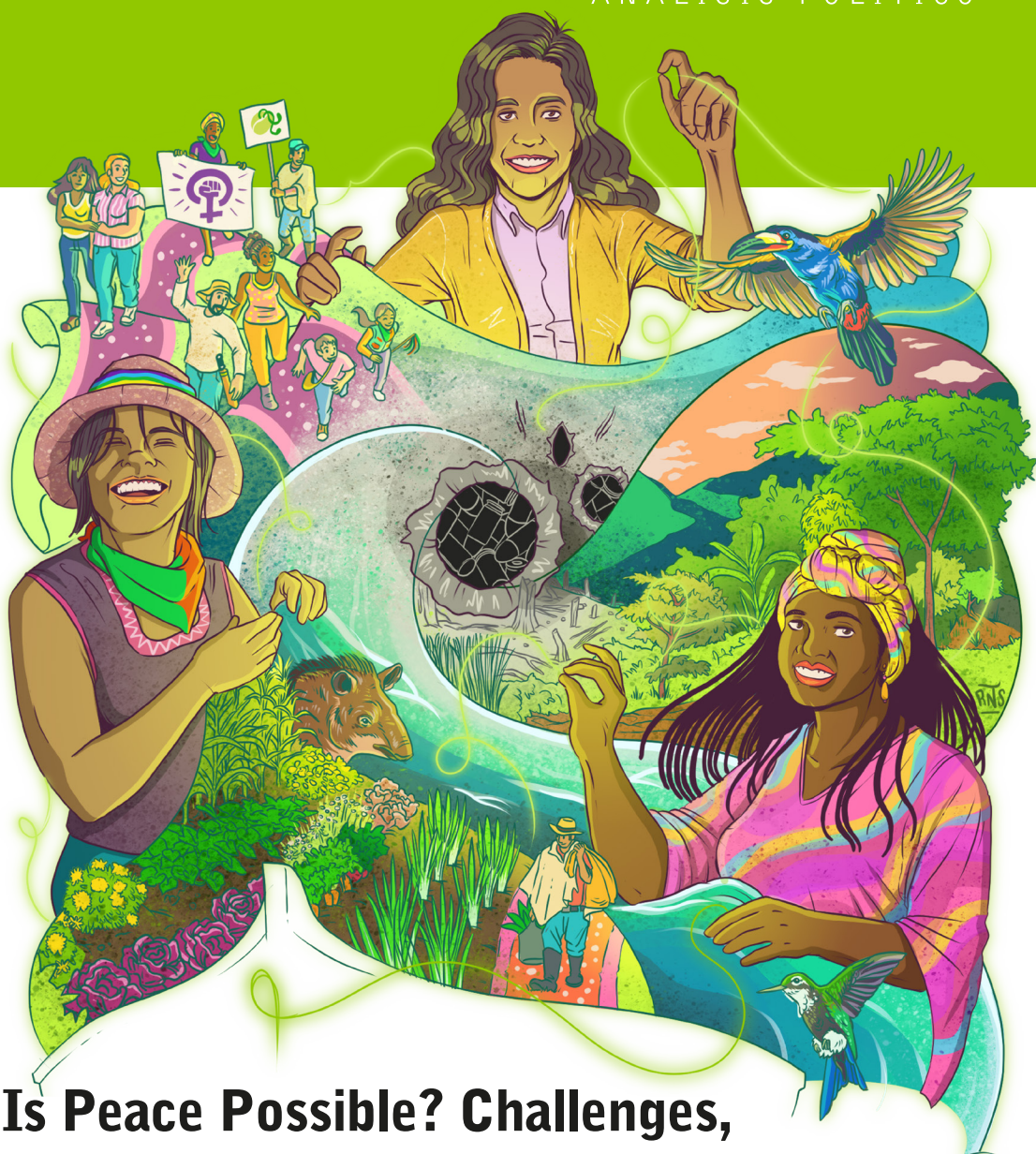


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**Is Peace Possible? Challenges,
Ten Years After the 2016 Peace Agreement**



Heinrich Böll Foundation

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is a German political foundation affiliated with Alliance 90/The Greens. Headquartered in Berlin, it currently has 33 offices worldwide, six of which are located in Latin America. In Colombia, the Foundation works to strengthen democracy and promote sustainable development. We support democratic initiatives, advocate for the protection of and respect for human rights, and help strengthen a critical and engaged civil society.

The Foundation's Colombia office has been based in Bogotá since late 2016.

Recommendations for International Cooperation Ten Years After Colombia's Peace Agreement

This document compiles the recommendations included in the special edition of *Ideas Verdes*, Issue 39, dedicated to the tenth anniversary of Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement. Prepared by six authors¹ in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, this publication offers a reflective and analytical assessment of the Agreement's implementation.

The issue uses this political and historical moment to examine the progress made, the limitations encountered, and the challenges that persist, while identifying strategies and courses of action for the coming years. Its five articles address strategic dimensions of peacebuilding: transitional justice and the territorial approach; the environmental agenda and peacebuilding; the continued killings of social leaders and their effects on community processes; gender measures as an essential component of the Agreement; and changes in organized crime and territorial governance. Based on these analyses, the authors present lessons learned and recommendations for civil society, international organizations, international cooperation actors, and State institutions.

Within this framework, the recommendations are organized into five thematic areas and are intended to provide guidance to the international community and help sustain its support for the comprehensive implementation of the Peace Agreement. They are based on an overarching premise: the Agreement constitutes a State commitment, and its implementation extends beyond electoral cycles. International cooperation and support can help preserve institutional and social capacities, strengthen civic space, support long-term territorial processes, and

¹ The six authors have experience and distinguished track records in the issues addressed. Their profiles and complete articles are available in the special edition of *Ideas Verdes* on the website: <https://co.boell.org/es/product-series/ideas-verdes>. The contributors to this edition are Axis 1. Transitional Justice: Freddy Ordóñez Gómez; Axis 2. Organized Crime: Laura Bonilla and Óscar Alejandro Chala; Axis 3. Environmental Agenda and Peace with Nature: Mónica Amador Jiménez; Axis 4. Protection of Social Leaders: Leonardo González Perafán; and Axis 5. Gender and Peace: Diana Salcedo López.

generate knowledge to inform public policy without replacing the responsibilities of the Colombian State.

These recommendations will serve as a resource for the conference "*10 Years of the Peace Agreement in Colombia: Between Progress and the Re-emergence of Violence*" to be held on October 5 and 6 in Berlin, Germany. Accordingly, each thematic area highlights the fields in which German ministries and development cooperation agencies, German parliamentarians, academia, and research centers can play a particularly significant role.

Axis 1. Transitional Justice and the Territorial Approach

The experience of Macro-Case 04 shows that territorially grounded restorative investigation can help explain the relationships among actors, economic projects, power structures, and forms of violence. For this knowledge to contribute to change in the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) must be coordinated with peacebuilding institutions, territorial authorities, social organizations, communities, and international cooperation actors.

- 1. Strengthen the capacity of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to move its macro-cases forward and investigate and understand violence from a territorial perspective.** The JEP's technical and financial capacity to investigate territorial macro-cases using a territorially grounded restorative methodology must be preserved and strengthened. Macro-Case 04 demonstrates that territory can serve as a unit of analysis capable of revealing relationships among actors, economic projects, power structures, and forms of violence.
- 2. Strengthen State responsibility for public understanding and the social appropriation of truth.** Institutional mechanisms are needed to coordinate, preserve, disseminate, and promote the social appropriation of the truth produced by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth and the JEP. This work forms part of the right to truth, reparation, guarantees of non-repetition, and the preservation of memory.
- 3. Ensure that transitional justice findings guide the actions of authorities in the territories and guarantee the effective participation of communities and victims.** National and territorial authorities must incorporate the findings of territorially grounded investigations into the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies for conflict-affected territories. This requires concrete mechanisms to connect JEP decisions with peacebuilding and territorial transformation instruments.
- 4. Continue directing international cooperation toward strengthening territorial capacities.** International cooperation can help preserve and strengthen the institutional, social, and community capacities required for the JEP's investigations and work to have lasting effects on the territories. This requires

strengthening local capacities to document, preserve, and promote collective ownership of memory; guaranteeing victims' participation; and providing technical and financial support for initiatives that connect transitional justice, peacebuilding, and territorial transformation, with priority given to long-term processes.

- 5. Strengthen the role of social organizations in the appropriation and monitoring of transitional justice.** Victims' organizations, grassroots movements, peasant communities, ethnic peoples, human rights organizations, university-based research centers, and other civil society actors must be recognized as key agents in the territorial appropriation of transitional justice outcomes.

Axis 2. Post-Agreement Armed Actors and the Limits of the Organized Crime Category

Public Policy Recommendations: Towards a Non-Dogmatic Implementation of the Spirit of the Agreement (2026–2030)

- 1. Abandon the binary classification of recognized insurgencies and high-impact organized crime as the sole criterion for policy design.** The evidence reviewed shows that armed actors in the third cycle fall along a spectrum that includes projects seeking to exercise local political authority, hybrid *crimilegal* arrangements, and organized crime structures in the strictest sense. A more detailed classification system would make it possible to determine, on a differentiated basis, what should be negotiated, what should be subject to submission-to-justice processes, and what should be combat.
- 2. Condition all collective submission-to-justice processes—not only formal peace negotiations—on compliance with verifiable territorial commitments, rather than solely on judicial benefits granted to individuals.**
- 3. Systematically incorporate the monitoring of less visible forms of violence—such as extortion, threats, recruitment, and forced confinement—as a central criterion for verifying ceasefires and submission-to-justice processes.** Without independent community oversight and stronger monitoring of these forms of violence, any ceasefire risks enabling the expansion of criminal governance under the guise of pacification.
- 4. Restore the political dimension of territorial development.** The Development Programs with a Territorial Focus (PDET) and the instruments that succeed them during the 2026–2030 period should also be assessed according to their effects on armed territorial control and citizen security. This assessment should include community participation mechanisms with real authority to veto or redirect prioritized investments.
- 5. Strengthen the capacity of local and community authorities to resolve disputes and provide basic public goods.** Weakening the legitimacy of armed actors is

not enough; the population must also have access to an effective and reliable institutional alternative.

- 6. Recognize that organized crime and the illicit economies that finance it are transnational phenomena requiring coordinated responses.** International cooperation—particularly from Germany and the European Union—can contribute through technical assistance for decentralization-related legislative processes; support for non-coercive measures aimed at dismantling these groups' armed capital; and assistance for independent systems that monitor less visible forms of violence, such as extortion, threats, forced confinement, and recruitment.

Axis 3. The Environmental Agenda in Peacebuilding in Colombia: From the Peace Agreement to Peace with Nature

Recommendations: German Cooperation and its Contributions to Peace with Nature in Colombia

Consolidate German cooperation through dialogue with Colombian institutions and prioritize support for social organizations and local communities that protect forests and sustain peace processes, ensuring their continuity beyond changes in government.

Nature is no longer merely the setting in which peace is built; it has become an essential dimension that must be protected to achieve sustainable territorial peace. German investments in tropical forests located in post-conflict contexts should therefore be assessed not only on the basis of their direct climate and environmental outcomes, but also in terms of their effects on territorial governance, conflict dynamics, and peacebuilding.

Ten years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, Germany can build on the lessons learned and shape its cooperation through 2030 by adopting an innovative approach to environmental cooperation for peace. Colombia's experience shows that protecting forests, strengthening environmental governance, and promoting sustainable livelihoods are necessary conditions for building legitimacy, reducing conflict, and consolidating lasting peace.

Axis 4. Ten Years after the Peace Agreement, Killings of Social Leaders and Their Effects on Community Processes Persist

Directing International Cooperation Toward Territorial Capacities

The international community has played a significant role in implementing the Peace Agreement, and its involvement will remain necessary in the coming years. Its contribution can place greater emphasis on strengthening territorial and organizational capacities.

This includes providing technical assistance to improve coordination and sharing information among the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Protection Unit (UNP), social organizations, and human rights observatories. It also involves strengthening collective and community-based protection and self-protection mechanisms.

Maintaining and strengthening international presence and monitoring in the territories facing the highest levels of risk is equally important. Diplomatic support, greater international awareness of risk situations, and the continuation of emergency funds and accompaniment programs can help expand protection for individuals and organizations, particularly at critical junctures.

This support should neither replace the responsibilities of the State nor impose external agendas. It should strengthen the capacities of the responsible institutions while also reinforcing communities' autonomy to define their priorities, sustain their processes, and engage in dialogue with the State. By 2030, international cooperation should contribute to consolidating stronger organizations, more effective institutional mechanisms, and communities with greater autonomy from external support.

Axis 5. From Implementation to Defending What Has Been Achieved: Challenges for the Gender Measures of the Final Peace Agreement

- 1. Protect the peace budget as a condition for achieving tangible changes in women's lives.** From a budgetary perspective, the Final Peace Agreement was not conceived as a policy limited to a single government. Its implementation was planned over a fifteen-year period, from 2017 to 2031. Budget discussions for the 2026–2030 period should incorporate non-regression and gender-impact criteria: no adjustment should reduce the State's capacity to implement measures specifically targeting women or shift the costs of austerity onto them.
- 2. Defend the governance mechanisms for monitoring gender measures.** Governance structures—in particular, the Special Instance for Women, the Special High-Level Forum with Ethnic Peoples, the Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CMPVI/CSIVI), and the Government's High-Level Gender Body—are essential for maintaining dialogue and oversight and ensuring the coordinated implementation of the Agreement. The funding, autonomy, and independence of civil society bodies must be guaranteed.
- 3. Strengthen international cooperation to protect civic space and women's political autonomy.** International cooperation can continue to fund projects aligned with the Government's priorities while also taking on an additional role: protecting civic space, the autonomy of social organizations, and the ability of women and LGBTIQ+ people to participate, exercise oversight, and demand compliance with the commitments made under the Agreement.

This requires expanding international cooperation—including political cooperation—for women's, feminist, LGBTIQ+, peasant, Indigenous, and Afrodescendant organizations. This support should be channeled through flexible, multi-year mechanisms with rapid response capacity. Financial cooperation can take the form of multi-year funds, flexible funding arrangements, and rapid response mechanisms made directly available to these organizations.

Technical cooperation can also strengthen capacities to monitor the implementation of the Agreement's gender approach and analyze its outcomes; produce

and use information; document gender-based violence and differentiated impacts; promote strategic litigation and rights enforcement; and design protection and risk-management strategies.

Sustained cooperation, through long-term partnerships among women's organizations, international bodies, and regional networks, can connect funding, technical assistance, political support, international observation, and citizen oversight mechanisms. It is also essential to establish preventive international monitoring mechanisms in response to potential rollbacks and to use diplomatic and verification instruments to continue demanding the full implementation of the commitments made under the Agreement.

Across all five axes, the recommendations underscore the need for international cooperation to help strengthen territorial, institutional, and community capacities, preserve the vital role of social organizations, and avoid taking over the responsibilities of the Colombian State. They also emphasize the importance of sustaining long-term processes, promoting participation, and consolidating capacities that allow the results of the Agreement's implementation to endure beyond changes in government.

Heinrich Böll Foundation
Bogotá Office – Colombia
Calle 37 No. 15-40
Bogotá, Colombia
Representative: Evelyn Hartig

T +57 1 37 19 111
E co-info@co.boell.org
W co.boell.org

