

3. Peace negotiations in America

- Five peace processes took place in the Americas: two in Colombia, one in Venezuela, one in Nicaragua and one in Haiti, representing 10% of the negotiations that took place during 2019.
- Faced with the worsening political and social crisis, the president of Haiti tried to initiate a national dialogue process.
- The Venezuelan government and the opposition held several meetings in Norway and Barbados under the auspices of the Norwegian government.
- The peace process between the Colombian government and the ELN was completely interrupted after an attack against a police academy in Bogota in January.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in the Americas in 2019, both the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each case on both continents throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in the Americas that hosted peace negotiations during 2019.

Table 3.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in America in 2019

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Colombia (ELN)	Government, ELN	Guarantor countries (Brazil, Norway, Cuba and Chile), accompanying countries (Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy)
Colombia (FARC)	Government, FARC	UN Verification Mission in Colombia, International Verification Component (Technical Secretariat of the Notables, University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute)
Haiti	Government, political and social opposition	--
Nicaragua	Government, political and social opposition	Vatican City, OAS
Venezuela	Government, political and social opposition	Norway, International Contact Group

3.1 Negotiations in 2019: regional trends

Five peace processes took place in the Americas in 2019, one more than the previous year. Two of the processes took place in Colombia, one in Venezuela, one in Nicaragua and one in Haiti, which began during the year. In Colombia, the process to implement the peace agreement signed between the government and the FARC in 2016 that ended the armed conflict pitting the former insurgency against the security forces continued, though not without difficulties. However, negotiations with the ELN were suspended and could not be formally reactivated throughout the year. In Venezuela, Nicaragua and Haiti, the peace processes were aimed at transforming the serious political crises that the three countries are going through, calling on the governments and political and social opposition movements in different negotiating formats, though none achieved results that could relax the respective political tensions.

With regard to the **parties** involved, the two negotiating processes in Colombia can be distinguished from the

rest of the processes in the Americas. In Colombia, the government negotiated with the political party FARC, formed after the demobilisation of the FARC-EP guerrillas following the signing of the 2016 agreement, as well as with the ELN guerrilla, with which it has pursued a fruitless peace process. In Venezuela, Nicaragua and Haiti, the most significant parties were the governments and the different opposition organisations, grouped in different platforms that brought together political parties and social organisations of different types, such as the Religions for Peace Platform in Haiti and the feminist movement in Nicaragua.

Third parties took a leading role in most processes, playing different roles and tasks. Third parties were both national and international and sought to bring the actors involved in crises and conflicts closer together. In Colombia, they were mostly international actors, both in the armed conflict with the ELN and in the implementation talks with the FARC. The accompaniment format in the failed ELN process

Map 3.1. Peace negotiations in America in 2019



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in America in 2019

was that of a group of guarantor countries (Brazil, Norway, Cuba and Chile) after Ecuador withdrew due to diplomatic differences with Colombia and Venezuela's participation was vetoed by the Colombian government, as well as a group of accompanying countries (Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy). The third parties responsible for verifying implementation of the agreement with the FARC were the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the International Verification Component formed by the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute and the Technical Secretariat of the Notables, which was managed by Colombian organisations CINEP and CERAC. Vatican City and the OAS assumed the role of guarantors, observers and companions in Nicaragua. Norway actively tried to boost the dialogue in Venezuela, even with meetings in Oslo, and especially with negotiations in Barbados, which failed to channel the process. Meanwhile, the International Contact Group was also very active, headed by the EU and Uruguay and made up of Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Bolivia.

The **negotiating agendas** reflected the particular characteristics of each context, though it should be noted that in Haiti, Venezuela and Nicaragua, the opposition was opposed to the continuity of the current governments and intended to initiate processes of

political transition. In Haiti, the opposition demanded the resignation of current President Jovenel Moïse and the government raised several proposals for a transition, including the establishment of a constituent assembly. In Venezuela, the government and the opposition negotiated a six-point agenda whose contents were kept secret, but in public the opposition leader and self-proclaimed "acting president" demanded the resignation of the current government, the formation

of a transitional government and new elections. After these negotiations failed, the government and other sectors of the opposition agreed on the release of political prisoners, electoral reforms and other issues. The agenda of the negotiations in Nicaragua was also focused on electoral issues and the human rights situation, especially political prisoners, reparations for victims and constitutional reforms. In Colombia, the process with the FARC was focused on implementation of the different

points of the peace agreement reached in 2016 and there were notable differences between the parties, which could not be resolved through the mechanisms established in the agreement, such as the Commission to Monitor, Promote and Verify Implementation of the Peace Agreement (CSIVI). Regarding the process with the ELN, the government continued to insist on an end to the kidnappings and the unilateral cessation of violence, while the ELN reaffirmed the agenda agreed during the process.

For the third year in a row, the negotiating processes that took place in the Americas were characterised by constant crises and serious obstacles that endangered their continuity

For the third year in a row, all the negotiating processes that took place in the Americas were marked by the fragility generated by the crises. All the negotiations had to face serious obstacles and were suspended at times, without attempts to reactivate them achieving a positive change in the processes. The processes continued to be affected by the serious distrust between the parties and towards the facilitating actors, once again conditioning the attempts to overcome the different crises in contexts of violence and even repression against the opposition, as happened in Nicaragua.

Regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, women's organisations faced enormous difficulties in being considered interlocutors and protagonists of the negotiating processes, despite the social leadership of these organisations. In Colombia, women's organisations continued to play a very important role in implementing the 2016 peace agreement. The Special Body on Gender for advising the CSIVI was active and submitted its evaluation report of said implementation, in which it criticised the fact that gender has been blurred as the central axis of implementation, along with contributions from civil society organisations. In Nicaragua, women's and feminist organisations continued to play a leading role in the opposition movement and showed their support for different peace process initiatives such as the National Dialogue. However, it was not possible for gender issues to be added to the dialogue agendas and the feminist movement deplored the constant violence against women in the country. In Venezuela, it was announced that one of the complementary tables of the National Dialogue Table would be formed by women's organisations and other actors.

3.2 Case studies

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

Haiti	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

In recent years, especially after former President Jean Bertrand Aristide left the country in February 2004 and the subsequent deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH), there have been several attempts at consultation and dialogue between various political and social sectors to cope with the institutional fragility, political-social polarisation and economic and security crisis facing the country. Yet none of these initiatives, most of which have had international support, have turned into meaningful agreements or have led to permanent or stable spaces or mechanisms for negotiation. Though President Jovenel

Moïse's mandate has been controversial since its inception after he was accused of electoral fraud in the 2015 election, his attempts to create a national dialogue in 2019 came in response to the deepening crisis in mid-2018 and the outbreak of protests and episodes of violence in 2019.

Given the exacerbation of the political, economic and social crises that began in late 2018, President Jovenel Moïse repeatedly tried to establish a national dialogue with the opposition, but by the end of the year these attempts were not successful, mainly because most of the opposition focused on forcing Moïse to resign. In late February, **Moïse approved a presidential decree that established the Inter-Haitian National Dialogue Facilitation Committee, which had a mandate until 31 May and whose main objective was to establish the framework for negotiations, make recommendations on measures to promote them, encourage the participation of as many actors as possible and synthesise the different proposals submitted during the negotiating process for subsequent implementation.** However, this attempt did not come to fruition as stated in the aforementioned decree for different reasons. Firstly, it failed because the Religions for Peace Platform, which brings together Catholic, Episcopalian, Protestant and Vodou community groups, declined to facilitate the dialogue as the government had proposed, claiming that the political and social conditions were not suitable for that purpose. Secondly, it failed because some of the members of the committee submitted their resignation since some of the objectives of the committee that were made public had not previously been discussed and they needed to be solved by the government, not the National Dialogue. Thirdly, and more importantly, it failed because most of the opposition rejected the negotiations offered by the government, proposing the beginning of a 36-month transition period instead in which a constituent assembly would be created to draft a Constitution and a new electoral council would be established to guarantee free elections. In April, another opposition platform (Progressive Opposition Forces) proposed the formation of an interim government that would lead a national dialogue and appoint a new head of state.

In early October, due to the worsening of the institutional crisis (the country had no government or prime minister due to the opposition's refusal to ratify the two prime ministers proposed by the president) and the increase in public protests (between 15 September 15 and late October, 42 people are estimated to have died and more than 80 were injured), Moïse proposed another committee to promote a national dialogue. On this occasion, **the Core Group was actively involved in such an attempt to negotiate**, visiting the country and urging different parts of Haitian society to start talks with the government to find a solution to the institutional paralysis. The parliamentary elections could not be held in October, so by January 2020 the terms of many MPs and congressmen will have expired. The Core Group, **which consists of the United Nations, the**

OAS and representatives of France, Spain, Canada, the United States and Brazil, also urged the government to try to overcome the humanitarian crisis. After the United Nations warned that 3.7 million people urgently needed food aid, Moïse appealed to the international community. The international community's greatest efforts to assist the negotiations in Haiti came from the US government, considered by some analysts to be Moïse's main source of support to remain in office. In March, the Trump administration appointed Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale to try to channel political negotiations in Haiti, so he met with Moïse and with opposition groups several times during the year. However, this time Moïse's call for dialogue fell on deaf ears, since the opposition as a whole thought that the only possible solution to the current crisis was to remove him from power. In fact, four of the seven commissioners appointed in October resigned shortly after being appointed to the position on the grounds that Moïse was not willing to put his potential resignation on the negotiating table. Given this scenario, **in November the president publicly declared that he had begun a series of closed-door talks with various civil society and private sector groups, as well as with moderate opposition factions.** Despite the fact that in mid-December the government declared that these talks were having an effect, the main opposition leaders and the representative of the Episcopal Conference stated that they had no knowledge of them. Until the end of the year the international community continued to support a resumption of the negotiations without conditions, but the main opposition platforms (such as the Alternative Consensus for the Refoundation of Haiti) rejected the option. At the end of the year, Moïse was in favour of amending the Constitution because he thought that the current one limits the executive powers of the presidency and thereby hinders the country's governance.

Finally, the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) began in October. The BINUH will support the government in matters of political governance and will take over from the United Nations Support Mission for Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), which in turn replaced MINUSTAH in 2017, established in 2004. Coinciding with the end of that mission, the Chilean Human Rights Commission and more than a dozen Haitian human rights organisations announced their intention to take legal action against Chilean soldiers deployed in MINUSTAH who sexually abused girls and women between 2014 and 2017. According to a report released at the end of the year after interviewing 2,500 people residing in communities in which MINUSTAH was deployed, 265 children fathered by MINUSTAH troops were abandoned. Many of these pregnancies were the result of rape. About 20% of the documented cases were committed by Chilean soldiers. MINUSTAH was one of the four peacekeeping missions with the highest number of complaints of sexual abuse.

The Haitian president convened a National Dialogue twice to address the worsening crisis, but most of the opposition rejected the offer and focused its efforts on achieving the president's resignation

Nicaragua

Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

In April 2018, as a result of the government's attempt to reform the social security system, a series of protests broke out throughout the country that caused the death or disappearance of hundreds of people and plunged the country into the worst socio-political crisis in recent decades. Faced with domestic and international concern over the protests, a repressive crackdown by the state security forces and clashes between government supporters and opponents, in May the government began a National Dialogue with various opposition groups that was facilitated by the Catholic Church. Due to the lack of progress in the dialogue and the government's growing opposition to mediation by the Episcopal Conference, several international players like the United Nations and the Central American Integration System said they were willing to facilitate it, while others, such as the OAS and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, exerted pressure on the government to end the crisis and the many human rights violations it was provoking.

Alongside the political and social crisis that the country has suffered since April 2018 and the growing international pressure on the government due to the human rights situation, **the National Dialogue between Daniel Ortega's government and the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy was resumed at the beginning of the year, but the talks were interrupted in May and the government formally terminated them in late July.**

In line with what had happened throughout 2018, early in the year, international pressure on the government to resume dialogue with the opposition and to allow international supervision of the human rights situation continued. For example, the OAS Permanent Council met in January to study the possible application of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which could lead to Nicaragua's expulsion from the international organisation. At the end of the month, Parliament passed the Law on Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace, but the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) considered that it did not meet international standards of justice, truth and reparations. In February,

after a visit by several delegations of the OAS, the EU and the US and a meeting between the government and private sector representatives that was also attended by the Archbishop of Managua and the Vatican Nuncio in Nicaragua, the government announced that the National Dialogue would resume on 27 February. In early March, both parties agreed on a tentative substantive agenda and several procedural and methodological issues for the negotiations, such as holding daily meetings, engaging in consensus-based decision-making, remaining tight-lipped about issues on which there is no agreement, finalising the negotiations for 28 March and asking the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua to

government release hundreds of people imprisoned since April 2018 that the opposition considers political prisoners or prisoners of conscience.

The second half of March is when the greatest progress in the negotiations was reported throughout the year, since on 20 March the government agreed to release the people arrested since April 2018 under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as to establish a working table on electoral reforms. Along the same lines, on 29 March, both parties signed the “Agreement to strengthen citizen rights and guarantees”, whereby they had to comply with commitments regarding the right to protest, freedom of the press, procedural guarantees (an end to illegal detentions, due process, effective judicial protection and other aspects), university autonomy and the disarmament of paramilitary bodies within a maximum of 90 days. However, in early April the negotiations were blocked for several reasons, including mass arrests (of around 160 people between 14 and 21 April, according to the opposition), the government's refusal to allow international human rights organisations to supervise implementation of the agreements reached, disagreements over the election schedule, mechanisms of reparations for the victims and especially the parties' different interpretations about the number of prisoners to be released (the government recognised about 240 people on a list of approximately 700 people that the opposition had submitted). The Civic Alliance complained that the government was not keeping the promises it had made in March and in late May it abandoned the negotiations in protest of the death of an opposition leader in prison, due to the continuation of what it considered illegal arrests and repressive measures and due to the enactment of an amnesty law for crimes linked to the crisis since April 2018 (which the opposition thought encouraged impunity among state security forces and paramilitary bodies). Meanwhile, the government said it had honoured its commitment to free those arrested since April 2018 after having released about 100 people in late May and another 106 in early June. Although the Civic Alliance made repeated calls to resume a third round of negotiations and several governments and international organisations exerted increasing pressure on Managua, the government ignored the appeals, publicly refused to move up the date of the elections (scheduled for 2021) and sent a letter to the Vatican and the OAS ending the negotiations in late July. Some analysts said that the fact that the letter was signed by the foreign minister and not by Daniel Ortega suggested that the talks could be resumed later, but they were not resumed in 2019. However, after Sommertag's efforts and pressure from Humberto Ortega (the brother of the president and one of the main leaders of the Sandinista revolution), on 30 December the government transferred 90 prisoners to house arrest, though the opposition that 65 prisoners

that they considered political prisoners remained incarcerated.

In Nicaragua, the National Dialogue between the government of Daniel Ortega and the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy was resumed at the beginning of the year, but it was interrupted in May and the government formally ended it in late July

Finally, given the standstill of the negotiations and criticism about the lack of a unitary vision among the opposition, starting in the final quarter of the year the large government opposition platforms, such as the Civic Alliance (the main actor in the National Dialogue) and Blue and White National Unity (formed by 94 civil society organisations) began contacts to form the Grand Opposition Coalition. In this regard, in mid-December the Civic Alliance, Blue and White National Unity and the Pro-Electoral Reform Group presented a unitary proposal on constitutional and electoral reform, one of the main topics of the negotiations since mid-2018.

Gender, peace and security

Shortly after the start of the National Dialogue in late February, the Broad Women's Movement, a platform of several feminist organisations, publicly voiced its support for this initiative. Although there is no evidence that the National Dialogue specifically addressed gender equity issues and that there were no women in the six-person negotiating delegation that the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy designated to participate in the National Dialogue (there were female substitutes for these representatives, as well as female advisors to the delegation), the Broad Women's Movement declared that the agenda that the Civic Alliance submitted to the negotiating table had previously been agreed with women's organisations that continuously provided content for the negotiations. However, in March it emerged that eight protesters imprisoned in La Esperanza prison began a hunger strike in late February because they did not feel represented at the negotiating table between the government and the aforementioned Civic Alliance.

South America

Colombia (ELN)	
Negotiating actors	Government, ELN
Third parties	Guarantor countries (Brazil, Norway, Cuba and Chile), accompanying countries (Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy)
Relevant agreements	“Heaven's Door” Agreement (1988)
Summary:	Since the ELN emerged in 1964, various negotiating processes have tried to bring peace to the country. The first negotiations between the Colombian government and the ELN date from 1991 (Caracas and Tlaxcala). In 1998,

both parties signed a peace agreement in Madrid that envisaged holding a national convention. That same year, the “Puerta del Cielo” agreement between the ELN and civil society activists was signed in Mainz, Germany, focused on humanitarian aspects. In 1999, the Colombian government and the ELN resumed meetings in Cuba, which ended in June 2000. The government of Álvaro Uribe resumed peace negotiations with the ELN in Cuba between 2005 and 2007, though no results were achieved. At the end of 2012, the ELN showed its willingness to open new negotiations with President Juan Manuel Santos, appointing a negotiating commission, and exploratory meetings were held. Formal peace negotiations began in 2017.

The peace process between the Colombian government and the ELN was fully suspended as the result of a serious bomb attack on a police academy in Bogota in January that killed 21 police officers. After the attack, Iván Duque’s government decided to reissue arrest warrants against members of the ELN who were in Havana as part of the armed group’s negotiating delegation and asked Cuba to extradite them immediately. The peace negotiations had been deadlocked since August 2018, following the inauguration of Duque’s government. The ELN representatives in Cuba completely distanced themselves from the attack in Bogota, noting that they had no responsibility or control over what happened and that they had complied with the negotiating protocols at all times. They also demanded that Duque respect the agreement that protected their safe return to Colombia. Both Cuba and Norway refused to facilitate the extradition of the negotiators, citing the agreement reached between the parties on how to proceed in case of a breach.

Negotiations between the parties were not resumed throughout the year, despite various calls for it, and the government remained firm in its demands that the ELN end the kidnappings and unilaterally halt its attacks. In April, the ELN announced a unilateral truce for Holy Week, which generally remained in place, although the CERAC centre said that it had been violated by an attack against the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline. At the end of the year, the armed group ruled out another truce for Christmas, as had happened on other occasions, but it did release three minors belonging to the organisation to a commission formed by the Ombudsman, the Catholic Church and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It also released two people who had been kidnapped since 2018. However, it also proposed a bilateral truce to generate a climate of trust that could restart the negotiations. This proposal was presented after the arrest of one of its leaders and former peace negotiator Juan Carlos Cuellar, who had served as a “peace manager” between 2017 and January 2019 and who was in contact with the current government. According to the ELN, Cuellar had

received guarantees from the government that he could continue his efforts ahead of a possible peace process.

Colombia (FARC)	
Negotiating actors	Government, FARC
Third parties	UN Verification Mission in Colombia, International Verification Component (Technical Secretariat of the Notables, University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute)
Relevant agreements	The Havana peace agreement (2016)

Summary:

Since the founding of the first guerrilla groups in 1964 there have been several negotiation attempts. In the early 1990s several small groups were demobilized, but not the FARC and the ELN, which are the two most important. In 1998, President Pastrana authorized the demilitarization of a large region of Colombia, around the area of San Vicente del Caguán, in order to conduct negotiations with the FARC, which lasted until 2002 and were unsuccessful. In 2012, and after several months of secret negotiations in Cuba, new talks began with the FARC in Cuba based on a specific agenda and including citizen participation mechanisms. After four years of negotiations, a historic peace agreement for the Colombian people was signed in late 2016.

The process to implement the peace agreement with the FARC underwent a year of difficulties, both due to the objections to the process raised by the government led by President Iván Duque and to the serious setback represented by important FARC leaders’ abandonment of the agreement and resumption of the armed struggle. These leaders included the chief negotiator in Havana, Iván Márquez, who in August joined former commanders such as Jesús Santrich, “El Paisa” or Romaña to declare that they were taking up arms again after refusing to appear before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), a transitional justice mechanism established by the peace agreement. Meanwhile, the different institutions established by the peace agreement made progress in their work. The Truth Commission continued to take testimonies and promote activities promoting reconciliation and co-existence. The JEP held more than 80 hearings and more than 12,000 people submitted to this form of transitional justice. The bodies responsible for verifying implementation of the peace agreement noted some progress, but also pointed out the limitations and difficulties. According to the report presented by the Kroc Institute,¹ by April 2019 more than two thirds of the commitments included in the peace agreement were in the implementation phase and one third had been completed or had made substantial progress on implementation. The Kroc Institute also found that

The implementation of the peace agreement signed between the government of Colombia and the FARC continued to move forward, though with significant difficulties and many pending challenges

1. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. *Effective status of the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia, December 2016 – April 2019*. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

after the formation of the new government headed by Iván Duque, implementation faced new obstacles and slowed down. Furthermore, the process to reinstate former combatants of the FARC was delayed, which produced an atmosphere of dissatisfaction and distrust, as demonstrated by the return of some of the FARC's leaders to armed struggle. The Kroc Institute identifies protecting and achieving progress in transitional justice mechanisms, particularly the JEP and the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, as one of the most important challenges. The security situation of social leaders, rights advocates and former members of the FARC were also identified as key challenges, given the many murders and harassment faced by many members of these groups. The Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component also submitted its follow-up reports,² in which it expressed concern about the lack of approval of the laws necessary to comply with many of the provisions of the agreement. The report indicates that some progress was made, but enormous challenges remained, such as comprehensive rural reform, security guarantees for the exercise of policy or for demonstration and peaceful protest and other aspects of the agreement.

Gender, peace and security

Major challenges remained in implementing a gender approach in the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government. The Special Body of Women for the Gender Perspective on Peace presented its evaluation report on three years of implementation.³ In the report, female civil society representatives indicated that some of the structural causes of inequality and violence that have a special impact on women and rural, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, *palenquero* and *raizal* communities in the country, as well as the LGBTI population, have still not been addressed. They also complained that gender has become blurred as the central line of implementation, since the Framework Plan for Implementation limits its transversal nature. However, the report also highlighted the government's decision to create a governmental High Body on Gender and revealed that institutions in different parts of the country remain ignorant or unaware of the peace agreement, the gender focus and other differentiated approaches. The Kroc Institute also presented its follow-up report on the gender approach, which stressed the difficulties and delays in implementing it.⁴ Compared to 27% of the general commitments of the agreement, whose implementation had not begun by August 2019, 42% of the commitments related to the gender approach had not been begun. In addition, only 8% of the

commitments related to the gender approach had been completed, compared to 25% of those for the whole agreement. The Kroc Institute noted that the greatest progress was made in the sphere of victims' rights.

Venezuela	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	Norway, International Contact Group
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

Faced with the worsening political and social crisis that Venezuela experienced after the death in 2013 of President Hugo Chávez, the leader of the so-called Bolivarian Revolution, his successor Nicolás Maduro's narrow victory in the presidential election of April 2013 and the protests staged in the early months of 2014, which caused the death of around 40 people, in March 2014 the government said it was willing to accept talks with the opposition facilitated by UNASUR or the Vatican, but categorically rejected any mediation by the OAS. Shortly after Pope Francis called for dialogue and a group of UNASUR foreign ministers visited Venezuela and held many meetings, preliminary talks began between Caracas and the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) in April 2014, to which the Secretary of State of the Vatican, the former Apostolic Nuncio to Venezuela, as well as the foreign ministers of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, were invited as witnesses in good faith. Although the talks were interrupted in May 2014 due to developments in the political situation, both UNASUR and the Vatican continued to facilitate through Apostolic Nuncio Aldo Giordano. In May 2016, shortly after a visit to Venezuela by the former leaders of Spain (Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero), Panama (Martín Torrijos) and the Dominican Republic (Leonel Fernández) at the request of UNASUR, the Venezuelan government and opposition met in the Dominican Republic with the three aforementioned ex-leaders and UNASUR representatives. After a meeting between Maduro and Pope Francis in October, both parties met again in Venezuela under the auspices of the Pope's new special envoy, Emil Paul Tscherrig. In late 2017, both sides decided to resume the talks in the Dominican Republic starting in December, accompanied by several countries chosen by both parties (Chile, Mexico and Paraguay by the opposition and Nicaragua, Bolivia and San Vicente and the Grenadines by the government). Although some agreements were reached during the several rounds of negotiations that took place between December 2017 and February 2018, Maduro's unilateral call for a presidential election for 2018 brought them to a standstill and caused the withdrawal of several of the accompanying countries designated by the opposition to facilitate them.

During the year there were several attempts and negotiating formats between the government and the opposition to try to solve the political and

2. Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component (CINEP/PPP-CERAC). *Sixth verification report on the implementation of the final peace agreement in Colombia for the international verifiers Felipe González and José Mujica*. Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component (CINEP/PPP-CERAC).
3. Special Body of Women for the Gender Perspective on Peace, Gender perspective and territorial peace: the situation three years after signing the peace agreement, November 2019.
4. Kroc Institute, UN Women, FIDM and Sweden, Gender Equality for Sustainable Peace. Second Report on the Monitoring of the Gender Perspective in the Implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord, December 2019.

institutional crisis that worsened at the beginning of the year with the proclamation of Juan Guaidó, president of the National Assembly, that he is the “acting president” of the country and his subsequent recognition by several states (56 by the end of the year). **The negotiations that generated the greatest expectations and media attention were those that took place in Oslo and in Barbados under the auspices of the Norwegian government, but also the National Dialogue Table between the government and several opposition parties, the direct dialogue between Caracas and the US administration and diplomatic talks and negotiations within the International Contact Group led by the EU and Uruguay.** In mid-May, the government and opposition delegations met in Oslo to conduct confidential talks facilitated by the Norwegian government to explore both parties’ willingness to participate in the dialogue. Although Guaidó had repeatedly refused to negotiate with the government, some analysts argue that his relatively unsuccessful call on the Venezuelan Armed Forces to rebel against the government on 30 April weakened his position. In addition, shortly before the start of the exploratory talks in Oslo, Guaidó met in Caracas with the International Contact Group. At the end of these talks in Oslo in late March, Guaidó publicly declared that the resignation of Nicolás Maduro was non-negotiable and that he would defend his road map in any negotiations, which consists of holding a presidential election supervised by the international community one year after Maduro’s resignation. During that one-year period, he would lead a transitional government to carry out economic reforms, free members of the opposition considered to be political prisoners and reform state institutions. Despite these statements, the opposition was splintered between those that accepted the negotiations and those that rejected them and instead requested military intervention from the international community. The peace negotiations facilitated by Norway resumed on 15 July in Barbados. In the days leading up to them, both delegations had agreed on a six-point agenda, which was not leaked, as well as on the creation of a working table that would run continuously. Shortly before travelling to Barbados, both delegations had met in Venezuela with the special representative of the International Contact Group, Enrique Iglesias. According to media reports, the framework in which it was negotiated at the time involved moving up the date of the presidential election to 2020 and reshuffling the Electoral Council in exchange for the opposition working for the withdrawal of international sanctions against Venezuela. However, on 7 August, the government halted its participation in the negotiations, accusing the opposition of supporting and celebrating the new

The negotiations that generated the most media attention were those that took place in Oslo and Barbados under the auspices of the Norwegian government, but the National Dialogue Table between the government and several opposition parties is also worthy of mention

sanctions imposed by the US and of intending to hand over the Esequibe, a territory it disputes with Guyana. In addition, the government had previously criticised the decision of the opposition-led National Assembly to ask the OAS to reinstate the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (known as the Rio Treaty), which many analysts interpreted as a way to facilitate military intervention in Venezuela. In mid-September, Guaidó also announced his withdrawal from the peace process and declared that the format had run its course. When he publicly announced his decision, Guaidó said that the government had not responded to his latest proposal at the negotiating table in 40 days: the resignation of Maduro and Guaidó and the formation of a council in charge of convening the next presidential election formed by members of the government, the opposition and the Venezuelan Armed Forces. Although both the Norwegian government and the International Contact Group continued to carry out diplomatic efforts to resume the talks, they did not resume during the rest of the year.

On the same day that the opposition announced an end to its participation in the negotiations in Barbados, Caracas publicly revealed that it had been holding confidential talks with several opposition parties in recent weeks and that a National Dialogue Table had been formed that had reached six preliminary agreements. These agreements include the release of some prisoners, the reform of electoral legislation and the return to the National Assembly of MPs of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela and its ally, the Great Patriotic Pole, who had withdrawn after the opposition’s victory in the last legislative elections,

which resulted in the establishment of a Constituent National Assembly composed exclusively of the ruling party. Although the majority factions of the opposition downplayed any importance to the agreement between the government and parties such as the Hope for Change Movement, Progressive Advance (led by Henri Falcón, an opponent who did decide to run in the 2018 presidential election), Let’s Change and the Movement for Socialism, the government kept the National Dialogue Table active until the end of the year and made some gestures in compliance with the agreements made in mid-September.

In addition to the aforementioned National Dialogue and the talks facilitated by Norway, there were also other active negotiating frameworks during the year. In August, the governments of the United States and Venezuela acknowledged that they were conducting bilateral talks shortly after it was reported to the press that Diosdado Cabello, one of the leading figures of the ruling party, was in direct contact with

Washington through an intermediary. The US special representative for Venezuela, Elliot Abrams, was also very active diplomatically throughout the year and even travelled to Moscow to address the Venezuelan crisis. In June, representatives of several important stakeholders in Venezuela, such as Cuba, Russia, Vatican City and the United Nations, met in Sweden. Finally, the International Contact Group was created in January for a period of 90 days. Led by the EU and Uruguay and composed of Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Bolivia, the group stated from its inception that any solution to the crisis would involve a new presidential election with international observers.

Gender, peace and security

In September, the Maduro government announced that the National Dialogue Table, which began with certain opposition groups after the breakdown of the negotiations facilitated by Norway, would have eight complementary tables to make progress in the agreements. One of them, the eighth, would be made up of social movements and indigenous, peasant and women's organisations. In September, the First International Congress of Women for Peace and Solidarity among Peoples took place in Caracas, which was attended by 70 delegates from around the world. Organised by the ruling party, the conference took place with six work tables and aimed to lead to a work plan focused on women's rights and struggles.

