some progress has been achieved. However, implementation remains hindered by resource shortages and a lack of coordinated institutional efforts.

These dialogues brought together youth, public officials, teachers, women, the international community, and members of social organisations involved in the implementation process. Participants reflected on the challenges they face, such as the stigmatisation of former combatants, lack of resources, and limited state presence in the territories. Through these exchanges, they examined how these challenges impact the communities' ownership of the Agreement and how local actors are working to overcome them, particularly through peace education as a tool to transform narratives and foster reconciliation.

During the Peace Breakfast, participants reflected on the causes and consequences of the armed conflict, helping to dismantle narratives of blame and stigmatisation that persist in society. They concluded that a better understanding of the conflict's history could help reduce prejudice, break exclusionary narratives, and promote reconciliation.

The marginalisation of victims was another recurring theme. Despite the Agreement's recognition of victims' rights, there remains an imbalance in opportunities for victims and former combatants, underscoring the need for a more inclusive approach. The importance of a differential approach was also highlighted, particularly in a region like Nariño with a significant Afro-descendant, indigenous, and female population among the peace signatories. This calls for public policies tailored to the specific needs of these communities.

2.1. Pasto: Reincorporation and Territorial Challenges

In Pasto, Ronald Urbina focused on the reincorporation process of former FARC-EP combatants. The discussion began with a theoretical overview of reincorporation, highlighting the challenges faced by the department of Nariño, particularly regarding security and social acceptance of peace signatories (former members of the FARC-EP who signed the peace agreement and are currently reincorporating into civilian life).

2.2. Samaniego: The Legacy of the Truth Commission and Peace Education

A key issue discussed was the ongoing stigmatisation of both former combatants and victims, which hinders their full reintegration into civilian life.

In Samaniego, Margoth Botina focused on the legacy of the Truth Commission (CEV by its Spanish acronym) and how peace education can serve as a vehicle for building a culture of peace in educational

and community settings. Through the participation of teachers, social leaders, and organisational representatives, the discussion explored how the CEV's recommendations and findings could be incorporated into educational and community processes to foster reconciliation and prevent recurrence.

A central idea was the need to acknowledge and share stories from the past to build a solid and lasting peace. Participants emphasised that the peace process cannot be understood without a deep knowledge of past experiences and that education plays a crucial role in raising awareness among younger generations about the importance of peace. It was noted that the unique characteristics of different territories must be considered when applying the CEV's recommendations and that community self-management and coordination are key to advancing implementation.

The state's commitment was identified as a crucial factor for successful implementation, as progress largely depends on the translation of the CEV's recommendations into effective public policies. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of considering differential approaches, especially in areas like Samaniego, where indigenous populations and women are actively involved in spaces such as the Municipal Peace Council and the Women's Council, which are vital in managing inter-institutional peace agreements.

2.3. Dabeiba: Territorial and Ethnic Approaches

In Dabeiba, Miladis Córdoba discussed the implementation of the Agreement from a territorial and ethnic perspective, analysing how different actors perceive the progress and challenges of the process. The discussion covered advances in security and trust-building in the municipality, but also frustrations related to limited institutional presence and the stigmatisation that peace signatories and local youth still face.

One major concern raised was the lack of resources and insufficient state presence in the territories, which has hindered effective implementation of the Agreement. Although Dabeiba has been described

as a “peace laboratory,” local communities feel that security improvements have not translated into social or economic progress. Overcoming stigmatisation and building trust were identified as significant challenges to consolidating peace.

Peace education emerged as a central theme. Participants agreed that education is key to breaking down fears and prejudices towards others, whether victims, reintegrated individuals, or local youth. However, this pedagogy cannot be implemented in isolation; it requires a strong commitment from the state and social organisations to promote a territorial shift in mindset.

Youth from the municipality expressed frustration at feeling ignored and voiceless. According to some participants, this sense of alienation can drive young people to join armed groups, highlighting the importance of implementing inclusive policies that foster active participation in peace processes.

2.4. Bogotá: Decentralisation of the Peace Agreement and Institutional Challenges

In Bogotá, Gloria Cuartas addressed the challenges of implementing the Peace Agreement at the national level, focusing on institutional cohesion and territorial approaches. The discussion highlighted how fragmented policies and a lack of unity among state institutions have impeded comprehensive implementation of the Agreement. The need for greater coordination between entities such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, and the Implementation Unit was emphasised.

A recurring theme was the persistence of the “internal enemy” narrative, which continues to fuel violence and the killings of peace signatories. This reflects the failure to overcome confrontational dynamics that still prevail in some regions. Limited state presence and the absence of a comprehensive approach to implementation were identified as key obstacles to advancing peace.

The session also examined challenges related to resources and the need for coherent strategies

across different levels of government. Participants pointed out that implementation does not solely depend on the signing of agreements but also on the state's ability to deliver a coordinated and effective response that considers local and regional realities.

Land acquisition under the Agreement has faced delays due to the need to assess factors such as landmines or missing persons in the territories. These obstacles illustrate the complexity of implementation and the need for a territorial approach that addresses each region's specific circumstances.

Final Reflections

The implementation of the Peace Agreement faces common challenges across territories: stigmatisation, limited state presence, and a lack of inter-institutional coordination. In all cases, peace education is considered a central tool for reconciliation and social transformation.

However, the absence of cohesive public policy and fragmented state institutions continues to limit the reach of reintegration and reparative measures, underlining the urgency of strengthening coordination among the various actors involved. Only through a firm and sustained commitment—engaging both national institutions and local actors—can effective implementation and lasting peace in Colombia be achieved.

3. Total Peace

To explore the perspectives and challenges facing the implementation of the Total Peace policy, we called upon peacebuilders. In Bogotá and Pasto, Carlos Erazo, head of the government delegation at the Instance for the Co-construction of Territorial Peace in Nariño, was invited. In Samaniego, Martha Ceballos from the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movice) participated, and in Dabeiba, Carlos Franco, a former member of the demobilised Popular Liberation Army (EPL), political scientist, and specialist in conflict resolution, was invited.

These dialogues focused on the challenges and progress of Total Peace, emphasising the importance of an inclusive, territorial, and long-term approach. In each of the meetings, a diverse group of participants was invited, including social leaders, victims, academics, human rights defenders, representatives from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and public officials, who shared their visions and experiences from their areas of intervention.

These dialogues were crucial in enriching the reflection on how the Total Peace policy is being experienced in the territory, from the difficulties of demobilisation and security to the construction of mechanisms for active participation in communities. The conversations revealed that the peace process is not only an institutional challenge, but also a cultural and social transformation process that requires constant cooperation and a true commitment from all involved actors.

3.1. Pasto: the Instance for the Co-construction of Territorial Peace in Nariño (ICPTN)

The discussions during the Peace Breakfast in Pasto highlighted several key ideas, particularly the importance of ensuring continuity in the peace process beyond governmental cycles. Participants stressed the need for strong institutional mechanisms and public policies that prevent disruptions to the process from changes in government. This is crucial to avoid losing progress made, especially if a future government is less

committed to peace.

Territorial security was a central theme, focusing on the protection of communities and leaders involved in the peace process. Achieving peace requires more than the demobilisation of armed actors; it requires ensuring that community members have adequate security guarantees. This involves joint efforts between the state and communities to create effective security mechanisms, as territories like Nariño remain vulnerable to threats from illegal armed groups, such as the United Self Defence Forces of Nariño.

Participants also discussed the need to provide sustainable alternatives for communities engaged in illegal activities such as illicit crop cultivation and mining. They emphasised that this transition must be supported by adequate infrastructure and conditions that enable long-term shifts to legal economies. This is a complex challenge, requiring not only the eradication of illegal practices but also the creation of viable economic alternatives.

Despite initial obstacles like mistrust and fear of armed actors, the peace process in Nariño is succeeding in fostering trust among communities. Recent negotiations have encouraged a more proactive attitude, with communities viewing the process as a genuine opportunity for transformation. According to Carlos Erazo, the key to this progress lies in consolidating local alliances, involving active participation from authorities and organisations to ensure the peace process becomes a replicable and sustainable experience.

3.2. Samaniego: Memory, Resistance, and Community Participation

In Samaniego, participants reflected on territorial peace, highlighting the importance of resistance, memory, and optimism in maintaining hope amidst a context marked by violence. Marta Ceballos shared her personal experience as a victim of armed conflict and emphasised the need for a collective and comprehensive approach to territorial protection. She stressed that peace must be built from and with the communities, adapting to local dynamics and reflecting their visions and

commitments.

A recurring theme was forced disappearances, particularly relevant in Samaniego, where 108 cases have been reported. Despite some progress made in the ICPTN, victims continue to experience ineffective responses from the state. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of social organisations and families, advancements such as the recovery of bodies have been achieved. Participants emphasised the importance of making visible memory processes, such as ‘memory quilts’, and strengthening justice mechanisms to support victims.

Community participation was identified as a cornerstone of peace processes. At the local level, communities stressed that peacebuilding should involve all stakeholders, including youth and educational institutions. A school principal in Samaniego suggested that schools should serve as spaces for learning and reflecting on territorial realities, where community experiences are heard and active participation in peace processes is promoted. At the regional level, the need for a permanent participation forum, such as the ‘Permanent Civil Society Forum of the Abades Region’, was proposed to ensure meaningful and ongoing involvement in peace dialogues.

Participants also expressed that security and territorial protection are fundamental to the success of peace processes. The ongoing control exerted by armed groups remains a serious obstacle to progress. Strengthening support networks and community self-care mechanisms was recommended to counter threats and ensure active community involvement in peacebuilding efforts. In this context, advancing towards an integrated peace policy that includes updating land-use plans and protecting human rights is crucial to rebuilding communities and restoring trust in institutions.

3.3. Dabeiba: Challenges and Opportunities in a Conflict-Affected Territory

In Dabeiba, Carlos Franco introduced the concept of Total Peace to participants who were less

familiar with the policy, in part due to the region’s prolonged history of violence. The municipality has experienced the presence of multiple armed groups over the years and continues to be affected by one of these groups. The session provided a space for reflection on this national policy under President Gustavo Petro, highlighting the need to learn from past peace processes and address current challenges.

The diverse group of participants included peace counsellors, public officials, representatives from the cultural and financial sectors, a teacher, an elderly woman, victims’ representatives, and peace signatories. Each contributed a unique perspective, enriching the discussions. The teacher, for example, emphasised the role of education and awareness in peacebuilding, while representatives from cultural and social sectors stressed the importance of community participation. The presence of victims and peace signatories reinforced the need to acknowledge and address the suffering of those directly affected by the conflict as a crucial step towards collective healing.

A key idea that emerged was the need to recognise the progress of the Total Peace policy while also addressing its limitations. Although the policy has the potential to create spaces for dialogue, such as the Peace Breakfasts, tangible reductions in violence remain elusive in many regions. The reluctance of some armed actors to negotiate and the mistrust caused by past failed agreements were recurring themes. However, there was consensus that negotiations remain the best path to overcoming conflict. Participants emphasised that peacebuilding requires not only genuine political will but also a profound shift in the mindset of political actors who have historically prioritised personal interests over those of the people.

The discussions reflected the complexity of peacebuilding in Dabeiba but also the willingness of civil society to actively engage in the process. Regional diversity, differing perspectives, and local realities make peacebuilding both a challenge and a possibility. Three fundamental conclusions were reached: first, peace is achievable despite numerous challenges; second, peace encompasses not only human rights and democracy but also development and dignity; and third, civil society’s

role is indispensable, as ending cycles of violence will only be possible through the active and committed participation of all sectors.

3.4 Bogotá: the Instance for the Co-construction of Territorial Peace in Nariño (ICPTN)

In Bogotá, discussions focused on the Instance for the Co-construction of Territorial Peace in Nariño (ICPTN), analysing the Total Peace policy and the end of the armed conflict through the lens of the process with Comuneros del Sur. According to Carlos Erazo, this approach was designed to adapt to the particularities of the territory, and foster dialogue that aims not only to disarm armed actors but also to transform the socio-economic and cultural realities of conflict-affected regions.

The concept of co-construction was central to the conversation, emphasising a collaborative and complex process that involves three key components: producing tangible transformations, fostering collaboration among local, regional, and national actors, and integrating territorial initiatives from the outset. The Instance is not merely an extension of national processes, but an independently structured initiative tailored to the rhythms and contexts of local communities. Agreements, progress, and interventions must be validated and shaped by the communities themselves.

The importance of trust was repeatedly highlighted, particularly given that many members of Comuneros del Sur come from the same communities affected by the conflict. This close relationship with local communities represents a key step towards overcoming armed conflict, as many former combatants no longer see violence as a viable means of survival.

Participants reflected on various aspects that have shaped the process so far, including the innovative and flexible nature of the territorial peace process, which has enabled progress on concrete actions,

such as humanitarian demining and the return of displaced communities, even before formal agreements were reached. This adaptability to local circumstances is essential in a dynamic and changing context like Nariño. Territorial peace extends beyond the cessation of hostilities to include strengthening local authorities, improving living conditions, and transforming illicit economies. These efforts are framed within a commitment to human rights and justice, with transitional and restorative justice mechanisms playing a vital role in rebuilding the social fabric of conflict-affected regions.

However, a major challenge identified was the fragmented state response and its slow reaction to local needs, which hampers the full implementation of peace policies. Participants agreed that active engagement from territorial entities is crucial, while also acknowledging the complexities and potential contradictions that may arise within these entities. Also highlighted was the importance of strengthening community participation and changing societal mindsets to overcome entrenched war cultures. Ensuring the sustainability of the process, both in terms of human and financial resources, will require international support and strategic use of the current administration’s remaining term.

This process of co-construction offers an opportunity to redefine how conflicts are addressed in Colombia, prioritising flexibility, adaptability, and mutual trust between social and political actors. The innovative approach of initiating actions on the ground before final agreements are made could serve as a model for future peace initiatives in the country. However, to achieve lasting peace, this paradigm shift requires the political will of all stakeholders, both locally and nationally.

Final Reflections

The perception of Total Peace across the four regions reveals both similarities and differences in the approaches and challenges faced by this policy. A common theme is the importance of community participation. In all regions, participants emphasised that peace cannot be imposed from above; it must

be co-constructed with local communities. Mistrust towards institutions and the continued presence of illegal armed actors remain significant challenges. However, experiences vary: in Nariño, territorial co-construction is seen as an opportunity for innovation, while in Dabeiba, historical mistrust of peace agreements requires a more cautious, locally adapted approach.

Despite considerable obstacles, the Total Peace policy also presents opportunities to advance towards a more sustainable and transformative peace. The success of this process will depend on inter-institutional cooperation, the strength of local communities, and genuine commitment from social and political actors. If structural challenges can be overcome and mutual trust is established, the experiences of these regions could provide important lessons for building lasting peace in Colombia.



4. Social Dialogue

To understand the meaning of social dialogue and the strategies or initiatives communities implement in their territories, experts and key actors from various sectors were invited to share their perspectives on how dialogue can transform social relationships and contribute to reconciliation. Participants included Ricardo Ruiz Vallejo, National Coordinator for Training of the National System of Coexistence for Life at the Ministry of the Interior, in Bogotá; James Bartolo from FICONPAZ, in Dabeiba; Javier Rodríguez, Coordinator of the School of Peace and Fraternity and Departmental Counsellor for Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence in Nariño, in Pasto; and Danilo Palacios, a professor at the University of Nariño and social activist, in Samaniego.

The Peace Breakfasts explored various topics related to the emotional dimensions of peace processes, the importance of community knowledge, collective reconciliation strategies, and the need for inclusive and transformative dialogue. Discussions highlighted how dialogue should be an ongoing practice that not only resolves conflicts but also heals the emotional wounds caused by armed conflict. Additionally, the challenges of building a lasting peace—overcoming power asymmetries and promoting balanced participation among the state, communities, and other social actors—were addressed. Finally, participants reflected on the importance of the pedagogy of dialogue, seen as an educational process that strengthens collective commitment to peace.

4.1. Pasto: The Emotional Dimension of Peacebuilding

In Pasto, Javier Rodríguez contributed to the dialogue on creating a culture of dialogue and active participation in peacebuilding, emphasising the importance of involving all social sectors. The discussion emphasised that each individual, from their workplace, community, or organisation, can contribute to transforming the realities of their territories. Special attention was given to self-care and the emotional dimension, highlighting that reconciliation and forgiveness must be approached from both individual and collective perspectives.

Drawing from his experience as a psychologist, university professor, and representative of the academic sector on the Departmental Peace Council, Javier emphasised the connection between people's emotions and their territories. He proposed that dialogue should be an extension of both collective and personal emotions. This space acknowledged the importance of emotional sensitivity in peacebuilding processes, with diverse participation that included conflict victims and social actors, enriching the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Key ideas included the need for active and empathetic listening during dialogue. Participants argued that forgiveness and reconciliation are processes requiring not only political will but also continuous emotional care and compassion at both the personal and collective levels. They also highlighted that dialogue extends beyond the mere transmission of words, with body language, gestures, and silences playing a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding.

An interesting proposal emerged for individuals to view the territory as a reflection of collective emotions, a fundamental tool in the process of comprehensive reparation. Advancing peace processes requires not only a material focus but also consideration of peace's emotional dimension. This perspective is seen as key to promoting active participation, where empathy and recognition of others' emotions drive the development of lasting solutions.

4.2. Samaniego: Community Knowledge and Collective Strategies for Peace

In Samaniego, the discussions focused on dialogue and social participation, emphasising the value of community knowledge and collective learning in peacebuilding processes. The dialogue recognised how local experiences and knowledge can be powerful tools for creating a culture of peace, particularly in regions marked by violence. The Peace Breakfast created a space for reflection on social dynamics and the challenges of transforming

realities deeply affected by armed conflict.

Participants included community leaders, educators, students, and representatives of social organisations. Danilo Palacios stressed the importance of integrating local knowledge into educational and peacebuilding processes. He highlighted the need to make visible the small but significant achievements that communities reach in their struggle for peace. He also proposed the creation of intergenerational dialogue spaces as a tool to strengthen social ties and promote shared responsibility in peacebuilding.

Key ideas that emerged included the promotion from childhood of constructive and peaceful behaviour patterns to ensure that future generations continue the work of reconciliation. Additionally, the importance of alternative communication strategies was discussed, aiming to give visibility to local leadership and achievements in peace processes. This approach seeks to break away from dominant narratives and provide a platform for those building peace from the grassroots.

Participants stressed that peacebuilding should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the government or leaders but as a collective effort. All sectors of society, from academia to local communities, must engage in this process. This perspective recognises traditional knowledge and community experiences as valuable for social transformation. Community and alternative communication strategies were identified as essential tools to counter the narco-culture and promote a culture of peace in the region.

4.3. Dabeiba: Dialogue as a Tool for Social Transformation

In Dabeiba, the Peace Breakfast focused on the importance of social dialogue and active civil society participation in peacebuilding. Throughout the discussions, James Bartolo emphasised that dialogue is not merely an exchange of ideas but a deep practice that should involve participants' emotions, experiences, and feelings. Emotional connections between individuals were seen as an essential first step in establishing trust and

empathy—key elements for reconciliation and social transformation.

The diverse group of participants included teachers, students, victims, ASOCOMUNAL (the association of community groups within the municipality), community leaders, and a public official. They discussed the crucial role of dialogue in communities affected by decades of violence and how these conversations can be instrumental in overcoming divisions and strengthening social cohesion. Dialogue was viewed as a means to share experiences, recognise differences, and reach consensus that benefits all sectors of society.

Participants emphasised that dialogue should be a transformative process, not just a platform for verbal exchange. It must be inclusive and acknowledge both the emotions of interlocutors and the communities they represent. Dialogue should not be used to delay decision-making but should be accompanied by concrete actions that address the urgent needs of conflict-affected communities.

The group concluded that words must be matched by genuine commitment to community needs and demands. Additionally, the dialogue process should be inclusive and respectful of differences, avoiding power asymmetries that exclude certain actors. Meaningful peace will only be achieved through horizontal dialogue, where all voices are heard and respected.

4.4. Bogotá: Social Dialogue as a Strategy for Inclusion and Political Transformation

In Bogotá, the Peace Breakfast focused on analysing social dialogue from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This event aimed to delve into the challenges and opportunities of dialogue during a transition from violence. Participants explored how dialogue can be a powerful tool for conflict resolution and lasting peace, while also addressing the inherent difficulties of negotiation and participation processes.

The session brought together a diverse group of participants, including representatives of international entities, civil society organisations, activists, academics, and government officials. Among the attendees were the British Embassy and Chevening representatives, who offered a global perspective on dialogue processes and their relationship with international politics. Ricardo Ruiz described social dialogue as a tool to bring diverse perspectives closer together, overcome power asymmetries, and promote an inclusive peace process.

Key ideas included the need to transform social dialogue into a cross-cutting mechanism that becomes integral to all social and political interactions, not just in conflict-specific contexts. Dialogue should not be seen as an end in itself but as a means to generate real and lasting agreements. Participants also reflected on the importance of ensuring balanced participation between the state and civil society, avoiding asymmetric power dynamics that could undermine the effectiveness of dialogue.

For dialogue to be effective, it must originate from civil society rather than solely from structures of elite power. A central challenge identified was the need to foster an inclusive and accessible language that allows all parties to feel part of the process. The pedagogy of dialogue and its adoption as a social practice were highlighted as essential strategies for advancing a peace that is not only political but also deeply transformative at social and cultural levels.

Final Reflections

Social dialogue, as expressed in the Peace Breakfasts held across various regions, emerges not only as a tool for conflict resolution but also as a transformative process for social relationships. Inclusion, empathy, and active listening are crucial components. The discussions emphasised the importance of recognising the emotional dimension in reconciliation processes, understanding that peace is built not only through formal agreements but also through emotional care and the comprehensive healing of individuals and communities.

Dialogue must be inclusive, horizontal, and transformative. Peacebuilding cannot be the sole responsibility of the government or elites; it must be a collective effort where every social actor contributes to the process. This underscores the need to give visibility to local knowledge and leadership, promoting a culture of peace from the grassroots. Moreover, social dialogue must be understood as a continuous practice, not limited to isolated moments of exchange, but as a permanent tool for conflict resolution and the transformation of asymmetric power structures. The pedagogy of dialogue, seen as an educational and reflective process, was considered essential to strengthening collective commitment to peace and reconciliation in the country.

Conclusions

The Peace Breakfasts held across different regions of Colombia highlight six key elements for building sustainable and transformative peace:

1. Social dialogue as a pillar of peace: Genuine and deep social dialogue must go beyond the exchange of words and become a transformative tool for social relationships. The inclusion of all voices is essential for communities to feel they are active participants in the process and to ensure that agreements reflect the realities and needs of the territories.

2. Comprehensive reparations must have an emotional component: Reconciliation is not just a political or economic matter but a deeply emotional one. Victims' reparation must address both material damages and the psychological and social trauma caused by the conflict. Self-care and emotional support are essential for communities to heal and to advance the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

3. Active participation with shared responsibility: Active participation of all sectors of society—including victims, local communities, institutional actors, and academics—is crucial. Peace should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the government but as a collective process in which every actor has a role to play.

4. Territory as an emotional dimension: Territories are imbued with symbols, meanings, histories, and collective emotions. Territorial reparation should include the healing of relationships between people and their environment, recognising that emotional connection to the land can be a powerful tool for reconciliation.

5. Re-contextualising the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement: Despite the optimism generated by the Peace Agreement, challenges persist, particularly regarding its implementation at the local level. The presence of illegal armed groups, lack of territorial understanding, and mistrust of institutions are obstacles that require urgent attention and concrete actions

to ensure community security and well-being.

6. Education and a culture of peace are key to breaking the cycle of war: Education and the promotion of a culture of peace are essential for ensuring lasting peace. Future generations must be raised with values of tolerance, respect, and non-violent conflict transformation, starting from early childhood with it embedded within innovative and sustainable educational processes.

The Peace Breakfasts demonstrate that peacebuilding in Colombia is a complex and multifaceted process that requires the active participation of all social actors, addressing the emotional wounds produced by the conflict, and a sustained commitment to the effective local implementation of peace agreements. Peace, in this context, is not merely a political goal but a process of social, emotional, and cultural transformation, with dialogue as its cornerstone.

Recommendations

Based on the reflections shared during the Peace Breakfasts, we make several practical recommendations directed at five key actors in Colombia's peacebuilding process:

1. To the National Government:

- Prioritise local implementation of peace agreements: Ensure that commitments under the Peace Agreement are effectively implemented at the local level.
- Guarantee territorial security: Strengthen the state's presence in conflict-affected regions, particularly where illegal groups remain active.
- Develop comprehensive reparation policies: These policies should address both material and emotional aspects of reparation.
- Strengthen decentralisation: Grant local governments greater autonomy and capacity to address the specific needs of their territories.

2. To local government bodies:

- Promote community participation: Encourage active civil society participation in decision-making on peace, security, and territorial development issues.
- Strengthen local capacities: Local authorities should receive adequate training and resources to manage peace processes and ensure the effective implementation of agreements.
- Develop social inclusion strategies: Create inclusive policies that promote the involvement of vulnerable groups—such as victims, peace signatories, youth, and women—in peace processes.

3. To the international community:

- Financial and logistical support: Continue providing financial and technical resources to support Colombia's peace efforts, particularly in reintegration, victim reparation, and strengthening local institutions.
- Monitoring and compliance guarantees: Play a key role in monitoring and verifying the implementation of local peace agreements, ensuring that stakeholders honour their commitments.

- Promote international dialogue on peace: Foster exchanges between Colombia and other countries with peace process experience to share lessons learned.

4. To civil society:

- Strengthen the culture of peace: Actively promote a culture of peace through educational activities, awareness campaigns, and dialogues among diverse communities.
- Encourage intercultural dialogue: Recognise the cultural and social diversity of territories and promote dialogue among different actors as a tool for peaceful conflict resolution.
- Create community support networks: Facilitate the creation of support networks for conflict victims, former combatants, and other vulnerable groups to promote their inclusion in social and economic reconstruction processes.
- Increase the participation of women and youth: Advocate for policies and spaces that promote the inclusion of women and youth, encouraging their leadership in reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

5. To businesses and the private sector:

- Promote sustainable economic development: Invest in projects that create jobs, infrastructure, and social development in conflict-affected regions. Quality job creation and investment in productive sectors can drive territorial transformation and prevent the resurgence of illegal activities.
- Ensure employment inclusion for victims and former combatants: Play a key role in the reintegration of former combatants and victims by offering inclusive and dignified employment opportunities.
- Promote a culture of peace in business: Adopt business practices that promote peaceful conflict resolution, business ethics, transparency, and respect for human rights.

Culture of Dialogue:

Honesty to build trust. *Respect* to build on differences. *Self-criticism* to re-evaluate our prejudices. *Generosity* to give the best of ourselves. *Solidarity* to support each other. *Co-responsibility* to work together for the nonviolent transformation of armed conflicts.



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