



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9598th meeting

Tuesday, 9 April 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Gatt. (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
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/2024/267)

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24-09657 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2024/267)

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. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, 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, and Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, Executive Director of Colombia Diversa.

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/2024/267, 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 appreciate the opportunity to brief the Security Council on this symbolic day in Colombia, which is dedicated every year to the victims of the armed conflict there. They should always be at the centre of our efforts to build peace in Colombia and elsewhere.

I welcome the presence here today of Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and once again express my appreciation for the Government of Colombia's continued support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I also welcome the participation of Ms. Marcela Sánchez

Buitrago, from the non-governmental organization Colombia Diversa, which gives visibility to the impact of conflict on women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and to their important role as peacebuilders. I would also like to recognize the attendance here of Mr. Roberto Vidal, President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as well as his leadership at this important moment for the Jurisdiction.

Colombia has reached an important juncture in relation to its ambitions for implementing the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and advancing its ongoing dialogue initiatives. As the Security Council was able to observe first-hand during its recent visit, there is a deep desire for peace in Colombia that extends from the highest levels of Government and State institutions across civil society and to vulnerable communities in the regions still afflicted by conflict. The key challenge for transforming that aspiration into reality is to channel the abundant political will and impressive drive of civil society into ever more tangible dividends of peace on the ground. That effort will require Colombians to overcome divisions in an effort that should unite them across the political spectrum, based on a common interest in securing a peaceful future.

(spoke in Spanish)

The transitional justice system established in the Final Agreement is a testament to the trust built by the parties at the time for resolving an armed conflict that had plagued Colombia for almost half a century. The system is based on a delicate balance that must be maintained so as to comply with the principle of victim centrality and achieve the long-awaited transition to peace. As part of that system, the Truth Commission played an essential role in clarifying the historical truth about the conflict, complemented by the mandate of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which focused on investigating the conflict's most emblematic and representative cases and the patterns associated with the most serious crimes and on punishing those who were most responsible for carrying them out. The responsibility of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is intrinsically linked to the transition from a situation of war to a situation of peace. That is a hugely important task that involves weighing multiple elements — rigour and speed, victims' rights and the legal security of those who appear before the Jurisdiction, thereby honouring the commitments made under the Agreement.

Autonomy and independence in decision-making have been fundamental in enabling the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to carry out its mandate, and will continue to be so. Its framework, on the other hand, is determined by the balances established by the parties to the Agreement and formalized in the law. I would like to welcome the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is approaching the issuance of its first sanctions. The victims need that to happen without further delay. And considering the recent difficulties, I want to take this opportunity to echo the Secretary-General's call on all the parties involved to create the best possible conditions for this culminating, long-awaited moment through a constructive dialogue, with a view to overcoming the obstacles and find solutions within the framework of the Final Agreement. Colombia's men and women have given us numerous examples of their ability to resolve their conflicts through dialogue, and I trust that this will not be an exception.

(spoke in English)

While thousands of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo who laid down their weapons in good faith have stood by their commitments under the Agreement, the need for concrete and sustainable progress on its implementation has become ever more pressing with time. In that regard, I recommend better use of the architecture for implementing it, including the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. In addition, I call on the Government to finalize the legal instruments needed to enable the swift implementation of the Comprehensive Reintegration Programme and the National Reintegration System in order to provide those men and women with certainty and consolidate their transition into civilian life.

Security also constitutes a key component of the reintegration of former combatants and continues to be of the utmost concern. Regrettably, 11 more combatants have been killed since the last report (S/2023/1033) was issued. And as the Security Council heard repeatedly during its recent visit, social leaders, as well as entire communities, particularly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, are still suffering the full impact of persisting violence and the limited presence of State institutions in various regions. In my recent visits to Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Norte de Santander, the call for security was a common plea from ethnic groups, local authorities, civil society and the private sector.

The election last month of a new Attorney-General, Ms. Luz Adriana Camargo, provides an opportunity to investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against former combatants and social leaders with renewed vigour. I met with her recently, and I was encouraged that her immediate priorities include the strengthening of the special investigation unit created by the Final Agreement and broader efforts to combat the criminal structures responsible for the violence.

(spoke in Spanish)

The current bilateral ceasefires constitute an important step towards building confidence in the negotiations and reducing violence. However, they are not a substitute for State security policies aimed at ensuring the protection and welfare of the communities affected by the conflict. On the contrary, they should be complementary. Many of those policies, such as that of dismantling armed groups or the Government's defence policy, with its focus on human security, are set out in the Final Agreement. I hope that progress will be made towards implementing them without further delay.

In a challenging context for the round table, with some significant disagreements between the parties that are yet to be resolved, the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional will meet in Caracas this week. On that occasion, I hope that the implementation of the Agreement so far can be assessed and that decisions will be taken to advance the agenda agreed in the Mexico Agreement (S/2023/299, annex). I hope that the parties, with the firm support of the international community, will be able to overcome the current difficulties and reaffirm to Colombian society the commitment of the national round table to reaching definitive agreements that have tangible benefits for the communities.

With regard to the dialogues between the Government and the group known as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, I urge the parties to remain focused on resolving their differences at the discussion table, in spite of the current difficulties, bearing in mind the unique opportunity they have right now to contribute to building a different future. In order to achieve that, it is crucial that they build on the progress made to date and give clear signs of their will to achieve peace. Any hostility towards the civilian population sends the opposite message, eroding the trust between the parties and society, as evidenced by the deplorable acts of violence against the Indigenous population in

Cauca that led to the Government's partial suspension of the ceasefire.

(spoke in English)

A road map for dealing with some of the structural causes of conflict in Colombia was laid out in the first chapter of the Final Agreement, on rural reform. Among other matters, it aims to resolve the historical inequities in land tenure that have endured for decades. Its priorities include the distribution, formalization and restitution of land and the delivery of public goods and services to rural Colombia. While there is still a long way to go to meet the ambitious goals of the peace agreement, in his report (S/2024/267) the Secretary-General recognizes significant increases in budget allocations and the efforts of the current Government to deliver land and resolve land-related conflicts. A continuing push to implement those provisions, backed by substantial investments and the coordinated engagement of all the relevant ministries and State institutions, is needed to overcome the inequalities that have long fuelled cycles of violence in the countryside.

Similarly, the Agreement's ethnic chapter and gender provisions seek to address the long-standing exclusion and disproportionate impact of the conflict on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as well as on women and LGBTQ persons. I look forward to concrete results in the work of achieving the goal of implementing 60 per cent of the ethnic chapter by 2026. I also trust that the soon-to-be-launched National Action Plan for resolution 1325 (2000) will help further the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the country. It will be important to ensure overall coherence between the plan and the gender provisions of the Final Agreement. Furthermore, the principles of the plan regarding women's participation and the crafting of agreements that account for the gender dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding should be duly considered and reflected in ongoing dialogue initiatives with armed groups.

The Council's visit in February was an expression of support for the creative and courageous efforts under way in Colombia. I am certain that it provided much-needed encouragement to all sectors of society to persevere in their struggle for peace. However difficult and demanding of patience, Colombia's decision to prioritize dialogue as a principal means for resolving conflict sets the country apart as a model that is more relevant than ever in today's world. I trust that the Council will echo our calls to encourage all actors in

Colombia to redouble their efforts to implement the 2016 Final Agreement and pursue dialogue as a way to further consolidate peace in the country.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Sánchez Buitrago.

Ms. Sánchez Buitrago *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank members for the opportunity to brief them today on the situation in Colombia.

I am Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, Executive Director of Colombia Diversa. I come from a country that is scarred by war yet hopeful for peace — a country where the organization that I lead has been working with the feminist movement for 20 years to champion the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in Colombia. Thanks to our collective efforts, what was once unthinkable is now possible — peace initiatives that recognize all people, slow but meaningful social change towards a world without discrimination and a legal framework rooted in equality.

Today my statement will focus on the impact that the conflict in Colombia has had on LGBTQ persons, the opportunities that the women and peace and security agenda offers to address those effects, and finally, what remains to be done in Colombia to ensure an inclusive peace. LGBTQ people in Colombia have long been targeted for who we are, much as women have, owing to entrenched patriarchal norms and social and legal discrimination, which contributed to the extreme violence inflicted on them during the armed conflict. LGBTQ persons, particularly Afro-Colombians and adolescents, were actively targeted, disappeared or killed by armed actors.

As of March, the registry of victims reported 6,000 crimes committed against LGBTQ people during the conflict in Colombia. According to the estimates in the Truth Commission's final report, the violence included forced displacement, exile, sexual violence and killings. We still do not have precise data on how many LGBTQ victims there were or what crimes they suffered in the armed conflict. That lack of information is the main proof of the fact that our lives are not considered important for peacebuilding in the country. Social stigma, lack of documentation and fear of reprisals mean that we may never know the full extent of the violations committed against us. It also explains why many LGBTQ persons who survived armed violence found themselves without legal recourse owing to a

system that does not recognize the violence committed against them as a crime — for example, forcibly cutting off people's hair or forcing them to wear certain clothes. However, the context of the violence makes it clear that those crimes were part of a pattern of gender-based persecution, a crime against humanity that must ultimately be judged.

As Council members know, Colombia is still one of the deadliest countries in the world for human rights defenders, and LGBTQ defenders face particular risks. In 2023 we recorded eight LGBTQ human rights defenders killed, and just this February, Aldinebin Ramos, co-founder of the Asociación LGBTQ+ Chaparral Diversa, a peacebuilder, was gunned down in his home by unknown assailants. In close to half of such killings, evidence suggests that those defenders were attacked for their sexual orientation or gender identity, and we have documented how LGBTQ defenders are being killed in connection with forcible displacement, injury and sexual violence.

Every attack on an LGBTQ person and every murder left uninvestigated sends the message that our lives are expendable. I hope that today the Council can send two powerful signals to the LGBTQ population in Colombia — that their lives matter and that the Council will stand by its commitment to protecting their rights. Making human rights defenders and other LGBTQ persons military targets hinders their ability to participate in peace efforts and democratic debate. That is why I want to ask the Council a question. If we are dragged violently into a war, can we be left out of the efforts to build the peace? The answer is no. Based on the fundamental principles of the women and peace and security agenda, if we are to have a lasting peace, LGBTQ people must be involved in every stage of peacebuilding — negotiations, ceasefires, demobilization efforts, transitional justice processes and the design of reparations measures. The Council recommends that practice in every peace process, all over the world. As the Colombian Government prepares to publish its first National Action Plan for resolution 1325 (2000), it is critical to ensure that the rights of LBT women are integrated into it and that the continued participation of a diverse range of LGBTQ organizations is guaranteed in its implementation.

If we are to break with the past, there must also be accountability for gender-based violence during armed conflict. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace recently opened case 11, which will investigate

gender-based violence, sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes based on prejudice against the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim. That judicial process aims to address the root causes of gender-based violence against women and LGBTQ people in armed conflict, and we hope it will bring us closer to ending impunity. We believe it can be a beacon of hope for LGBTQ survivors of gender persecution around the world.

Finally, I want to offer the Security Council several recommendations on how to support efforts to include LGBTQ persons in Colombia's peacebuilding process:

First, the Council should demand the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and LGBTQ persons in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and in negotiations with other actors in Colombia.

Secondly, it should call for an end to attacks on LGBTQ people and defenders, and for all perpetrators to be properly held accountable. That includes urging for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the integration of a gender perspective into the work of the national protection unit, as well as requiring the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to regularly report on the situation of human rights defenders, including LGBTQ defenders, to the Security Council.

Thirdly, the Council should call on the Verification Mission to prioritize support for the implementation of a gender approach, on which there has been little progress, together with the ethnic approach.

Fourthly, the Government of Colombia should be encouraged to include the prohibition of sexual violence in all future ceasefire agreements and adequate prosecution of all gender-based violence in negotiations with other armed groups. The Council should also continue to support the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, especially in relation to the decision to open case 11 and ensure the participation of women's and LGBTQ organizations in that transitional process.

Fifthly, the Council should urge the Government to constantly consult with women and LGBTQ persons in developing and implementing its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Merely naming them does not amount to participation.

We should think of Colombia as a laboratory for implementing the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion that are central to the women and peace and security agenda. Success or failure in our case could set an important precedent for the protection of LGBTQ rights elsewhere in the world. We hope the Council will seize the opportunity to lead by example.

The President: I thank Ms. Sánchez Buitrago for her briefing.

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for briefing us today, and I welcome Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia to our meeting. I would also like to thank the Colombian Government for hosting the Security Council in February. The visit was an important opportunity for us to see first-hand the progress and the challenges on the ground and to demonstrate the Council's continued commitment to supporting sustainable peace in Colombia.

The 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a road map for achieving peace and security through territorial transformation. We welcome the Government's commitment to its full implementation, one of the key messages we heard during our visit. We encourage the Government to make full use of the 2016 peace architecture to deliver on the commitments made in the Agreement. The Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement is an important mechanism for driving that progress, and we look forward to seeing it continue to meet, with sustained energy and commitment from all sides. We also welcome the Government's commitment to rural reform, including the announcement of \$8 million for the Rural Women's Development Fund.

As set out by Ms. Sánchez Buitrago, violence and criminality — including the killings of former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders and members of the LGBTQ community — continue to undermine the implementation of the Agreement. We call on the Government to take urgent steps to address that, including through further support for prevention and protection measures and by redoubling its efforts

to tackle impunity. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has a central role to play, as part of the transitional justice architecture established in the Final Agreement, and I welcome the presence here today of its President, Mr. Roberto Vidal. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2024/267), concerns have been raised by former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo secretariat about the scope of the Jurisdiction's work. We encourage the parties to address their differences through constructive, open dialogue.

With respect to current peace dialogues, we welcome the extension of the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the progress on releasing detainees. We now call on the ELN to deliver on its commitments to protect civilian populations, respect international humanitarian law and move ahead with a broader political process.

We condemn the recent attacks by the group referred to as the Estado Mayor Central on both civilian populations and security forces. Those attacks call into question its commitment to pursue dialogue instead of violence. We call on the group to demonstrate the genuine will to work for peace.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has said, let 2024 be the year of implementation. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting broad and lasting peace in Colombia.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu, who will do us the honour of taking part on Thursday in the Forum for International Cooperation in Switzerland to talk about the Colombian peace process. I also wish to thank Ms. Sánchez Buitrago for her statement.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Minister Murillo Urrutia, who is here with us today, for the excellent collaboration with Council members during the trip to Colombia in February. On that occasion, the Council was able to see for itself the peace efforts under way and how the Government was pursuing the objective of "total peace" through dialogue, an effort supported by Switzerland. Discussions with the various stakeholders highlighted the population's desire to achieve lasting peace throughout the country.

In that regard, allow me to highlight the following three points.

First, the guarantee of justice and accountability for the crimes committed is essential to the success of the peace process. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace lies at the heart of those efforts. Switzerland therefore organized an event yesterday with the President of that body, which provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the progress, opportunities and challenges involved in promoting justice and reconciliation. The exchange also provided a platform for addressing the concerns of the signatories to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Dialogue and thorough consideration of all the concerns of the parties involved is crucial to finding a common path forward. Furthermore, while underlining the autonomy of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Switzerland calls for enhanced coordination between the relevant authorities to ensure adequate preparation for the implementation of restorative justice before the first sentences are handed down.

Secondly, Switzerland remains concerned about the ongoing violence against marginalized groups, in particular Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples. Colombians have high expectations of the peace processes under way, so it is crucial that issues of participation and security in the territories be addressed quickly. In order to ensure and promote security guarantees for former combatants, Switzerland calls for greater intra-institutional coordination. With regard to the reintegration of former combatants, we welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Reintegration Programme and the National Reintegration System, and call for their rapid implementation. Reintegration issues must be included in municipal and departmental development plans. That process must also be accelerated.

Thirdly, Switzerland welcomes the renewal of the provisional bilateral ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional for 180 days, despite the difficulties encountered during the most recent round of negotiations. We call for continued dialogue in the seventh round of negotiations. We note with concern the recent acts of violence perpetrated by the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP). It is imperative that the FARC-EP EMC's explicit commitment to improve the protection of civilians, as agreed during the most recent round of negotiations, be respected and implemented. As the guarantor country of that process, we hope that the negotiations will lead

to the re-establishment of a nationwide ceasefire and to the achievement of further progress therein.

The recent visit of the Security Council highlighted the importance of continued support from the Council and the international community to achieve lasting peace in Colombia. Beyond that, it also demonstrated the positive influence that a united Security Council can have on a peace process.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing today. And I thank Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for her important briefing. I also wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia to this meeting.

The United States appreciated the opportunity to join the Council on its important trip to Colombia earlier this year. And we thank the Government of Colombia for hosting the visit.

The United States reiterates its strong support for the continued implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Accelerating efforts towards full implementation is vital to Colombia's efforts to make progress towards justice for victims of the conflict, alongside its security, stability and counter-narcotics goals.

We welcome continued dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), including the sixth round of talks in Cuba, as well as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia's deployment of more than 100 personnel to support the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of the bilateral ceasefire. We are glad to hear reports that the Mechanism is helping to reduce conflict and that the ceasefire was extended. We welcome the Verification Mission's efforts to implement those provisions of the peace agreement that are outstanding, including gender provisions.

We encourage the Colombian Government to continue regularly consulting with diverse women and LGBTIQ+ civil society to develop and fully implement the first national action plan on women, peace and security in Colombia and to ensure that their rights and perspectives are fully integrated.

We also welcome progress on the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform chapter, a fundamental aspect of the agreement. More must be done to

expand access to land, in particular for marginalized ethnic communities.

We condemn the acts of violence perpetrated by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) on 16 and 17 March against Indigenous communities in the municipality of Toribío, Cauca. In particular, we mourn the death of community leader Carmelina Ascué Yule and the wounding of two Indigenous guards. According to reports, FARC dissidents attacked her and others following their protests against the armed groups' forced recruitment of minors.

We also remain greatly concerned by increased violence in regions such as Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Putumayo that particularly threatens the safety and development of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

We continue to monitor discussions between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP. The United States will continue to look for more progress on those efforts before considering a further expansion of the Verification Mission's mandate to include monitoring the ceasefire between the FARC-EP and the Colombian Government. Unhindered humanitarian access, particularly for humanitarian demining organizations, as well as civilian protections, continues to be of paramount importance.

The ELN, FARC-EP and Segunda Marquetalia remain designated foreign terrorist organizations under United States law, and those designations demonstrate the United States' solidarity with Colombia's efforts to support victims as they seek truth and justice.

Past peace processes have made clear that a security strategy is essential to pressure illegal armed groups to negotiate in good faith and to avoid impunity for their abuses.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for the comprehensive briefing. We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia in this meeting.

Colombia remains largely a unique and inspiring example. Its Government not only volunteered to implement a complicated set of national reconciliation commitments, but also asked the Security Council to monitor and oversee that process. We always recall

and commend that decision, as well as the ongoing efforts of the Colombian State and all participants of the peace agreements. We trust that this is exactly how Colombians viewed the visit by the Security Council in February.

Of course, the Council's visit alone could not and was not intended to solve the numerous problems of Colombian peacebuilding. We saw, however, that all participants recognize the issues and maintain an open dialogue with a view to resolving them as effectively as possible.

We note the genuine commitment of the Colombian authorities to the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/267), the legal and instrumental framework for the final peace agreement has finally been established. What remains is the most important challenge — the actual implementation of the document's provisions.

Unfortunately, at the moment, the process is still moving at a slow pace, which has given rise to justified criticism from the signatories of the agreement, namely, the former combatants and the victims of the conflict. The level of armed violence remains exceedingly high. We reject the ongoing attacks and assassination attempts against former combatants, who must be provided with adequate security guarantees and opportunities to return to civilian life. We also note the concerns of the signatories to the peace agreement regarding the modalities of the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We trust that the disagreements will be resolved through inclusive dialogue while preserving the independent work of this critical transitional justice body.

We believe that the initiative by President Petro Urrego's Administration to engage in dialogue with armed militias as part of the "total peace" process has made the peacebuilding process in the country broader and more comprehensive. At the same time, for it to be more successful and predictable, it would be useful to have a unique road map of State policy that stipulates specific tasks and deadlines for their implementation.

Russia has always advocated the inclusion of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in the peace process, and we are pleased to see that, in general, the ceasefire with this illegal armed group is working successfully. We value the contribution of the United Nations

Verification Mission in Colombia to preventing potential clashes between the parties within the framework of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of the ceasefire.

We understand the difficulties in negotiations with the dissidents from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, whose continued attacks on civilians, kidnappings and recruitment of minors are unacceptable. Those who suffer most from the violence perpetrated by illegal armed groups are Indigenous people and Afro-Colombians.

Recently we received first-hand knowledge from Indigenous leaders from the Cauca department. During their first visit to New York, they shared their concerns with us. We note their calls — not only to operationalize the ethnic chapter of the final peace agreement, but also to provide the Indigenous population a greater role in dialogue with the armed groups whose activities cause them great suffering.

We stress that, regardless of progress on various negotiating tracks, the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement must remain an unconditional priority and a benchmark for all peacebuilding efforts undertaken by the Colombian authorities.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia will continue to support the peace process in Colombia in order to make it sustained and irreversible, as well as the work of the Mission, under the leadership of Carlos Ruiz Massieu.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, as well as my own country, Guyana (A3+).

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his informative briefing and Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for sharing her perspectives. We also welcome the participation of the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, and through him thank the Government of Colombia for the excellent arrangements made for the Council's visit in February.

Colombia constitutes a positive example of conflict resolution through inclusive dialogue and implementation of peace agreements despite the complex and challenging nature of the conflict. The

A3+ commends the ongoing efforts of the Government of Colombia for the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

The recent Council visit was a welcome opportunity to view those efforts first-hand and to assess the challenges and opportunities that the Government and the people of Colombia are encountering in the implementation of the peace agreement.

We commend the continued prioritization of rural reform and take note of the positive developments to that end, including increased allocations for agricultural development projects, progress with the land cadastre and the allocation of funds to support women's projects. We are also pleased with the steps taken to improve the participation of Afro-Colombian organizations in rural reform. However, we urge further progress, including in the approval of the rural health plan. Addressing land issues is critical for the progress and sustainability of the peace process. While acknowledging the efforts of the Government in that regard, we note the enduring challenges to definitively adjudicate land to the beneficiaries. The A3+ urges the acceleration of Government efforts in that regard.

The lack of substantive progress in the implementation of the ethnic chapter remains a cause for concern. We note that, during the reporting period, only four of 23 implementing institutions have met their ethnic chapter goals for 2023. We recognize the efforts to accelerate the implementation of that chapter and stress the importance of stepping up those efforts in order to achieve concrete results.

We also welcome the completion of the Colombian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and look forward to its launch in April 2024. The inclusion of women is crucial to the peacebuilding efforts.

We welcome the approach of the Government of Colombia to seek peace through dialogue with relevant groups. The ongoing negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the extended ceasefire are welcome steps for the peace process.

However, the A3+ strongly condemns the acts of violence committed by the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC) against Indigenous communities that led to the death of an Indigenous leader. We take note of the Government's decision to

suspend the ceasefire with the EMC in some areas and will continue to monitor this situation closely. We urge the concerned parties to return to the path of peace for the benefit of the Colombian people. We hope to see further progress in peace talks with other groups. We believe that these agreements will lead to a reduction in violence on the ground and an improvement in the humanitarian situation in the affected areas.

We commend the work and the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP). Considering the imminent sentences, we call for enhanced coordination between the Government, the SJP and other stakeholders in order to facilitate the implementation of those sentences. We recognize the importance of legal certainty for those under the jurisdiction of the SJP and the need for expeditious justice for the victims. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's call for constructive dialogue with all concerned parties in the framework of the final peace agreement.

The security situation in Colombia continues to pose a threat to the successful implementation of the peace agreement. The A3+ condemns the killings of former combatants. We note that, since the signing of the Agreement, 87 former combatants were killed while under, or awaiting, protection measures. We urge the Government of Colombia to increase efforts to urgently improve protection measures.

We also condemn the persistent violence against social leaders, human rights defenders, the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, particularly women and children. The continued recruitment of children is also cause for great concern. We call on all armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

We note with concern that displacement and confinement continue to trend upwards in many parts of the country, particularly the Pacific coast and border regions. We commend the efforts being made to respond to those challenges and to ensure the protection of forcibly displaced populations. The A3+ urges the Government to increase the State presence and control across all territories to ensure the safety and protection of the civilian population and reduce insecurity in the country. That is also essential to the sustainability of the gains made so far in the implementation of the peace agreement and its successful implementation as a whole.

In conclusion, the A3+ reaffirms its full support to the Government and the people of Colombia in the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement and the important work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, here this morning and to thank him for organizing the Security Council's visit to Colombia in February.

France continues to offer its wholehearted support to the peace process in Colombia. The full implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is paramount, and France welcomes the resolute commitment of the Government of Colombia in that regard. We encourage the Government to continue its efforts to translate that commitment into concrete, tangible changes that can be implemented quickly for the benefit of the population. That should especially be the case in the areas of development, rural reform, access to land, the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement and transitional justice.

France welcomes the efforts made by the Colombian Government in the context of negotiations with the armed groups. The extension of the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional is another step towards peace in Colombia, and negotiations must continue with the self-proclaimed Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP) group for the sake of the communities affected by the violence, which must see the benefits of those negotiations. We also welcome the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Transitional justice is a central pillar of the peace agreement, and it is important to maintain its fundamental balance. The first restorative sentences will open a new chapter in reconciliation. That is in the interests of the victims and the former combatants who have engaged in that process.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia plays an essential role in the multifaceted support for implementing the Final Agreement. We witnessed the remarkable work being done on the

ground during the Council members' visit in February. We stand ready to examine an extension of the Mission's mandate to include monitoring the implementation of the commitments made following the discussions with the EMC FARC-EP. The Final Agreement in Colombia is a historic achievement, and its full implementation, despite the many challenges that remain, must ensure that it continues to be a benchmark in terms of peace processes.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to start by thanking Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and the representative of civil society, Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, and by recognizing the presence in the Chamber of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, whom I would also like to thank for helping to make the Security Council's visit so successful.

I want to highlight the work of the organizers of the visit to Colombia, who drew up a balanced and comprehensive agenda. The meetings with all the parties interested in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace will ensure a comprehensive vision and greater transparency in our work. The visit should motivate the Government and the people of Colombia to continue working for a comprehensive and inclusive peace. The valuable opportunity to meet representatives of victims, women, young people and ethnic and racial groups will encourage us to continue working constructively on the challenges that remain in implementing the Final Agreement. Listening to their stories puts a human face on the peace process and the search for truth and justice, and underscores the importance of achieving national reconciliation. Colombians want peace, and the Security Council must remain committed to that goal. I appreciate the efforts to advance the implementation of various aspects of the Final Agreement and the renewed impetus behind such issues as comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter.

It is encouraging that such aspects as implementing comprehensive rural reform have been prioritized through the progressive allocation of funds to accelerate the delivery of land and rural development in regions affected by poverty and inequality. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts towards those momentous goals, such as the completion of Colombia's first rural land registry. The work of accelerating the

implementation of the ethnic chapter is vital, including through high-level committees monitoring the application of the commitments to completing at least 60 per cent of the chapter's implementation by 2026.

My delegation is concerned about the persistent violence in rural areas that may hinder the full implementation of the peace agreement. It is crucial that dialogue initiatives between the Government and the armed groups move forward in order to put a definitive end to all activities that threaten peace in Colombia and the region. Violence against social leaders, especially women, must be eradicated. The killing of human rights defenders, Indigenous leaders, Afro-descendants and people in rural areas must be investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice. The high number of forced displacements disproportionately affects ethnic communities, representing 67 per cent of those affected, which is why the presence of the State is essential in those areas.

The results of the sixth round of talks between the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Government in Cuba are encouraging. In that regard, the work of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and measures to prevent possible armed clashes are essential. Ecuador is optimistic that the National Reintegration System can be established and adopted soon. It will be crucial to continue to implement the measures necessary for the reintegration of former combatants from the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo into civilian life.

Lastly, I reiterate our support for the 2016 Final Agreement, its institutions and the work of the Verification Mission in the implementation of the Agreement. During our visit, I saw first-hand the difficult work that has been done to fulfil its mandate, and I therefore hope it will continue on that path.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): Allow me to express my gratitude to Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his informative briefing and for the contributions of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to the peace process in the country. I also thank Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for her briefing and warmly welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Murillo Urrutia, who is joining us today.

Having joined the Security Council's visit to Colombia in February, I was able to see that both the Government and the people of Colombia have

eager aspirations for peace through a comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the “total peace” policy, with the support of the Verification Mission and the Council. As a member of the Council, the Republic of Korea feels an even stronger responsibility to work for a successful peace process in Colombia. We welcome the recent advances in the implementation of the Final Agreement and the ongoing peace dialogue initiative with various armed groups. To ensure that Colombia’s peace process remains on the right track, I would like to underline the following points.

First, we commend the Colombian Government for its steadfast commitment to prioritizing comprehensive rural reform to directly address the conflict’s root causes. The Colombian Government’s significant budget allocation in 2024 for the National Land Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as its decision to establish 200 regional rural reform committees, has laid an enabling foundation. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that seven years after the Final Agreement was signed, the land formalization and distribution goals agreed on are facing significant delays, despite the current Administration’s ongoing efforts. The Colombian Government’s efforts alone may not be sufficient to cope with that challenge. We call for collaborative action promoting the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement across civil society, the private sector and the international community, along with the engagement of the relevant United Nations agencies, including the Peacebuilding Commission. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia could contribute to that by providing more information to all stakeholders about the quarterly breakdown goals of the land reform process, major constraints and areas for potential cooperation in the Secretary-General’s future reports. The land reform that Korea conducted in the 1950s, together with the rural development in our country that first gained momentum in the 1970s, were stepping stones to where Korea is today. Drawing on that experience, we are working with the Colombian Government to bolster its rural development efforts, as the Presidents of our two countries discussed last September.

Secondly, we recognize that the role of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is crucial to the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We commend the Jurisdiction’s efforts to achieve the recent acknowledgement of responsibility by participants in

the conflict, including former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and members of the public security forces. We are also looking forward to the first restorative sentences, which are soon to be handed down. However, despite the progress that the Jurisdiction has made, we are concerned about recent tensions between it and the former FARC-EP leaders regarding the scope of amnesty and the focus of investigations. Transitional justice must be implemented, whatever the obstacles. We underscore the importance of constructive dialogue in narrowing differences between the Jurisdiction, former FARC-EP leaders and Government entities, through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Lastly, the Republic of Korea welcomed the recent progress in the peace dialogue initiative with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which achieved a 108-day ceasefire extension, the release of 26 hostages and an agreement to establish a multi-donor trust fund to support the peace process with the ELN. We also welcome the initiation of a peace dialogue process with Segunda Marquetalia. Despite the agreement reached in January on an extension of the ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the armed group referred to as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), we note that the agreement was recently suspended, owing to the violence perpetrated by the EMC FARC-EP against Indigenous communities in the department of Cauca. We remain concerned about all forms of violence inflicted by armed groups on civilians, including former combatants, social leaders, ethnic populations and women. We also underline the importance of the implementation of the gender provisions in the Final Agreement and the efforts of the Verification Mission to integrate a gender perspective into its mandate in order to ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in the peace process.

The Republic of Korea was able to achieve peace and prosperity thanks to the support of the international community, including Colombia, during the Korean War. Bearing that in mind, we reaffirm our commitment to continuing to work with all stakeholders in order to forge an environment conducive to enduring peace in Colombia.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and

Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for their briefings. I also welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia.

In the Council's open debate on conflict prevention last month (see S/PV.9574), some participants cited Colombia as a good example of a country achieving peace. Japan strongly supports and commends Colombia's continued commitment to "total peace", underpinned by the concept of human security, which calls for the protection and inclusion of all individuals and the establishment of stable mechanisms for that purpose. Colombia's effort is also demonstrated by the recent approval of a strategic security and protection plan for former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, as well as by the progress on comprehensive rural reform that allocates land to people in vulnerable situations, including former combatants. In order to further implement the protection and reintegration of former combatants and all other actors, the roles of security and justice institutions are also crucial. In that vein, we hope that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, together with all the parties concerned, finds a way to overcome recent obstacles, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/267).

We welcome progress on the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and on the gender provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. The full, equal, effective, meaningful and safe participation of all actors in the peace process, including negotiation, mediation and reconciliation, contributes to building a resilient society. Japan reiterates that such reforms and plans in the Final Agreement and other ceasefire agreements should be broken down into concrete strategies at the local and community levels, to be implemented effectively on the ground. The importance of that approach was reaffirmed during the Council's visit to Colombia in February. The concrete strategies should reflect the perspectives of stakeholders and beneficiaries, including victims, rural communities, ethnic peoples, former combatants and all other Colombians, regardless of gender, so that all those actors can experience the positive impact.

Turning to the ongoing peace negotiations, Japan welcomes the commencement of the peace dialogue process between the Government and Segunda Marquetalia and the extension of the ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Ejército

de Liberación Nacional. It includes the suspension of ransom kidnappings, which should be firmly upheld. Japan commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for supporting Colombia's efforts to promote dialogue. In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering support for Colombia and its people's endeavour to sustain peace.

Mrs. Blokár Drobič (Slovenia): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Sánchez Buitrago for their briefings. I would also like to join other members in welcoming His Excellency Minister Murillo Urrutia to the meeting.

During the Council's February visit to Colombia, members were assured first-hand of the Government's commitment to implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and achieving comprehensive and inclusive peace in the country. We acknowledge the Government's ongoing efforts in that regard and applaud the courage and determination that the people of Colombia are demonstrating in seeking to resolve persistent, deep-seated issues. In particular, we commend the progress that has been made towards implementing comprehensive rural reform, a fundamental aspect of the Agreement.

At the same time, we encourage further swift and concrete action to translate the Government's policies and plans for implementing the various sections of the Agreement, especially its gender provisions, into tangible results. One area in which such actions are urgently needed is the protection of civilians. We are especially concerned about the reported increase in grave violations against children, including their recruitment and use by armed groups. That must stop. We call for an immediate end to all violence against the civilian population, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. The events in Cauca three weeks ago serve as a stark reminder of the security challenges, highlighting the urgent need for the rapid implementation of the security guarantee measures to safeguard the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as well as vulnerable groups such as women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society leaders, among others. In that regard, we are looking forward to the discussion of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on Friday. In the parties' discussion of long-term plans with the international community, they need to commit to strengthening the protection

of civilians. The ceasefire must be complemented by concrete measures that will benefit communities.

Rural communities continue to suffer disproportionately from both conflicts and development gaps, especially where the State's presence is not sufficient. Strengthening the integrated presence of the State and State services across the national territory is not only crucial to the successful implementation of the Final Agreement, but it is also inextricably linked to the outcomes of the ongoing efforts to resolve the continuing armed conflict in Colombia. In that context, we commend the Government's efforts to advance dialogue initiatives within the framework of its "total peace" policy. The announcement of the longest-ever ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional marks an important step in the right direction.

I also want to touch briefly on the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In anticipation of the issuance of the first restorative sentences, constructive dialogue among all the parties concerned will be paramount in overcoming any obstacles encountered regarding the scope of the Jurisdiction. We encourage the Government to provide it with the necessary support and invite the Jurisdiction to bear in mind its unique responsibility of delivering justice promptly and with legal certainty. It must fulfil its historic role as the judicial component within the transitional justice system, including in the prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence, notably on case 11. By doing so, it can exemplify best practices not only for Colombia but also the wider region, and indeed globally. Justice and reparations for victims are integral to the post-conflict period and among its crucial components. Without justice, no peace can truly be sustainable.

Before I conclude, I want to mention that during the Council's visit to Colombia, the members saw what an impact the conflict has had on the environment, which is the silent victim of the conflict. Slovenia therefore strongly supports integrating cross-cutting climate-related security risks into the broader context of the peace process as well as the implementation of the Final Agreement.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the Colombian Foreign Minister to today's meeting, and I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I also listened carefully to the statement by the representative of civil society.

In February, members of the Council paid a successful visit to Colombia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Colombia for its warm reception and thoughtful arrangements. My thanks also go to Guyana, as the Council President at the time, for its careful organization, and to the co-leads of the United Kingdom and Switzerland for their considerable work. As a result of the visit, Council members witnessed the important progress made in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia and promoting ceasefire and peace talks. During the visit we saw the strong determination of the various parties in Colombia to move the peace process forward, as well as the difficulties in the implementation of the Final Agreement, and it was clear that there are many risks and challenges in the road ahead.

Whether we are speaking of the implementation of the Final Agreement or the advancement of the country's vision of "total peace", it is necessary for the parties in Colombia to maintain faith and unity, draw on lessons learned, identify the root causes of problems and formulate policies and initiatives that are in line with the country's realities, meet the needs of their stakeholders and can be implemented in a practical way. The international community and the Council should see the visit as an opportunity to review the past few years of the Council's work in terms of its consideration and support of the peace process in Colombia. In the light of the developments in the situation and the actual needs in the country, the relevant policy practices need to be optimized and adjusted so as to give more targeted support. I would like to touch on three points.

First, we should promote national development and work for sustainable peace. According to information provided during the visit by the Colombian Government and by representatives from various walks of life, one of the main obstacles to the implementation of the Final Agreement, which has fallen short of expectations, is a lack of progress in key areas such as rural reform, land distribution and the reintegration of former combatants. We encourage the Government of Colombia to continue to scale up its efforts in those areas and look forward to seeing such efforts translated into a solid foundation for advancing the peace process. At the same time, we are cognizant of the many difficulties and challenges faced by the Colombian Government in implementing the relevant policies. We hope that in accordance with its mandate, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will provide greater support in that regard

and coordinate with the United Nations country team, the United Nations Development Programme, the Peacebuilding Commission and other agencies, as well as international and regional partners, so as to build synergy.

Secondly, we should promote the process of dialogue and reconciliation and consolidate the momentum for peace. We welcome the continued extension of the ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and look forward to positive progress in the seventh round of peace talks between the two sides. We note that while the ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo has encountered some setbacks, the determination of the two parties to move forward with the peace talks remains unchanged. We also welcome the recent announcement by the Colombian Government on the launching of peace talks with other armed groups. We hope the parties in Colombia will demonstrate the willingness and determination needed to engage in peaceful negotiations to reduce conflict and violence, create a favourable environment for dialogue and consultation and continue to consolidate and expand the effective outcomes of such talks.

Thirdly, the security situation should be improved in a practical manner in order to strengthen confidence in peace. The Secretary-General's report (S/2024/267) notes that violent crimes and armed conflict persist in some parts of Colombia, threatening the security of the population and disrupting social activities. Some former combatants have been repeatedly attacked. A secure and stable environment is particularly important to enhancing the confidence of all sectors of the population in the process. We support the Government of Colombia in fully implementing the relevant security policies, continuing to increase its deployment of security forces in former conflict areas where effective control is absent and strengthening the protection of women, children, ethnic minorities and former combatants.

Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and many Council members mentioned the transitional justice process in Colombia in their statements. China attaches great importance to the role of transitional justice in realizing justice and promoting peace and reconciliation. We hope that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will speed up its work and issue its first sentence as soon as possible.

China commends the significant work done by the Verification Mission under the leadership of Mr. Ruiz Massieu in terms of promoting the peace process in Colombia. We stand ready to continue to support the Mission and international and regional partners so as to contribute to the promotion of a Colombian-led, Colombian-owned peace process with our support and assistance.

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

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his comprehensive briefing. I welcome the participation today of Colombia's Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, and I thank the Colombian Government for its hospitality during the Security Council's visit in February. I am also grateful to Marcela Sánchez Buitrago for her strong testimony, and I commend the vital work of her organization in the defence of human rights and justice for gender-diverse persons in Colombia.

Malta commends the people of Colombia for their determination on the path to sustainable peace, and recognizes the important progress that the Colombian Government has made in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We hope to see greater implementation, through swift and concrete action on the ground, to ensure that the Final Agreement delivers transformative change and tangible results. That can be achieved only with the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and LGBTQI+ persons.

Malta commends the Government's efforts to reduce violence through dialogue with armed groups. We welcome the ongoing peace talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, and the new round of talks between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. It will be crucial to ensure that the positive developments in peace talks are not eclipsed by violence. To that end, it is critically important for the parties to seek to strengthen their commitments to the protection of civilians, including children, and take concrete measures for the immediate benefit of conflict-affected communities. That includes strengthening the integrated presence of the State across Colombia's territory.

Security guarantees must be in place to protect those who have committed to the peace process or are vulnerable to violence, discrimination or coercion. That particularly relates to former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders, women, Indigenous people and LGBTIQ+ persons.

More than 1,200 human rights defenders and social leaders have been killed in Colombia since 2016, with 150 killed in 2023. We commend the progress towards the launch of Colombia's first national action plan on women and peace and security and its intersectional approach related to LGBTIQ+ and ethnic matters. We urge the Government to accelerate implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. Effective investigation and prosecution of crimes committed against those groups must be given priority.

Malta is troubled by the considerable increase in grave violations against children detailed in the most recent Secretary General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363). We are concerned by the disproportionate impact on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children, including the increase in rape and other forms of sexual violence, which disproportionately affected Indigenous and Afro-Colombian girls. All parties must immediately cease the killing and maiming of children and take all necessary measures to ensure their protection, including ending the use of landmines. Furthermore, we urge armed groups to end the abduction, recruitment and use of children and call for the immediate release of all children from their ranks. We call for the strengthening of prevention programmes to benefit those children and for authorities to investigate and prosecute anyone found responsible for those violations.

Malta commends the meaningful progress achieved by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. I welcome the presence of Mr. Roberto Vidal, President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, today. We hope to see the prompt issuance of restorative sentences to ensure the delivery of transitional justice for victims of the conflict. We urge parties to engage in constructive dialogue to overcome any obstacles encountered within the framework of the agreement.

In conclusion, in the light of the significant day in which Colombians remember the victims of the conflicts, Malta commends the progress made thus far and reaffirms its full support to the Colombian peace process. We look forward to seeing further

implementation of the peace agreement to deliver lasting and sustainable peace for all Colombians.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Murillo Urrutia (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Madam President, for your support. We thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his efforts and leadership to achieve peace in Colombia. We thank the members of the Security Council and have taken careful note of their recommendations. We also thank Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, Executive Director of Colombia Diversa and the representative of civil society at this meeting, for her leadership in Colombia to achieve inclusion, which our Government also supports, and for her briefing and her perspective.

Colombia is a global example. We have come to the Security Council to speak of peace and not war. The instructions of President Gustavo Petro Urrego and Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina were to promote peace, life and democracy in a context of social justice and inclusion for peoples and territories that have been historically marginalized in Colombia and from the perspective of a feminist foreign policy. Colombia's success in its bid for peace will also be the success of the United Nations.

As a nation, we recognize and value the unanimous support of the international community, represented in the Security Council, for our Government's policy of "total peace" and for Colombian society in general. That support was expressed in an amplified manner during Council members' visit to our country in February, which I had the honour to accompany with other officials of our Government.

Today, 9 April, Colombia is commemorating the national day of remembrance and solidarity with victims of the internal armed conflict. The purpose of this day is to recognize the victims, remember them and honour their memory. They will always be the centre of gravity of peace.

On that point, I would like to make special mention of Justice Roberto Vidal, President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, who is with us today in this Chamber, and who yesterday shared with his teams precisely how that tribunal has a transitional

approach focused on victims and restorative justice. I concur with Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu that the selection of the new Attorney General of Colombia is a very important opportunity for being able to make progress on combating impunity, because it is imperative that the struggle against impunity leads to redress for the victims and achieving peace. We also find ourselves at a time of great opportunity for the harmonious relationship with the various courts of the Colombian legal system, which, as has been said at this meeting, is key to achieving peace.

Council members have directly witnessed the challenges we are facing in Colombia. Peace in Colombia involves recognizing that the territories of our country are diverse. Peace involves recognizing the multiple social, ethnic and linguistic groups in the country and, therefore, the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is important.

Council members had the opportunity to visit a territorial area for training and reintegration in the department of Caquetá and to speak with the communities of the Colombian Pacific coastal region. They saw territories where armed confrontations used to take place and where now peace and hope are being built. They were able to see first-hand the diverse reality of Colombia, as underscored by Ms. Marcela Sánchez Buitrago. That diverse reality means that the policies aimed at achieving peace must be innovative and focus on diversity in their analyses and the reality of our territories and historically marginalized population groups.

We condemn any action against civilian groups on the margins of the legal system, because those are the groups that disproportionately suffer the consequences of war. That is why we are working to transform the structural causes of violence in the country — in order to transform the life and reality of the territories.

Regarding the implementation of the historic 2016 peace agreement, we are making decisive progress. Since the beginning of this Administration's term, the Government has formalized the allocation of close to 800,000 hectares of land to peasants, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, victims of armed conflict and, particularly, internally displaced persons.

Recently, the national Government allocated close to COL\$500 billion to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in order to strengthen it and help it fulfil

its mandate of delivering justice, clarifying the truth and making reparations to the victims, among other important progress. Similar unprecedented budget allocations have been granted to the implementation of comprehensive rural reform. These actions are aimed at addressing the guidelines established in the 2016 peace agreement, the national development plan entitled “Colombia, global life force”, as well as our “total peace” policy.

We recognize, however, that we still face many challenges before we can achieve the full implementation of the agreement, as well as total peace in the country — challenges that the Council has also identified and mentioned here. These are being addressed by our Government as a matter of priority. In that sense, we recognize the importance of life and security guarantees for ex-combatants, social leaders, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, LGBTQ persons and internally displaced persons, especially children, adolescents and young people. Peace signatories are essential for the very sustainability of the agreement.

We therefore submit for the consideration of the Council — and we will do so formally — a proposal to invite the peace signatories, as high contracting parties to the 2016 agreement, to participate periodically in these meetings.

The message I want to leave the Council with today is that the Government of President Gustavo Petro Urrego and Vice-President Francia Márquez is committed to overcoming violence and moving towards a Colombia at peace.

In these turbulent times, with manifestations of violence and wars, Colombia has set out to be a country that promotes life, peace and reconciliation. We do so with conviction because many of us are from those territories and have, at one point, also been victims. Our experience will always be at the Council's disposal. As a country, we value the unanimous consensus of the international community — shown once again today in the Council — for peace in Colombia.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.