



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9434th meeting

Wednesday, 11 October 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. França Danese.	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mrs. Paolini
	Gabon	Mr. Nanga
	Ghana	Mr. Osei-Mensah
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United Arab Emirates	Ms. Tantawy
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America.	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/701)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/701)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; His Excellency Mr. Hrvoje Ćurić Hrvatinčić, Deputy Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Mr. Rodrigo Botero García, General Director of the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/701, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu: I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council as it takes up the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/701) on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

As always, I am honoured to be joined by Minister for Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán. I once again thank him and the Government of Colombia for their continued trust in the work of the Mission

in support of peace. I also welcome Mr. Rodrigo Botero's participation in today's meeting. He is a leading Colombian environmentalist and participant in the ongoing peace efforts whose work illustrates the important connections between conflict, peacebuilding and the environment.

We meet as milestones in the peace process are approaching, with the seventh anniversary of the signing of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace coming up and nearing the halfway point in the 15-year timetable for its implementation. Those who have studied Colombia's armed conflict deeply have pointed to skewed land distribution and the failure to enact essential rural reforms as one of its underlying causes. It was for that reason that the parties to the agreement placed comprehensive rural reform at its heart, making it the first chapter of the agreement and the area requiring the most substantial long-term investment. It is therefore not surprising that the lagging progress in that area in the initial years of implementation has limited the extent to which the agreement has been able to bring the hoped-for transformations to rural and conflict-affected areas that have long been marginalized.

Nevertheless, while we are still a long way from attaining the ambitious goals of the agreement in that respect, I wanted to begin my briefing today with an acknowledgement of the increasing Government efforts under way to bring about these reforms. I would say that a commitment to that section of the agreement and the new peace dialogue initiatives were the outstanding features of the Petro Urrego Administration's recently concluded first year as it sought to further consolidate peace in the country. The Secretary-General's latest report highlights important policy actions in that regard, pointing to a year marked by substantial budget allocations for rural reform and its prioritization in the national development plan; increased dialogue with peasant and landholder organizations and recent steps taken such as the establishment of the National Agrarian Reform System and the designation of four priority regions for comprehensive rural development interventions.

That commitment has been brought to life in human terms in scenes such as that witnessed this past weekend in the town of San Juan de Arama, in the southern department of Meta, where land purchased by the Government was delivered to some 500 beneficiaries, among them former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias

de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatants, peasants and Indigenous members of the communities where they have resettled. Hopeful moments such as those are now increasingly common as Colombia's Government takes up that crucial aspect of the Peace Agreement, for which action is overdue, with greater dynamism.

The Secretary-General's report also contains multiple examples that illustrate the interdependence between the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement and other efforts by President Petro's Government to consolidate peace. A few weeks ago I visited the former territorial area for training and reintegration of Carrizal, in Antioquia department, where more than 50 former FARC-EP members and their families are living alongside members of the local community. There, as in similar locations around the countryside, one can see an admirable persistence among former combatants and communities as they join efforts to improve their lives and realize the transformations outlined in the Final Peace Agreement. In a project supported by the Mission, women former combatants who work in artisanal mines have augmented their incomes and those of the community by crafting and selling jewelry. Former combatants and community members have also joined forces in planting trees to combat deforestation. However, as I heard in my conversations with ex-combatants and leaders of social organizations, those initiatives have been imperilled by threats from illegal armed groups. In fact, that reintegration area, like several others before it, is likely to be relocated in the near future, owing to insecurity. As the relocation is planned, I reiterate my call on the authorities to ensure dignified living conditions in the new location and to continue to look after the safety and welfare of the communities that remain behind.

I should also condemn once more and in the strongest terms possible the killings of former FARC-EP combatants. Two such killings have occurred since the report was issued, and nearly 400 former combatants have been killed since the signing of the Final Agreement. That is simply unacceptable, and it demands that the authorities take urgent and concrete measures for their protection and that of social leaders and human rights defenders. An important step in that direction was the recent adoption by the National Commission on Security Guarantees of the long-delayed implementation of a public policy dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. That policy — a product of consultations between

the Government and civil society — seeks to address the multiple causes favouring the emergence and strengthening of criminal actors. Its implementation should help the authorities respond effectively to the ever-evolving threats in the territories.

(spoke in Spanish)

The multiple expressions of violence that persist in various regions of Colombia must not continue to hinder implementation. Government initiatives to pursue dialogue with armed actors are unquestionably a necessary additional way to defuse those threats and reverse their impact on communities by allowing the unfulfilled commitments undertaken under the peace agreement to materialize. That is particularly true for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories in regions such as the Pacific, where the actions of armed groups and the limited implementation of the ethnic chapter of the agreement force communities to endure intolerable levels of violence and lack of opportunity.

I would once again like to welcome the progress made at the negotiating table between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). In particular, I want to highlight the development of the bilateral ceasefire, which has resulted in a decline in the conflict between the parties. I also emphasize the importance of the Council's support in enabling the Mission to contribute to that process through its participation in the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, which is contributing to the prevention and resolution of incidents between the parties.

I am also pleased to report that thanks to the contributing countries, 31 of the 68 international observers authorized by the Council and deployed specifically to monitor and verify the ceasefire arrived recently. The work of the National Participation Committee installed in August to promote the participation of all sectors of Colombian society in the peace process with the ELN is also progressing. The fact that the peace talks panel met in Bogotá yesterday for the first time is indicative of how the process is becoming increasingly established in Colombia.

We welcome the dialogues between the Government and the self-styled Estado Mayor Central FARC-EP group. Last weekend, the parties announced a suspension of offensive actions against each another and declared that they intended to establish a peace talks panel and that a bilateral ceasefire would take effect starting on 16 October. I have been informed that

the parties will soon ask the Council to authorize the Mission to participate in the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire. I will ensure that the Council receives all the information it needs to consider the request.

The expectations generated by progress towards the construction of a peace process must be matched by the fulfilment of the commitments made, the de-escalation of confrontations and, especially, respect for the rights of communities, social leaders and signatories of the 2016 Final Agreement.

The consistent demonstration of the will of the parties necessarily involves preventing the recurrence of events such as last month's attacks in the department of Cauca, which resulted in the tragic death of civilians from communities that have been seeking peace for decades.

As we meet in October, which marks the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, I salute the Government of Colombia and civil society organizations for their progress towards the finalization of the first national action plan for its implementation.

In the same context, the recent decision of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) to open Case 11, which will address gender-based, sexual and reproductive violence by parties to the conflict, is another key milestone. I acknowledge the leadership and tireless work of hundreds of civil society organizations across Colombia who advocated for the opening of the case.

That important development comes alongside other recent advances by the SJP on its way to issuing its first sanctions, including recent acknowledgements of responsibility made by all parties. In addition to being an obligation of all parties to the conflict, contributing to the truth and acknowledging responsibility for the crimes committed are fundamental pillars for the success of this process.

As the Secretary-General stated in his report, it is important for the peace process, as a whole, to reach the stage where the SJP issues its first sanctions as soon as possible. Likewise, it will be crucial for the Government to ensure the necessary conditions for the prompt and effective implementation of those sanctions so that they can fulfil their objective and thus honour the principle of the centrality of the victims. To that end, the Mission continues to work closely with the SJP, participants and Government and State entities.

(spoke in English)

From conducting a participatory process to develop the national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000), alongside women platforms, to consultations with peasants and landowners over rural reform, dialogue with grassroots organizations has been a prevalent practice of the current Administration. I salute that inclusive approach, which provides opportunities for building consensus on public policy.

In that spirit, I encourage the Government, former FARC-EP combatants and all actors invested in the comprehensive implementation of the Final Peace Agreement to prioritize constructive dialogue. That will be essential for sustained progress in areas such as the ethnic chapter, rural reform, reintegration and illicit crop substitution.

Also critical to moving forward is the definition, without further delay, of a clear institutional architecture to oversee implementation, including the appointment of a high-level official within the presidency tasked to lead those efforts. The period ahead will be key for translating new plans and initiatives into actions.

In over two weeks, Colombia will hold its second local elections since the Final Agreement. Unfortunately, violence has already impacted the electoral campaign in various regions and has affected parties across the political spectrum, including former combatants and members of the Comunes party. I trust that authorities will do their utmost to guarantee that both candidates and voters can participate in the elections in the most inclusive and secure way possible throughout the national territory. That would deepen a tangible outcome of the Final Agreement.

Colombia's conflict was once considered intractable. The peacebuilding efforts under way today, with the crucial support of the Council, came about following frustrated attempts in previous decades. But Colombians never gave up on peace and neither did the international community. In times of tension around the world, Colombia's case is a reminder that even the most entrenched of conflicts can be resolved through dialogue and a call to never desist in the search for peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Čurić Hrvatinić.

Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinić: On behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission, I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council.

Building on the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with Colombia since 2020 and, in particular, on transitional justice and on Indigenous peoples, peace and reconciliation this year, the Commission encourages the Security Council to consider several points.

The Commission acknowledges the concrete steps taken by the Government of Colombia during its first year in office to consolidate peace and encourages all concerned parties to redouble their efforts in order to accelerate the full implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

The Commission welcomes the progress achieved to date while acknowledging that challenges remain as Colombia nears the seventh anniversary of the Final Agreement.

The Commission encourages the Council to support the Government in ensuring that peace dividends reach all Colombians, including through comprehensive rural reform, which is key to reinforcing State presence and providing development opportunities and public services in conflict-affected areas and historically marginalized regions, thus addressing the underlying causes of conflict in a sustainable way by recognizing that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

The Commission calls for continued international support for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and other peace initiatives taken forward by the Government. In that regard, the Commission welcomes the support of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations country team, the close coordination among the two and the Secretary-General's recent decision to extend Colombia's eligibility for the Peacebuilding Fund for a further five-year period. It also encourages the Government to progress on its plans to re-establish the presidential office for the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

The Commission welcomes advances in the Government's efforts to seek broader peace through dialogue in the framework of the "total peace" policy, in particular the peace negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and, in that regard, expresses appreciation for the Security Council's

decision to mandate the Mission to verify the ceasefire between the Government and the ELN.

The Commission also underscored the need for all armed groups to cease violence against civilians, engage in good faith in peace initiatives and seek to de-escalate violence against one another as demonstrations of their will to work for peace. In that context, the Commission welcomes the announcement by the Government and group self-identified as Central High Command-Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo to include respect for civilian populations in their bilateral, national ceasefire.

The Commission encourages further progress in reintegration to ensure the security and livelihoods of former combatants who have laid down their arms and seek to rebuild their lives in peace.

The Commission expresses its strong concern about continued violence faced by former combatants and social leaders, as well as Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations and other vulnerable populations in Colombia, and encourages the further implementation of the action plan of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. The Commission encourages the Government to undertake concerted efforts to provide security and protection.

The Commission also underscores the importance of holding upcoming regional and local elections on 29 October in conditions of safety and security, and underscores the need to ensure the safe participation of former combatants in those elections, in accordance with national legislation.

The Commission recalls with appreciation Colombia's commitments to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in peace efforts and encourages further international support, as demonstrated in the Commission's meeting on Indigenous Peoples, Peace and Reconciliation of 19 June 2023.

The Commission encourages the Council to closely follow the measures taken to provide protection for young community members and leaders to ensure their full and effective participation in peacebuilding efforts. The Commission appreciates the strong focus on gender provisions in the Final Agreement and the total peace policy, including in the dialogues with other armed actors. It welcomes the ongoing work towards the development of Colombia's first action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which could

contribute to the full and timely implementation of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement and of the ceasefire agreements, including the one between the Government and the ELN.

The Commission commends continued progress in the pioneering work of the transitional justice system in contributing to truth, justice, reparations and the non-repetition of crimes committed during the armed conflict. It acknowledges the efforts of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and looks forward to the issuance of its first restorative sentences.

The Peacebuilding Commission notes that Colombia continues to be a model for comprehensive peace consolidation and reiterates its commitment to supporting the Government of Colombia and its people in their efforts to build and sustain peace and share their experiences on peacebuilding before the Commission.

The President: I thank Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinić for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Botero García.

Mr. Botero García (*spoke in Spanish*): Following a deplorable weekend that saw conflicts escalating around the world, I wish to draw the Security Council's attention to three issues: first, the nature of the armed conflict in Colombia and its environmental repercussions; secondly, the opportunity for a peace policy that includes the environment at its heart; and finally, the international reciprocity necessary to prevent the conflict's expansion.

As Council members know, the lack of implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and, in particular, the failure of the State to reach the territories previously controlled by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo have led to those territories being occupied recently by various armed groups. The proliferation of such groups is also related to the presence of resources — generally in local community areas or conservation zones — that are fuelling their armies.

In that context, since the signing of the Final Agreement, almost 1 million hectares have been deforested in one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet — an area approximately a quarter the size of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Environmental degradation is also related to allegedly legal activities, which in some areas are conducted in tandem with those

forms of territorial co-opting, offering evidence of new alliances between armed groups, regional politicians, private investors and international markets. The overlap between activities related to agriculture, livestock farming, infrastructure, oil and large-scale mining and illegal economies is not by chance, allowing us to see the complexity of the conflict.

Deforestation has been concentrated in public lands, Indigenous territories and protected areas. The introduction of 1.2 million new cows to appropriated and deforested lands in the Amazon has had an impact on the rights of landless peasant communities, as well as forests and biodiversity. The data collected in Brazil and Bolivia by the Science Panel for the Amazon shows regional trends. We believe that the regulations of the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom are not enough when it comes to due diligence and traceability. Other large international markets are still not helping with that task.

Threats against and the displacement of national park officials, in an area of 10 million hectares and over the course of several years now, as well as the concentration of anti-personnel mines, which are causing inhumane confinement and leaving land uninhabitable for the future, are concrete examples of the major interests that are posing a danger to our territories.

All of that paints a bleak picture for civil and public environmental defenders and non-governmental organizations. Colombia has one of the highest rates in the world of threats to and deaths among those defending its environment and territory, despite the Government's efforts to advance the ratification and implementation of the Escazú Agreement.

It is worth highlighting here the opportunity presented by the Colombian Government's peace policy to place the environment at the heart of the peace dialogues' agenda. For the first time in the history of peace dialogues in our country, the environmental axis has been defined as a structural element to achieve a peace that includes the environment as a victim, but also as an element of transformation for the country's sustainable future.

As for the peace agenda with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), it has been agreed that civil society's participation in the discussion of environmental issues should be promoted, and the transformations required to ensure that the environment

can recover and thrive for the benefit of the entire population should be considered. The inclusion on the agenda of an item dedicated to the environment as a victim underscores the fact that Colombia has recognized the importance of the environment as a collective good that must therefore be repaired, restored and privileged in governmental and civil efforts. It also recognizes that the State, the private sector and armed groups have all had environmental impacts that must be acknowledged and rectified. That is unprecedented at the global level and therefore attests to the challenges faced in advancing the dialogue process.

It is important to highlight the opportunities — and challenges — that have arisen with other illegal groups, such as the Estado Mayor Central, which is directly associated with deforestation in the Amazon and has demonstrated its intention to discuss that issue in addition to the agricultural frontier, Indigenous territories and protected areas. The transition towards a comprehensive State presence, with support for local populations — and hopefully supported by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia — will be a crucial point in the political dialogue with the Estado Mayor Central, which could constitute the best path towards their political transition.

The price of gold has increased by 118 per cent since 2008, and the consequences of that can be seen in the lands forgotten by humankind. The income from those businesses passes through money laundering systems and could be traceable between purchasing and producing countries. The role of private enterprises must be reviewed, as they could be playing a key role in that operation.

Another issue that fuels war and destroys the environment and local communities is that of minerals such as coltan. Its uses in communications technologies, *inter alia*, augurs long-term demand. Various countries with powerful economies are interested. How can we achieve an agreement that does no harm to those still-untouched areas of our planet? The same goes for coal and other minerals with regard to the energy transition. The peace dialogues have also included segments of communities that are affected by the hydrocarbon industry and oil and mining companies associations, in the search for agreements and consensus that will allow us to achieve a plausible future.

On the issue of borders, alarm bells are ringing. Today, unfortunately, we are witnessing drug trafficking taking hold, with unprecedented violence, along our

border with Ecuador. On our border with Peru, illegal mining activities are making inroads, Indigenous youth are being recruited and industrial-scale coca crops are being established, in the search for routes to Europe. On the border with Brazil, fleets of dredging boats are paying taxes to illegal armed groups. On the border with Venezuela, a number of illegal groups are having an impact on Indigenous and protected territories along the Orinoco River, in search of gold and of coca routes in Catatumbo and through Lake Maracaibo. The story comes full circle on the border with Panama, where the highest levels of migration in America are taking place, controlled by armed groups.

In other words, peace in Colombia affects the continent and the world. Reciprocity is more urgent than ever, as the Presidents of the States members of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization drew attention to in Belém, Brazil, earlier this year. Democracies and the environment are increasingly at risk.

I must point out that Colombia is at a turning point. The peace policy has opened up an essential path forward: namely, achieving a national agreement that goes beyond what was agreed with a specific armed group and includes all social, political and financial segments of society in building a path towards the resolution of conflicts in the country. Likewise, if the reality of international demand for products from illegal economies remains unchanged, other groups could emerge and seek to control over such revenue, despite the political transition of the groups currently involved in negotiation processes.

Lastly, we call on the Security Council to continue its support in the hope of reversing climate change and biodiversity loss, concurrently with the long-term peacebuilding process, which will have ramifications for Colombia and the planet as a whole.

The President: I thank Mr. Botero García for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and Ambassador Hrvatinčić for their briefings and Mr. Botero García for highlighting the wider environmental challenges. I welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán as well.

As we approach the seventh anniversary of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the United Kingdom commends the efforts made by successive Colombian Governments to work towards sustainable peace in the country.

I would like to highlight three particular priorities.

First, we welcome the recent progress on rural reform and the restitution of land to Indigenous communities. The full implementation of the 2016 agreement remains central to peace and reform in Colombia. We support the Secretary-General's call for the rapid delivery of a dedicated office within the presidency to accelerate the implementation of the agreement.

Secondly, we strongly condemn violence against signatories from the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), human rights defenders, women leaders and members of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has verified 393 killings of former FARC-EP combatants since the Final Agreement was signed, which includes 18 killings since the Security Council last met on this issue (see S/PV.9374). We welcome progress towards rapid-response plans to protect signatories of the agreement and human rights defenders, with the adoption of a public policy to dismantle organized crime groups. We welcome the recent opening of macro-case 11 on sexual and gender-based violence by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and we look forward to the launch of Colombia's first resolution 1325 (2000) national action plan. We commend the participatory approach taken by the Government of Colombia, as it is vital to consider the experience of all women, as well as ethnic and LGBTQ+ groups, in its development.

Thirdly, the continued dialogue and ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación (ELN) is an important step towards peace in Colombia. We expect the ELN to approach its undertakings in good faith and to respect international law. We continue to follow closely efforts to reach a ceasefire with the dissident group of the former FARC-EP that identifies itself as the Estado Mayor Central, and we welcome the announcement on the 8 October of a bilateral ceasefire.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting broad and lasting peace in Colombia and welcomes the prospect of a visit by the Council in 2024.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3). We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his enlightening briefing on the latest developments in Colombia. We extend our appreciation to His Excellency the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for his valuable advice to the Security Council. We also thank Mr. Rodrigo Botero García, General Director of the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development, for the important perspective that he shared. We welcome the participation in this meeting of His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

We would like to warmly congratulate President Gustavo Petro Urrego on the successful completion of his first year in office. The year was marked by his tireless search for the restoration of peace in a country that has faced decades of conflict. His inclusive and consultative approach has united diverse stakeholders and set the stage for a transformative journey towards a more harmonious and peaceful nation.

The journey is, however, far from over. The road to peace is arduous. There are still many challenges ahead to overcome. In that regard, we welcome the continued progress being made in negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), with the holding of the fourth round of peace negotiations in Venezuela. Similarly, we note with great satisfaction the ongoing dialogue with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Their continuous engagement serves as a testament to the commitment of both parties to working towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Such dialogue is essential to fostering understanding, trust and, ultimately, lasting peace in the country.

The A3 considers the issue of land to be a crucial element in the country's peace process. We therefore commend the Government's continued effort to promote the institutional reforms and the allocation of necessary funds for comprehensive rural reform. We encourage the Government to intensify its efforts in land allocation and to pair that action with both technical and financial support in order to promote the beneficiaries' self-reliance.

We welcome the work carried out by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) during the reporting period. We note with satisfaction the public recognition of responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity by former members of the public security forces. We encourage the continued collaboration of the Minister of Defence with the SJP in ensuring that all those indicted provide truthful accounts. Such a collaborative effort holds great significance in attaining justice and accountability for the atrocities committed.

Regarding the ethnic chapter, the A3 regrets the lack of substantive progress in its implementation. It is worrisome to note that most efforts to advance the ethnic provisions are still in the planning stage, including consultations with Afro-Colombians and Afro-Indigenous people. We are also concerned about the lack of clear and up-to-date information on the current state of the implementation of the ethnic chapter by the entities responsible, as well as the lack of projects specifically designed by the territorial development programme to benefit ethnic communities.

In the light of those considerations, we strongly urge the Government to redouble its efforts to accelerate the implementation of a vital component of the peace agreement. It is imperative to ensure that the rights of Indigenous peoples who have endured the consequences of the conflict are reaffirmed and respected, and that the reparations and justice for the damage caused are provided as soon as possible. Addressing those issues is crucial to the effective realization of the intended benefits for marginalized communities, particularly those who have suffered the most. We were pleased to note that the Colombian army recently issued a public apology to the families of victims of the civil war. We commend that noble gesture, which showcases the army's commitment to justice, reconciliation and the pursuit of lasting peace in the country. It holds promise for fostering understanding and contributing to the ongoing reconciliation process.

In our opinion, the security situation in Colombia continues to be of great concern and a potential threat to the successful implementation of the peace agreement. In the context, we encourage continued dialogue with all groups to address the situation. We welcomed the approval in September by the National Commission on Security Guarantees of public policy aimed at dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. The A3 reiterates its appeal to the Government to intensify the State's presence in regions

with criminal incidents while ensuring the safety and protection of the civilian population, especially the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, which are the worst affected.

The continuing attacks on and murders of social leaders, human rights activists, political party members and former FARC-EP fighters, as well as the recruitment of children and other atrocities among the Colombian population, should not be tolerated. This wave of violence undermines trust and therefore the ability to build peace. We welcome the interest of former FARC-EP members in participating in the upcoming elections on 29 October, as evidenced by the approval of 299 candidates, including 128 women. We condemn all acts of intimidation and violence towards election candidates, regardless of their party affiliation. Such actions undermine the democratic process and must be unequivocally rejected.

The A3 encourage the continued use of the early-warning and early-response system to address political tensions and prevent electoral violence. We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the invaluable work being done by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, whose diligent efforts in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the peace agreement have played a vital role in ensuring its successful progress. We urge and encourage the continuation of those efforts.

To conclude, the A3 would like to extend its sincere wishes to the good people of Colombia for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections. We stand in solidarity with Colombia and reaffirm our unwavering support for the nation's ongoing efforts to consolidate peace, foster reconciliation and build a brighter and more prosperous future for all Colombians.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would first like to welcome Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to today's meeting and to thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and Ambassador Ćurić Hrvatinić, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their briefings. I also listened attentively to the statement by the representative of civil society.

China commends the Government of Colombia, led by President Petro Urrego, for fully implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and actively advancing the vision of "total peace". China expects and supports

efforts by the parties in Colombia to consolidate and build on the commendable progress that has already been made, strive resolutely to achieve the goal of realizing total, lasting and sustainable peace and work hard to usher in a dynamic and fruitful new era.

Colombia's peace process has highlighted the potential of sustainable development to promote lasting peace. China commends the Government for integrating nation-building into the implementation of the peace agreement and for continuing to increase inputs in areas such as rural reform, land distribution, the substitution of illegal crops and the reintegration of former combatants into society, with a view to addressing the root causes of conflicts and realizing lasting peace and security in Colombia. To that end, China hopes to see continued assistance from the United Nations country team and the PBC, among other entities, along with international regional partners.

Colombia's peace process sets an example for resolving differences, disputes and conflicts through dialogue and negotiation. China welcomes the fact that the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional have continued to implement the ceasefire agreement and have advanced the peace talks, and hopes that the two sides can achieve further positive results at the fifth round of the peace talks, to be held in Mexico in November. The Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo have announced a suspension of hostilities and confrontation and their intention to start formal ceasefire talks in the near future. China hopes that the two sides can agree on a ceasefire arrangement as soon as possible.

Colombia's peace process has underscored the need to increase people's confidence through security governance. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/701), strengthening the State's presence across the country and protecting vulnerable groups are vital to the implementation of the peace agreement and to advancing dialogue and negotiation with armed groups. China supports the Government of Colombia in continuing to increase the deployment of security forces in former conflict areas where effective control is lacking and in strengthening the protection of former combatants, women, children and ethnic minorities. China hopes that the local elections will proceed smoothly and safely in October.

This month the Security Council will make a decision on the mandate renewal of the United Nations

Verification Mission in Colombia. We appreciate the important contribution made by the Mission, under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu, in support of the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the Colombian Government's efforts to advance the vision of total peace. We hope that the Mission will coordinate closely with the Colombian Government and participate in the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire, in accordance with resolution 2694 (2023). We also support the Security Council in positively considering further expansion of the Mission's mandate when the conditions are in place.

Along with the international community, China stands ready to continue its support for a Colombian-led and -owned peace process and to help Colombian people to achieve greater gains towards the goal of total peace, stability and development.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Ruiz Massieu and Mr. Botero García for their briefings. I welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán who joined this meeting. I also thank Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinčić for the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We appreciate it very much.

Japan welcomes the efforts of the Colombian Government in advancing the peace process and commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for its support in that endeavour. The upcoming departmental and municipal elections will be a significant opportunity for Colombia to validate the achievements stemming from its long-standing commitment to peace. The Security Council and the international community will be following closely and with keen interest.

Japan continues to emphasize the importance of conducting elections in an atmosphere free of violence. That requires leadership by the Colombian Government and active cooperation by the Colombian people. Creating and maintaining an atmosphere free of violence should extend beyond the elections. The immediate cessation by all actors of any form of violence, including against civilians and former combatants, is vital.

In that regard, Japan commends the Colombian Government's efforts to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and

Lasting Peace and looks forward to further efforts to implement the national plans for rural reform, as well as the first issuance of restorative sentences by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

We also welcome the continued dialogue between the Government and several armed groups under the “total peace” policy, including the group self-identified as Central High Command-Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, and the fourth round of talks with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Any ceasefire talks or agreements need to be sustained by concrete action. Unfortunately, several previous ceasefire agreements have been broken in the past. An institution-based approach is one way to ensure that ceasefire agreements are sustainable. The National Participation Committee, which the Peacebuilding Fund is supporting, could be a part of such a mechanism.

A necessary thread for all phases of a ceasefire to succeed is full and meaningful participation. As the PBC Chair noted, measures and frameworks that protect and promote the active engagement on the ground of people, including women and youth, in peacebuilding efforts, are crucial.

In conclusion, Japan reaffirms its continuous support for Colombia’s peace efforts.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his informative briefing on the Colombian peace process. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, to this important meeting, and I thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for his briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

Colombia has undertaken a long and challenging journey towards peace — lasting peace. It has been time consuming, arduous and painful, but resolute efforts to close this dramatic chapter and the strive for peace are paying much-awaited dividends. Albania commends the Colombian Government for its remarkable progress. And we welcome the positive developments in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, as identified in the report of the Secretary General (S/2023/701). We encourage it to stay the course and call on all stakeholders to redouble efforts to accelerate progress.

Making peace after decades of war was never going to be an easy process, and we are aware of the difficulties and impediments being faced in the process, particularly regarding the rule of law. Peace — “total peace” — can be the result of efforts made only by all and for all.

I would like to make the following points.

First, we applaud the progress made in negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. That reflects the determination of both parties to put an end to decades conflict. However, we remain worried by the persistent violence against former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), human rights defenders and social leaders. It has been mentioned by other colleagues that close to 400 former FARC-EP combatants have been killed, and women leaders and female ex-combatants are constantly under the threat of sexual violence. We strongly condemn such crimes and remain concerned about the slow progress of investigations. We join the call of Secretary-General on the Government to take all necessary measures to guarantee their security and protection, as well as to bring perpetrators to justice.

Secondly, Albania welcomes the approval by the National Commission on Security Guarantees of the public policy and its action plan aimed at dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. We are convinced that full State presence and authority in all conflict affected regions is instrumental to address the root causes of the conflict and bring an end to violence. In that respect, we also welcome the efforts aimed at reaching and pursuing ceasefires through dialogue with all other illegal armed groups currently under way.

Thirdly, with the upcoming regional elections on the horizon, political violence, especially against women involved in the electoral process, is not only an issue of particular concern but also unacceptable. We call on the Government to bolster security for all, fostering an environment of peace, respect and broad participation.

Fourthly, transitional justice remains vital in achieving and consolidating peace. It provides for truth, justice and reparations to victims on all sides. We believe that all actors involved must do their part in their process in order to ensure accountability for crimes and justice for the victims. It is the only secure path towards reconciliation. In that respect, we welcome the inclusion, for the first time, of gender prosecution

in indictments by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the announcement to initiate a macro case on sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes committed out of prejudice, hate or discrimination against individuals of a particular gender, sexual identity or diverse sexual orientation in armed conflicts.

In conclusion, allow me to underline that “total peace”, though complex and challenging, remains a unique opportunity to bring to an end decades of conflict. Albania fully supports the efforts of President Petro Urrego towards building consensus and establishing an inclusive dialogue. Last but in no way least, we express our full support to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and commend them for their tireless efforts in favour of peace, stability and process in Colombia.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his informative briefing and Mr. Rodrigo Botero García for all he does to advance environmental justice in Colombia. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for his important perspective. Let me also welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán once again to the Security Council.

The United States remains one of Colombia's strongest partners. And we remain committed to the successful implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Its implementation will help to bring about stability and security. It will drive progress forward on counter-narcotics goals. And it will strengthen the protection of human rights, help to bring truth and justice to victims of Colombia's decades of conflict, and enhance economic development and equality in Colombia in rural and urban areas.

There are three messages I want to convey today.

First, the United States is committed to working with Colombia as it implements the 2016 peace accord. The United States is deeply committed, as the first international accompanier of the ethnic chapter, to partnering with Colombia to consolidate a lasting peace that centres on justice and equality for Afro-Colombian and Indigenous people. The United States is also committed to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Mission plays a critical role in strengthening peace and security in Colombia, and we are grateful to the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General and his team for their tireless efforts. We echo the Secretary-General's call on all groups behind violence in areas affected by armed conflict to halt their actions against civilians.

Secondly, the United States supported the Security Council's expansion of the Verification Mission's mandate last August to include monitoring and verification of the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We continue to engage with the Special Representative to stay up to date with the Verification Mission's efforts to monitor the implementation of the Government's ceasefire with the ELN. But we are concerned about the ELN central command's ability to maintain the ceasefire, at a time when various fronts under its command continue to express discontent. Although the ceasefire with the ELN seems largely intact, a recent media report indicated that 40 per cent of ELN members would reject a peace deal with the Government. Why? Because they continue to see lucrative earnings from drug trafficking and illegal mining.

I want to conclude with a third point, on the potential further expansion of the Verification Mission's mandate to include the ceasefire with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP). The EMC's recent announcement that it would cease offensive operations against the Colombian military and police forces and begin a 10-month ceasefire is a positive development. But we need to see more progress in that effort before the Council considers further expanding the mandate. And let me be clear: the ELN, the EMC and the Segunda Marquetalia remain designated foreign terrorist organizations under United States law.

As we support peace efforts, we must learn from past mistakes. We know from other peace processes that a security strategy is essential and that it can pressure illegal armed groups to negotiate in good faith and to avoid impunity for abuses. Before the Security Council agreed to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor the ceasefire with the ELN, there were multiple rounds of talks between the ELN and the Government negotiating team. In addition, several international accompaniers and guarantors had already committed to support the process. And the Security Council regularly heard inputs from the Colombian Government's negotiating team, which gave us a clearer sense of their expectations. The talks between the Government and the EMC still

lack that maturity. We look forward to continuing to hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Colombian Government as those talks progress and the parties develop mechanisms to maintain the ceasefire going forward. We look forward to continuing our engagement on those efforts and will closely follow the talks with the EMC.

The 2016 peace accord is Colombia's blueprint for peace and justice. Now the parties must make those promises real. The Colombian people, who have endured decades of conflict, deserve nothing less.

Ms. Tantawy (United Arab Emirates): I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his valuable briefing. His work and that of his team has been critical in providing the Security Council with the necessary and much-needed insights into developments in Colombia. We also thank Mr. Botero García for his briefing and for shedding light on the dire impact of conflict, not only on people, but on the environment too. We thank Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinić for his briefing as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia here today.

We have reached a critical juncture on the path to peace and security in Colombia. The hard-won gains should not be taken for granted; on the contrary, they demonstrate that nothing short of a holistic and whole-of-society approach is necessary for securing a just and lasting peace throughout the country. As such, the United Arab Emirates wishes to make three points today.

First, we must maintain momentum to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. Now almost at the midway point, seeing that through to its successful conclusion is crucial. We welcome the Government's progress in the implementation of the agreement, including on rural reform and the gender provisions, as well as the progress made in the country's first national action plan on women and peace and security. However, the continued violence against civilians, and in particular against former combatants, remains a challenge that must be addressed. Those men and women honoured their commitment by pursuing the path to peace. We stress the critical need to take all necessary measures in ensuring their security and protection. At stake is the preservation of an environment of reconciliation. Similarly, all efforts should be made to allow for safe and inclusive elections to take place. To see an electoral

process that is truly representative — including women, Indigenous people and former combatants — enhanced security measures are needed, and we welcome efforts in that regard.

Secondly, the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition has been crucial for building trust and reconciliation in Colombia. We focus today on the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP). The cases of the SJP, where victims are at the heart of the process, are well under way to reaching the stage where the first restorative sentences are issued. That will be key for the transitional justice process and reparation and to the overall implementation of the agreement. We particularly welcome the added focus on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, which is a critical part of the reconciliation process.

Thirdly, upholding the ceasefire is at the core of the first steps towards a broader, lasting peace across the country. The ongoing ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) reflects the new era of trust-building in Colombia. As such, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its support for all efforts to monitor and verify the ceasefire agreement, including through the recent expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. And as we heard from Special Representative Ruiz Massieu during the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security in August, women are playing a prominent role in that process. Representation in that form sets the scene for peacebuilding that is truly inclusive and has a greater chance of being sustainable.

Colombia has worked with the Council and the international community to show what can be achieved when there is an unwavering commitment to reconciliation. As our last mandated Security Council briefing on Colombia, the United Arab Emirates wishes to acknowledge and commend all those who have worked towards that goal. The building blocks of peace are firmly in place. As it continues taking the necessary steps in the reconciliation process, we have faith that the country will continue to move beyond its past and towards a secure, more prosperous future for the people of Colombia.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán. I thank the Special Representative

of the Secretary-General and Mr. Rodrigo Botero García for their briefings. I also thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for his intervention. The Commission's recommendations should always be taken into account by the Council.

The progress reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/701) is encouraging, especially that derived from the attention paid to gender provisions in the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The recently adopted national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is an essential instrument to promote the active participation of women in peacebuilding processes.

Ecuador recognizes the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition as an international reference point for the application of transitional justice. The opening of Case 11 by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), which will investigate sexual and gender-based violence committed in the context of the conflict in Colombia, is another element that contributes in that regard. On the other hand, at a time when the SJP is approaching the phase of issuing the first restorative sentences, it is important for the Colombian State to undertake efforts to ensure favourable conditions for carrying out those sentences and for them to be accepted by Colombian society.

It is important to acknowledge the reports of a decrease in violence as a result of the ceasefire reached with the Ejército de Liberación, and those concerning the ongoing talks with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, which could result in a ceasefire agreement with specific provisions on the protection of civil society. Ecuador echoes the Secretary-General's call for all armed groups to put an end to violence against civilians, participate in good faith in peace initiatives and demonstrate their willingness to work for peace.

We welcome the approval by the National Commission on Security Guarantees of the public policy aimed at dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, which we hope will help to stop violence in the conflict-affected areas. The Security Council looks forward to hearing the results of the pilot plans that have been implemented in the Magdalena Medio, Caguán and northern Cauca areas. We also hope that the department and municipal elections to be held on 29 October will be held in a safe, peaceful

and respectful manner, with the broad participation of the public.

As we approach the halfway point of the 15-year deadline for the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, I would like to reiterate Ecuador's support for the peace process in Colombia and the implementation of the agreement within the framework of the "total peace" policy, including initiatives aimed at ensuring better security conditions and sustainable development for marginalized populations, particularly those in border areas.

Mrs. Paolini (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General; Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinić, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Mr. Botero García for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of Minister for Foreign Affairs Durán in today's meeting.

France commends the efforts made by the Colombian authorities to achieve peace in Colombia. In that respect, we welcome the announcement of a ceasefire and peace talks between the Colombian Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), which will begin on 16 October. We sincerely hope that that announcement will lead to a lasting ceasefire and a peace agreement. We also welcome the continuation of negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) since the ceasefire announced on 3 August, with the support of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

France fully supports the Colombian authorities in their efforts to secure ceasefires with several other armed groups. Those developments are encouraging. They must allow affected communities to finally live in peace, with better prospects for socioeconomic development.

The Colombian Government's efforts to reach new ceasefires go hand-in-hand with the full implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The negotiations under way with the ELN and EMC FARC-EP armed groups seek to strengthen the Final Agreement in order to secure peace throughout Colombia. In that regard, France welcomes the Government's continued efforts to implement the peace agreement, as well as the Human Rights Council's establishment in July of an international expert mandate to make recommendations

on the agreement's implementation. We welcome in particular the efforts to ensure development, rural reform and access to land and encourage the Colombian authorities to increase those efforts.

We also support the prioritization of the implementation the ethnic chapters of the peace agreement. We also call on the Government to continue to guarantee favourable conditions for the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Despite the progress made, we deplore the fact that the security guarantees remain insufficient for former combatants, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society, given the violence targeting them, and for children and adolescents, who continue to be recruited by illegal armed groups.

We are closely monitoring the preparations for the local elections scheduled for the end of this month and call for them to be held under the best possible conditions. It is essential to prevent any risk of violence and to guarantee the safety of candidates and voters throughout the territory of Colombia.

Colombia continues to set an example through its determination to build peace through dialogue. In that regard, the 2016 peace agreement is an essential and historic achievement that must be fully implemented, alongside the pursuit of new peace agreements with armed groups. France encourages the Government to pursue and strengthen its efforts. We stand together with the Government in its efforts to achieve a lasting and "total peace" for the country.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's discussion of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán. We thank the briefers for their briefings.

The 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is approaching its seventh anniversary, nearly halfway through the time allotted for its implementation. Over that period, the implementation of the agreement approved by the Security Council has faced numerous challenges. The previous Colombian Administration effectively sabotaged the peace process. It is encouraging that both parties to the peace agreement are now committed to its implementation and are working together for reconciliation in the country.

We note the consistent work of the Colombian leadership in that regard, in particular in the implementation of land reform. Nevertheless, additional efforts are required to ensure the physical security and respect for the human rights of former combatants, social activists and the most vulnerable segments of the population, as well as to implement the illicit crop substitution programme, strengthen State authority on the ground and provide housing for former participants in the conflict.

On a separate note, we underscore the need to stop the violence against former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo members. More than 30 signatories of the peace agreement have been killed in this year alone, which is an average of one murder a week. Without clear security guarantees for former combatants, it is impossible to speak of a durable implementation of the peace agreement. That is particularly important in the context of the upcoming department and municipal elections, in which former rebels must be able to participate without fear for their lives.

We view Bogotá's recent peacebuilding initiatives as a logical next step in implementing the provisions of the peace agreement. We see the "total peace" policy of the Government of Gustavo Petro Urrego as an opportunity to resolve the pressing problems impeding Colombia's exit from this protracted armed conflict. At the same time, we are convinced that the total peace can and must be built on nothing other than the previously laid foundations of the peace agreement. It is important that all the decisions taken on the new peacebuilding tracks do not contradict that fundamental document.

Furthermore, the institutions and agreements that were established for the implementation of the peace agreement can and should be updated in accordance with changing realities. In particular, there is the question of the future role of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in the context of the numerous peace processes under way.

We welcome the start of the work of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, with the assistance of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to verify the ceasefire agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We hope, as progress is made in the peace talks with other groups, that those agreements will lead to a decrease in violence on the ground and an improvement of the humanitarian situation in the affected areas.

We are following the negotiation process with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP) illegal armed group. We welcome the start of a nationwide reconciliation programme and the formal launching of a dialogue with the group. At the same time, we are concerned about the continuing incidents of armed violence by the EMC FARC-EP. We hope that both sides will nonetheless be able to find a path to reconciliation.

Within the framework of the Security Council, Russia will continue to actively participate in international efforts to provide assistance to the peacebuilding processes in Colombia. We reaffirm our full support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia under the leadership of Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and we are prepared to give positive consideration to extending the Mission's comprehensive mandate this month.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu, Deputy Permanent Representative Hrvatinčić of Croatia, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Mr. Botero García for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán of Colombia.

Malta commends the Government's efforts in holding peace talks with armed groups and welcomed the commencement at the beginning of August of a six-month ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. The Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2694 (2023), aimed at verifying the implementation of the ceasefire, demonstrates its commitment to Colombia on its path to peace and highlights the advances being made on the ground. We welcome the progress being made towards a ceasefire with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and hope it will prove to be a promising step forward.

Regrettably, persistent violence continues to hinder the realization of the full potential of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The continuing targeted killings, threats and violence against people standing for office in the upcoming elections are cause for great concern. We urge the Government to ensure comprehensive safeguards that can enable meaningful political participation and representation. The violent attacks and targeted killings of former combatants, human rights defenders, Indigenous leaders and Afro-

Colombian leaders, as well as environmentalists, as Mr. Botero García highlighted, pose an existential threat to the peace agreement. We condemn that violence in the strongest possible terms and call on the authorities to bring those responsible to justice as soon as possible. The State must honour its obligations to those who have chosen peace and ensure robust security guarantees for former combatants and social leaders.

We are deeply concerned about the high numbers of both forcibly displaced people and those who have been forcibly confined. More must be done to prevent and address such human rights violations. We urge the Government to redouble its efforts to establish an effective State presence in the areas most affected by conflict and to create suitable conditions for returns and reintegration. We also call for sustained attention and resources to be provided to the search for the missing and disappeared.

Malta welcomes the Government's efforts on comprehensive rural reform. We call for continuing the work of providing vulnerable groups with access to land and transforming conflict-affected areas. The implementation of the ethnic chapter in the Final Agreement is vital. It is deeply worrisome that ethnic communities continue to suffer disproportionate violence and child recruitment at the hands of illegal armed actors. We call on the Government to redouble its efforts to ensure the full and timely implementation of those crucial provisions in order to address historic inequalities. Priority must also be given to the gender provisions in the peace agreement. Ensuring the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in its implementation remains key.

Malta is pleased to see progress across cases of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as it approaches the pivotal phase of issuing its first restorative sentences. That next step is crucial to the transitional justice process and to peacebuilding efforts and the overall implementation of the peace agreement. We also commend the announcement on the opening of Case 11, on sexual and gender-based violence, and the inclusion of sexual violence and slavery among the first regional indictments for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In conclusion, we are pleased to see clear progress being made on Colombia's path towards lasting and sustainable peace. It is essential to build on what has been achieved and to take decisive action to stop

the ongoing violence and ensure the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation of the Foreign Minister of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, in this meeting. I also thank the Special Representative, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinčić, for their briefings. My thanks also go to Mr. Rodrigo Botero García for his statement.

Just two months ago, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2694 (2023), expanding the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and the peace negotiations have made significant progress since then. We welcome the dialogue among all the parties and underscore the efforts of the Colombian Government through its “total peace” policy. With regard to dealing with the past, the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is noteworthy, although it will be essential to ensure the implementation of the upcoming first reparation sentences. Given that the protection and participation of the entire population are key elements of the peace process, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the announcement of the suspension of all offensive operations between the Colombian Government and the self-proclaimed Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo is a first step towards the opening of formal peace negotiations and the signing of a bilateral ceasefire agreement. Switzerland supports that development as part of its ongoing commitment to the Colombian peace process.

Secondly, the Colombian Government must ensure the safety and protection of ex-combatants from acts of violence. The judicial authorities must also combat impunity. We would like to point in that regard to the recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/49/19), which highlights the need for greater attention to the implementation of non-repetition guarantees. Conflict-related violence continues to affect civilians in many parts of the country, despite the Government’s efforts to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. In view of the upcoming elections, Switzerland reiterates its call on the Colombian authorities to strengthen its prevention and security measures in order to mitigate the effects of that

violence. We also reiterate that all parties must respect international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, the role of women in peacebuilding, through their knowledge, experience and leadership, offers a potential that must be strengthened. The women and peace and security agenda is a cross-cutting theme in our support to the Colombian peace process, particularly with regard to ceasefires, the participation of civil society and the work of dealing with the past. We therefore commend the Government of Colombia for developing its first national action plan on women and peace and security. The broad participatory process organized at national, regional and thematic levels, with the support of the international community, will set an exemplary standard for its future implementation. We were honoured to co-host with the Government of Colombia an event on women’s participation and its national action plan, which took place just before this meeting. The remarks by Mr. Leyva Durán, Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and the two civil-society representatives who shared their practical experiences and recommendations once again highlighted the indisputable fact that

(*spoke in Spanish*)

without women, there is no peace.

(*spoke in French*)

The support of the Council and the international community remains essential to achieving a lasting peace. We welcome the close cooperation with the Government of Colombia in this regard. We also thank the Peacebuilding Commission for its recommendations and look forward to Colombia’s continued cooperation and sharing of experiences in that context.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Brazil.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I thank the speakers for the report presented, and I extend a very warm welcome to Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán.

Colombia continues to demonstrate its commitment to the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the expansion and consolidation of peace in its territory. Dialogue with the other armed groups is also continuing through the “total peace” strategy of President Petro Urrego’s Government. In other words,

the country remains committed to a comprehensive and integrated solution to politically motivated violence.

With regard to the Final Agreement, we must always bear in mind that its implementation is a long-term process, established over a 15-year timetable. We will soon commemorate the seventh anniversary of its signing, on 24 November, which puts as the midpoint of the timetable for its formal implementation.

We know that the agreement involves deep reforms, which are always difficult. It is not an easy task to bolster State presence in rural areas where there are still vestiges of the conflict. The agreement has the great merit of tackling Colombia's various structural challenges, which are at the root of the manifestations of political violence in recent decades.

The full implementation of the 2016 agreement is a necessary condition for the expansion of the peace processes in the country. Concrete Government actions are the best way to clearly show its earnestness in its commitment to redefine its relationship with the most vulnerable segments of the population, including women and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations.

It is just and necessary to recognize the significant progress already made, especially the budget allocation and the legal and institutional changes aimed at expediting the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform, which is essential for the State to expand its presence in all corners of the country, especially in conflict-affected areas. We also welcome the creation of the agrarian and rural jurisdiction and the recognition of the rights of peasants to special constitutional protection in Colombia.

Brazil supports the strategy of Petro Urrego's Government to achieve total peace. We recognize the importance and necessity of the additional dialogues under way to expand the benefits of peace throughout the country. As a guarantor country, Brazil also reiterates its firm commitment to the dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

We welcome the remarkable progress achieved in the negotiations. As guarantors, we can attest to the determination of both parties to put an end to decades of conflict. As the Secretary-General notes in his latest report (S/2023/701), initial progress demonstrates the possibility of a sustained reduction in violence, which would bring significant benefits to the affected communities.

As we approach almost a year of negotiations, after four cycles of dialogue, we welcome the functioning of the National Commission on Participation and the development of its timeline of meetings with various regions and social sectors, as well as the maintenance of the bilateral, national and temporary ceasefire, accompanied by the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.

We also welcome the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to establish the national, regional and local bodies for the Mechanism in order to fulfil the task of participating in the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire and its protocols, pursuant to resolution 2694 (2023).

As of 3 October, the ceasefire has held for two months. We urge the parties to continue to maintain it, so as to help improve the humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected areas, especially with regard to strengthening the protection of civilians. Brazil also stresses the importance of defining a political and conceptual framework on humanitarian actions and dynamics, as achieved in the most recent cycle, held between August and September in Caracas.

We follow with optimism the Government's dialogue with the self-proclaimed Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. The establishment of formal negotiations and the continuing bilateral ceasefire that ensures respect for the civilian population, are very encouraging signs. As in the case of the ELN, we hope that the Council can authorize the Mission to verify the implementation of the ceasefire agreement with the Estado Mayor Central as soon as it is requested by the Colombian Government.

It is important to promote simultaneous progress in the various negotiations. In that regard, we must optimize the Council's contribution to the joint progress of those processes, especially with the aim of encouraging ceasefires with the Government and among the groups still competing for territory.

We know that challenges remain. Violence by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations continues to significantly impact the lives of civilians and ex-combatants, which represents a central challenge for the peacebuilding and reintegration process.

Brazil strongly supports the Colombian society and Government in their political determination to overcome the various challenges to total peace,

including through our work in the Council. We reiterate that the actions of this organ in Colombia must be guided by the expectations and requests of the Colombian Government. As always, that will be our guiding principle during the negotiations for the renewal of the mandate of the Verification Mission.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mr. Leyva Durán (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome my fellow countryman, Mr. Rodrigo Botero García.

Peace in Colombia is a daily project. It is a daily effort to eradicate violence and armed confrontation as a means to further the interests of the people a divided and intolerant society. The history of humankind has taught us that peace requires ongoing efforts. It requires artisans to patiently work to build peace—to design it, weave it, agree upon it and maintain it.

Allow me to elaborate on this idea with a visionary anecdote regarding our great Colombian sculptor and painter, Fernando Botero, who recently passed. Botero was a man who banked upon peace in Colombia and in the then besieged and suffering Medellín, his birthplace, to which he donated a sculpture called *El Pájaro — The Bird*— as a symbol of peace, which would help it leave behind the violence perpetrated by the drug cartels in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

On 10 June 1995, in the San Antonio park, in his city, at the foot of this sculpture, 10 kilograms of dynamite were detonated, leaving 23 dead and hundreds injured. Despite the horror of this event, Botero never lost his faith in peace. Upon the request of the artist, the sculpture was not removed. On the contrary, the bird statue remained there as an eloquent testimony of unpardonable brutality. Five years later, in 2000, Botero donated another sculpture, a new bird, which now stands triumphantly alongside the “Pájaro Herido”, or “Injured Bird”, as it was dubbed to refer to the violent incident. Botero taught us an important lesson— despite the violence inflicted upon us, we must never waver; we must vanquish; we must overcome.

In Colombia, we know that lesson very well. Although various forms of violence persist, as mentioned with concern in the quarterly report presented today (S/2023/701), our efforts and renewed

commitment to peace must be maintained and must be our highest task. It certainly has not been easy and has required perseverance. Fortunately, we have an active society that demands constant responsibility from the Colombian State and its institutions.

It is my duty, at this point, to highlight that Colombia’s decision to bring the peace agreements of 2016 to the Security Council was a sign of the will at that time to achieve irreversible reconciliation—the task being to ensure that what was agreed upon would be binding regardless of the political will of the Government in power.

I wish to take this occasion to refer to two fundamental issues of peace in Colombia: first, the need to ensure the inviolability of what was agreed upon in 2016; and secondly, to reiterate that the dialogues that continue to be held with various armed groups and actors are fundamental tools, today and every day, to achieve “total peace” throughout our national territory.

With regard to the desire to maintain and fulfil what was agreed upon, we are concerned that the institution serving as a model for the entire world, designed to provide justice after decades of horrible internal conflict— more specifically, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace— is derailing from what was agreed upon with great effort, casting aside norms that should be rigorously applied in favour of the victims, with truth, reparations and non-repetition as its heart. I love and admire the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as if it were a person, not an institution. Alongside five others, I had a hand in designing it. I therefore applaud what was intended and what has been achieved. It has been a difficult task, but the time has come to review its actions in order to correct and perfect them. Let us consider that now.

On 13 March 2017, the Head of State of the Republic of Colombia, in a communication addressed to Secretary-General António Guterres, politely requested that he transmit to the Security Council his official declaration of good faith in the form of a unilateral State declaration. By doing so, within the framework of resolutions 2261 (2016) and 2307 (2016) of 25 January and 13 September of that year, respectively, adopted unanimously by the Council, its own official document would be generated, containing the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed on 24 November between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas

Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo.

Consequently, the Security Council incorporated the Final Agreement, along with the unilateral State declaration, in an official document: S/2017/272. Its incorporation implies that the text to be implemented by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, without any modification of its content whatsoever, is the one officially adopted by the Security Council, thereby enshrining Colombia's commitment to the world to enforce it, at the risk of incurring international liability that would entail serious consequences should it fail to do so.

We must bear in mind that Security Council resolutions such as those I cited cannot be contested through any legal recourse — much less through a unilateral State declaration. It is those resolutions that, by their nature, prevail in our internal order. Therefore, in the case at hand, the official document I mentioned was automatically added to the constitutional body of law of the Colombian nation. That is something that many are unaware of, yet that cannot be ignored.

In the case of a jurisdiction such as the one indicated, its binding regulatory text establishes the corresponding powers, which are not being respected. With regard to the personal competence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the text of the official Security Council document S/2017/272 states the following:

“The judicial component of the comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition will apply to all those who participated directly or indirectly in the armed conflict. It will apply to those investigated or convicted of the crime of rebellion or other crimes related to the conflict, whether they belong to the armed organizations in rebellion or not.”

Unfortunately, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has officially limited the appearance of those who are entitled to such special justice, as is the case for so-called paramilitaries, among others. Their connection has been prevented or made difficult by the application of a non-existent mechanism in the Final Agreement that refers to so-called prior contributions to truth within the framework of the conditionality regime, when the fact is that the conditionality regime refers exclusively to the laying down of arms.

That has restricted the revealing of peace, closing the path to truth and impeding it from fully reaching

the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as well as the victims and the general public. Now is the time to underscore that Law 975 of 2005 — known as the Justice and Peace Law of Colombia, which dates back to well before the peace agreement — contains provisions for the reintegration of members of armed groups organized outside the law who contribute effectively to the achievement of national peace. Its article 63 states that:

“More favourable future law. If, subsequent to the promulgation of this law, laws are issued that grant members of illegal armed groups benefits more favourable than those established here, the persons who have been subject to the alternative mechanism may avail themselves of the conditions established in such subsequent laws.”

That goes to show that combatants subject to the jurisdiction of the Justice and Peace Law can resort to the universal principle of penal favourability — a right that has constantly been denied by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. I add here a citation from item 5.1.2 of the Final Agreement, entitled “Justice”, in its section II, paragraph 32:

“With regard to combatants in illegal armed groups, the judicial component of the system will only apply to those signing a final peace agreement with the Government.”

It is worth noting that, in the case of the so-called paramilitaries, there is the Santa Fe de Ralito Agreement, of 15 July 2003, signed between the national Government of the time and the so-called United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia. That text has been disregarded, but I am providing a copy of it alongside my statement today. The persons concerned are therefore covered by the personal jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which we are analysing. Likewise, in accordance with paragraph 32, to which I have already referred to twice:

“The judicial component will also apply to State agents who may have committed crimes related to or during the armed conflict; this application will be in a differentiated manner, providing fair, balanced, simultaneous and symmetrical treatment.”

It continues:

“In the case of State agents, the application of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is based on the recognition that the State's primary purpose is to protect and guarantee the rights of all citizens”.

Furthermore, it states that

“[f]or the purposes of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a State agent is understood to be any person who at the time of the commission of the alleged crimes was acting as a member of public bodies, or as an employee or worker of the State or its decentralized entities, territorially or through provided services, and who participated in the planning or commission of criminal acts related directly or indirectly to the armed conflict. In order for such acts to be considered by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, they must have been committed as actions or omissions within the time frame of the internal armed conflict”.

Despite the cases of hundreds of Colombians, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has set aside previous mandates all of which are related to its specific jurisdiction.

It bears pointing out that the Special Jurisdiction as a special jurisdictional system is based on the Charter of the United Nations, whereby free States may establish such systems, based on the principles of international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law, all of which points to the fact that in the case of State agents, article 27 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, “Irrelevance of official capacity”, is applicable without being subject to discrimination. The scope of paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 27 must therefore be borne in mind. With regard to the right to the truth and victims’ right to the truth, they are inescapable, particularly in the context of a peace process. Such rights rise to the level of *ius cogens*.

In that regard, I would like to refer members of the Council to the most authoritative sources on the subject, as reflected in their credentials. On the subject at hand, I have based my arguments on renowned experts, in particular Rafael Casado Raigón, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Córdoba; Araceli Mangas Martín, Professor of Public International Law and European Law at the Universities of Salamanca and Complutense; and Zlata Drnas de Clément, Professor Emerita of the National University and Professor of the Catholic University in Córdoba, Argentina, whose expertise lies in public international law, among other subjects. Perhaps the Council can best be guided by Ms. Zlata Drnas’s work on the peremptory norms of general international law — *ius cogens* — and its concrete application. With regard to *ius cogens*, the author points out that these are peremptory norms of

general international law, which are the linchpin of the normative system and can invalidate any norm contradicting the principle, customary or conventional. As Ms. Drnas writes, all of that implies that the nature of the norm *ius cogens* is characterized as

“a coercive, compulsory, imperative, absolute, peremptory, final, non-derogable, fundamentally immutable, full right, which protects fundamental social goods of a given community”.

Furthermore, the German jurist Hermann Mosler reaffirmed that

“*ius cogens* rules are characterized by the fact that their violation affects the international legal community as such, since even when it turns out that only one State is directly affected by a violation of such rules, the consequences are likely to extend to the community as a whole”.

We must therefore ask ourselves what, given their status as peremptory norms of general international law, are the norms and rights within the scope of *ius cogens* over which the jurisdiction of the SJP falls in order to protect them without any restrictions? The answer is nothing more or less — and whether it is put in writing or not — than the recognition of the victims and the fact that their rights in armed conflict include the right to the truth. Those legal rights, which are broadly protected by international law, are based on the principles I just mentioned. The mission of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is therefore to promote and uphold them, while acknowledging their intrinsic value, to provide them with the corresponding safeguards and acknowledge their place in the legal hierarchy, as they are at the top of the normative system, given the fact I mentioned previously that they have the power to invalidate any norm contrary to them, whether customary or conventional.

The SJP cannot impose conditions or restrictions on those who want to tell the truth if they have the right to appear before the Special Jurisdiction, owing to the specific jurisdiction derived from its constitutive norms, such the mandate conferred on it by the peace agreement, which we have often referred to by its full title, Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, officially acknowledged in the letter dated 29 March 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council that I cited previously.

The principle of *nulla poena sine lege*, or that there is no penalty without law, is held sacred in constitutional States. It is upheld even more strongly in a socially conscious State based on the rule of law such as Colombia. The principle is part of the human right to due process. Where crimes are concerned, the Special Jurisdiction is obliged to implement previously established punishments, excluding all others, in accordance with the peace agreement, as stipulated within the Security Council letter that I just mentioned.

Under Chapter 5 of the agreement, part III — entitled “Procedure, bodies and sanctions of the judicial component of the comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition” — the last paragraph of section 46, clearly states that:

“The Tribunal for Peace will be the final body of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace created within the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition”.

In relation to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Security Council’s own document, mediated by the unilateral declaration of the State, as well as subject to resolutions 2261 (2016) of 25 January 2016 and 2307 (2016) of 13 September 2016, our Special Jurisdiction for Peace has become an exemplary form of international jurisdiction. Its decisions reach far beyond our borders, with universal *erga omnes* effects. It therefore cannot be restricted by local jurisdictions, nor can it ignore the official text of the agreement. Its obligation is to promote international legal certainty. Restricting rights that it must place above all other considerations does harm, in addition to the dangerous liability that its prestigious magistrates may incur. Its status as a final body was reiterated in the agreement of 9 November 2016 signed between the national Government and the FARC-EP. Part III, paragraph 2 (a), of the agreement clearly states,

“The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, being a special jurisdiction that autonomously and preferentially exercises judicial functions for matters within its jurisdiction, particularly with respect to conduct deemed to constitute a serious breach of international humanitarian law or a serious violation of human rights. It shall only

apply to acts committed prior to its coming into effect.”

For the Government of Colombia, on whose behalf I am speaking before the Council today, it is clear that the entire content of the 2016 peace agreement constitutes an imperative mandate for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and for all State institutions. We cannot fail. To avoid any shadow of doubt, the President of the Republic, Gustavo Petro Urrego, will in the next few days reiterate the official declaration of good faith in the form of a unilateral State declaration, as previously delivered by one of his predecessors, so as to assume direct responsibility for protecting and fulfilling the commitments enshrined in the official document of the Council contained in document S/2017/272. The word and commitment of the Republic of Colombia to the Council and the world cannot be called into question.

Secondly, a brief yet important point: I wish to emphasize that the dialogues that we are currently having with the various groups and armed actors serve as a fundamental tool to achieve peace in all territories of the country and to alleviate the humanitarian impact of armed and criminal violence. As a Government, we know that this must go hand in hand with the intervention of all State institutions, which is what we intend to do in conjunction with the national development plan, which has already been mentioned here in the past.

We understand the concerns sometimes caused within the international community and the Council by the ambitious and challenging commitment to total peace shown in Colombia, which goes alongside the challenge of a complex institutional design. However, I stand here today with the certainty that this commitment is appropriate and proportional to the responsibility that as a State and as a Government, under the leadership of President of the Republic, Gustavo Petro Urrego, we have towards society and the victims. It is also something that becomes an obligation, towards which we must move fearlessly, with optimism, faith and total peace. We must aim towards guaranteeing the life and happiness of every member of our society. We want to set an example. We truly want to say loud and clear that Colombia is a global life force.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.