

Guatemala, 19th June 2017

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary General
United Nations

Re: Extension of Iván Velásquez's Mandate

Your Excellency, Secretary General:

We are writing to you on behalf of the International NGO Forum in Guatemala (FONGI), the International Platform Against Impunity (PI) and the international solidarity networks Act Alliance, CIFCA, CIDSE, and Grupo Sur. Our members have, for more than two decades now, been providing financial and political accompaniment to many Guatemalans in their efforts to build a peaceful country based on justice and the respect for human rights.

We have witnessed the hope that blossomed with the signing of the peace accords in 1996, the progress that has been made as well as obstacles that have sprung up along the way and the challenges that continue to persist. The UN has provided significant support to Guatemala throughout each crucial stage of this process, particularly through MINUGUA (the UN Mission to Guatemala), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

Regarding the latter, the CICIG has represented a unique initiative with the capacity to contribute, more than any other institution, to addressing the root causes of impunity by investigating organized crime and corruption which are the principal obstacles to justice and which violate fundamental human rights. The CICIG's successes have included criminal prosecution of organized crime and corruption networks that reach to the highest levels of Guatemalan governmental institutions, and their sources of financing, in order to dismantle them, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Since the events of 2015, when the CICIG broke the cases of mass corruption within the customs offices, the social security system and the judicial system, they have worked tirelessly alongside the Attorney General's Office to move forward with arrests and prosecutions of all those suspected of corruption and involvement in organized crime.

The CICIG has contributed to capacity building within the Attorney General's office and the passing of legislation to guarantee non-recurrence of weaknesses that have allowed corruption to flourish in the system.

Iván Velásquez has been a key figure throughout this process. His leadership and commitment to justice, peace and a culture of human rights for Guatemala has meant an unprecedented surge in popular support both for his mandate and the work of the CICIG in general. Nevertheless, Mr. Velásquez's time as Commissioner has not been without difficulty. He has faced a consistent smear campaign in the national media as well as threats from sectors who oppose the work of the CICIG. Fortunately these instances have not served to dissuade him from continuing to work for a more just Guatemala.

In February 2017 the European Parliament emitted a resolution highlighting the precarious situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala and the need for continued international support for the work of the CICIG in tackling organized crime and corruption and in strengthening the judicial system.

For these reasons we fully support the extension of Mr. Velásquez's mandate as Commissioner of the CICIG and we would like to request that you take into account the following considerations:

1. The renewal of the Commissioners mandate will send an important message to the Guatemalan people that the work of the CICIG, in addressing the root causes of impunity by investigating organized crime and corruption, which are the principal obstacles to justice and which violate fundamental human rights, will continue unhindered.
2. The CICIG has managed to rattle the very heart of corruption in Guatemala, it will be essential to secure continued international financial support for the CICIG. This will ensure that the CICIG can confront new challenges in the shape of the ever changing and evolving illegal security groups and clandestine security organizations, which currently operate through national and international organized crime networks.
3. Future extensions of the CICIG's mandate should respond to an independent and impartial assessment of its results, rather than simply considerations of timing, so as to ensure the sustainability of the eradication of impunity and the influence of the distinct apparatuses that have infiltrated the Guatemalan state, including non-state actors that use and promote impunity and corruption.

Mr. Secretary General, the CICIG has demonstrated itself to be a crucial institution in the process of ending this painful chapter in Guatemalan history and changing the culture from one of impunity to a culture which values life and justice. We thank the UN, for its continued support for this initiative until it has achieved its goal.

Without further comment, Excellency, we send you wishes of our highest regard. Please find below our contact details and do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

Sincerely,

Act Alliance
CIDSE
CIFCA
FONGI
Grupo Sur
International Platform Against Impunity

