

The Honourable Robert D. Nault, P.C., M.P.
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs and International Development
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to respond to the Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled *Supporting Peace and Development in Guatemala and Colombia for the Long Term*, tabled in the House of Commons on December 1, 2016.

The Government is pleased to note that the Committee's recommendations are consistent with Canada's overall engagement in Guatemala and Colombia. Canada is working to fight impunity, strengthen security and the rule of law, advance women's rights and empowerment and support transitional justice through various programming tools. It is expected that this work will continue pending the ratification of the International Assistance Review undertaken by the Government in 2016.

Below is the Government's response to the specific recommendations made by the Committee.

Recommendation 1: The Government of Canada should continue to support the International Commission against impunity in Guatemala.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. Canada recognizes the International Commission against impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) as a critical partner for Canada in Guatemala. The CICIG and Guatemala's Public Ministry have achieved important results in the fight against impunity and corruption. As highlighted by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion during his visit to Guatemala in October 2016, the investigations they have undertaken continue to be critical for a better governed and more transparent Guatemala. Canada provided \$18 million to the CICIG for the period 2008-2017 and is currently one of the top four donors to the Commission. Further support from the international community will be required as the CICIG's mandate has been extended to 2019. This extension was requested by President Jimmy Morales, accepted by the UN Secretary General following consultations with donor countries, and welcomed by civil society and the international community. Global Affairs Canada is considering future funding to the CICIG. Canadian support to CICIG will also continue to be provided through other means and channels. For example,

with support from Canada's Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (\$693,000 from 2015-2017), the Justice Education Society of British Columbia has been instrumental in strengthening the capacity of local authorities working with CICIG to investigate and prosecute. In the context of increasing criticism of the CICIG and threats and harassment against the Attorney General, judges and other justice system actors working to fight impunity in Guatemala, Canada will also continue to provide political and public support to the work of the CICIG and the Public Ministry, including through highly visible social media channels.

Recommendation 2: The Government of Canada should provide direct support to local civil society organizations – and their Canadian civil society partners – that are working to fight impunity, strengthen the rule of law, advance women's human rights and women's empowerment, combat sexual and gender-based violence, address indigenous rights and inclusion, and pursue transitional justice in Guatemala.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. The Government of Canada places great importance on collaboration with civil society organizations. This was demonstrated when former Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion invited Mr. Pascal Paradis, Executive Director of Lawyers without Borders Canada, to accompany him on his October 2016 official visit to Guatemala. Lawyers without Borders Canada is among a number of Canadian civil society partners who, with the Government of Canada's support, collaborate with Guatemalan organizations. Other Canadian partners include: Justice Education Society, which has helped strengthen Guatemala's justice system and investigation methods; the Center for International Studies and Cooperation, which has strengthened women's economic empowerment and the capacity of local institutions to prevent violence; and InterPares, a pioneer in work on sexual violence in armed conflict. Currently, Canada funds four health-related projects implemented by Canadian civil society organizations (Cause Canada – \$2.4 million; Action Against Hunger – \$4.3 million; Tula Foundation – \$7.6 million and Horizons of Friendship – \$11.4 million) that work with counterparts in Guatemala to increase access to reproductive and health services for women and youth. Canada will explore future programming to enhance women's rights and empowerment and gender-sensitive justice and to provide political support to local organizations working to promote and protect human rights.

Recommendation 3: The Government of Canada should pursue opportunities to engage with the Government of Guatemala and Guatemalan civil society organizations on the women, peace and security agenda, including by supporting the development and implementation of Guatemala's national action plan.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. The situation of women and girls remains a challenge in Guatemala. The topic was a key focus for the visits to Guatemala by former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Minister Karina Gould, in July 2016 and by former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stéphane Dion, in

October 2016. Canada is engaged through a policy dialogue with the Inter-Institutional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in Guatemala, which is working to draft Guatemala's National

.../3

- 3 -

Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Through programming and diplomatic engagement with the Government of Guatemala, Canada will continue to address complex issues affecting women in Guatemala, including: women's rights and gender inequality; nutrition; maternal, newborn and child health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; efforts to prevent early and forced child marriage; political and economic empowerment; transitional justice; violence prevention; and combating criminal structures and organized crime groups, including those that profit from the abuse and exploitation of women. By supporting CICIG, Canada has also promoted the integration of gender equality training for teams within the Commission, enabling them to carry out gender-based analysis.

Through support to organizations that promote human rights in Guatemala, Canada has contributed to legal representation for strategic human rights litigation, including support for the landmark case of "Sepur Zarco", which resulted in the conviction of two former military officers for crimes against 15 indigenous women. The trial marked the first time that sexual slavery perpetrated during an armed conflict was prosecuted in the country where the crimes took place. The Government will continue to work to increase the participation and empowerment of women and girls through our engagement with grassroots organizations. During his visit to Guatemala in October 2016, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion met with one of the girls supported by Canada who has now become an advocate for the rights of girls. Together they recorded an inspiring message diffused through social media, highlighting that women and girls are powerful agents of change. Canada will use every opportunity to reinforce this message.

Recommendation 4: The Government of Canada should explore opportunities to support the National Police of Colombia in its efforts to strengthen rural policing, including through training initiatives.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. The recently finalized peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) provides an opportunity to resolve the longest running armed conflict in the Americas. Achieving a long-lasting and durable peace will require extending security to rural and remote areas which have been at the centre of the armed conflict. As part of the \$21 million contribution to support Colombia's peace efforts announced in September 2016 by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion, the Government of Canada is strengthening rural and urban police reform through a \$3 million, three-year project entitled "Police Transformation Focused on Urban and Rural Citizen Security Phase II" with Fundación Ideas para la Paz, a Colombian non-governmental organization. Through this project, Canada will assist in the development and training of Colombia's police capabilities and strengthen the monitoring of their activities at the national level, in rural

regions that have been prioritized in the post-conflict phase, as well as in the 12 metropolitan areas for which the Colombian National Police (PNC) is responsible. The Government of Canada also expects to deploy Canadian police officers to the UN Special Political Mission and trainers to support the PNC. These deployments would help strengthen the UN's ability to implement the peace agreement as well as help the PNC improve its ability to respond to the demands of citizens, particularly in rural communities.

.../4

- 4 -

Recommendation 5: As part of its development assistance to Colombia, the Government of Canada should provide targeted support to programs that are focused on the reintegration of former combatants.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. As the demobilization timetable advances, Canada supports the need to ensure the successful reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society. Integrating former combatants as productive community members helps to build an inclusive Colombian society and contributes to national reconciliation. Canada is supporting a \$3.8 million project over three years entitled “Increasing national and local capacity for the implementation of the prospective peace agreement in Colombia” with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Part of this project is expected to support issues around demobilization and reintegration, including early efforts to facilitate planning for longer-term reintegration, as well as aspects related to women and children, and addressing gender-based violence.

Recommendation 6: The Government of Canada should provide on-the-ground support for the efforts of women's organizations and women's rights activists in Colombia, including in rural areas, towards the development and implementation of gender-responsive peace agreements.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. Canada's multi-year investments in rural development support women's equal participation as decision-makers in rural cooperatives and associations, as well as access to credit, infrastructure and land. Fostering inclusive rural development is a central element of Colombia's peace agreement, as recognized by Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia and winner of the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize. Canada's education and youth programs have targeted unequal gender relations among youth in conflict zones and supported educational opportunities designed to target vulnerable girls and teenage mothers. Furthermore, Canada has strengthened access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Colombia, while simultaneously providing psychological support. In July 2016 and September 2016, Canada's Minister of International Development and then Minister of Foreign Affairs respectively, visited Colombia and announced \$78.4 million in support for Colombia's peace efforts. These funds will support gender-responsive initiatives such as: access to transitional justice, reconciliation efforts, and support for survivors. From these funds, a \$20 million contribution to the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Post-Conflict in Colombia, Canada will support women's civil society organizations at the forefront of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and recovery efforts, particularly in rural areas,

with a view to strengthening the role of women to fully participate in peace building implementation. Through Canada's Embassy in Bogota, Canada is also serving as President of the International Cooperation Gender Working Group. This will allow Canada to support the implementation of gender-responsive peace agreements and Colombia's National Policy on Rural Women.

.../5

- 5 -

I would like to thank the Committee for its work in producing this report. As Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, I remain committed to working with our partners in helping support peace, justice, development and women's empowerment in Guatemala and Colombia.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P.

