

# *UN Optimistic About Colombia Peace as Talks Scheduled to Resume*

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United Nations, January 31 (RHC-UNNS) -- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Friday voiced encouragement as Colombian stakeholders prepare to resume peace talks in Havana next week in an effort to end the country's decades-long internal conflict.

In a statement, Ban said the year had "begun with optimism" about the prospects for reaching a Colombian peace agreement in 2015 and reiterated the United Nations' full support for the process. Additionally, he welcomed "the importance attached by both parties to de-escalating the military confrontation."

According to Government estimates, some 600,000 people have died since the conflict between the country's authorities and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) began in the 1960s.

The two sides are working to end the long-running conflict through full implementation of the General Agreement for the End of the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed two years ago.

Last year, the parties reached an accord on dealing with illicit drugs in the country. This followed the

agreement reached in 2013 on political participation and enhancing the role of women, which the Secretary-General also welcomed.

“He is pleased to learn that the unilateral cease-fire initiated by the FARC-EP on 20 December 2014 has held and expresses the hope that this important gesture can be maintained,” today’s statement continued.

“He commends the decision by President Juan Manuel Santos to begin discussions that could lead to a bilateral cease-fire. Both parties are encouraged to persist in their talks on the possible implementation of humanitarian measures to diminish the intensity of the conflict.”

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