

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Brussels, 24 August 2016**

**Oidhaco celebrates the signing of the final agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC, paving the way for peace in Colombia**

On 24 August 2016, the Colombian Government and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC) jointly announced the signing of the Final Agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace. Oidhaco welcomes this declaration and hopes that it will be the beginning of a new era for Colombia. Furthermore, Oidhaco commends both parties for their persistence to overcome the difficulties, which arose during the negotiations and their resolve to reach a mutual agreement.

Today, following more than three years of public negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC, the agreement reached by both parties was ratified. The agreement is based on six points of the negotiations agenda: 1. Integral rural development; 2. Political participation; 3. Conclusion of the armed conflict; 4. Solution to the problem of illicit drugs; 5. Victims of conflict; 6. Implementation, verification and ratification of a final peace agreement. The Colombian people will now be asked to approve or disapprove of the accord in a plebiscite. Oidhaco encourages approving the peace accord in order to advance towards a lasting and positive peace and bettering the human rights situation in Colombia.

Nevertheless, in this new post-agreement stage the armed conflict and human rights violations continue to exist in Colombia. To advance towards a complete peace, it is important to initiate the public stage of negotiations between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN). Furthermore, Oidhaco underlines the importance of establishing guarantees of non-repetition of violence, including violence perpetrated by paramilitary groups, whose dismantling is essential, to ensure the satisfactory implementation of the agreement. Moreover, the Government must guarantee the protection of human rights defenders and ensure respect in the relationship between companies and human rights within this new context, which is favourable to investment and business.

Finally, it is fundamental that the monitoring and verification of human rights in the context of the agreements' implementation is carried out in a rigorous and independent way. We therefore call upon the European Union and its member states, as well as on Norway and Switzerland to promote the current mandate of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as a special mechanism mandated to carry out this verification. To fulfill this task, the mandate and the resources of the OHCHR must be broadened to ensure that a human rights component is included in the verification of the implementation process to put Colombia on the path towards peace.

