



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

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Thursday, 11 July 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mr. De Bono Sant Cassia
Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hyunwoo Cho
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

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/2024/509)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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/2024/509)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): 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. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia. On behalf of the Council, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): 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 Mr. Diego Tovar, representative of the high contracting party to the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement.

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/2024/509, 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 (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to appear before the Security Council today in the presence of the President of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego. I would

like to acknowledge once again his commitment to peacebuilding in Colombia, despite the many challenges and difficulties it still faces. His vision of "total peace", placing the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace at the centre of everyone's efforts and promoting dialogues with other groups, is a realistic response to the complex context that Colombia is facing.

It also gives me great pleasure to welcome Mr. Diego Ferney Tovar, who is participating in the meeting in his capacity as a signatory and a representative of the Comunes party. We appreciate his leadership and his work as a representative on the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. This is the first time that both parties have participated in person in a Security Council meeting, in a clear reminder of the bilateral nature of the peace agreement. Cooperation between the parties using the architecture established by the Agreement remains essential to making progress on its implementation. I would also like to welcome the recent efforts of both parties in preparation for this meeting to review the status of implementation of the Agreement and the obstacles confronting it, as well as to identify priority actions for the coming years. The parties' intention to formulate a rapid action response plan to speed up the implementation of the Agreement is encouraging. I also appreciate the new functions assigned to the new Minister of the Interior to coordinate the Government's implementation efforts. Today's Council meeting is certainly an opportunity to have a productive dialogue with a long-term vision and to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to continue supporting national efforts.

(spoke in English)

Over the years, the continued commitment of both parties, combined with the work of key Government and State institutions, has contributed to achieving substantial progress in implementing important aspects of the Final Agreement. I would like to start by recalling the courage demonstrated by the thousands of men and women former combatants who willingly laid down their weapons and set about reintegrating themselves into society and political life. It is equally important to mention the work that has been carried out since that time by Government officials and agencies to support the former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and their families.

However, we still have the continuing challenge of ensuring the sustainability of the reintegration process in the long term, providing adequate housing, access to land and security and combating the stigmatization of former combatants. Since inequitable land distribution has been one of the root causes of the conflict, the Agreement includes in its first chapter on rural reform the provision and formalization of land for the benefit of peasants, rural women and victims. It is one of the most potentially transformational aspects of the Agreement. However, progress remained stagnant until recently.

I congratulate the Government, led by President Petro Urrego, for prioritizing comprehensive rural reform, as seen in expanded budgets and acquisition of land, even if more momentum is needed in order to reach the goal of 3 million hectares established in the Agreement. I am also encouraged that the Government has recently announced a renewed focus on bringing peace dividends to the regions most affected by conflict by investing in the development programmes with a territorial focus. Those programmes were launched in the early years of the process following consultations, with the participation of more than 220,000 citizens. However, while nearly 4,000 of those initiatives have been completed to date, the credibility of the process lies in the successful implementation of all 33,000 initiatives proposed by the communities in order to meet the expectations created among the population.

I also call on the authorities to remain focused on the implementation of the ethnic chapter. It was a major achievement of the Colombian peace agreement and the product of consultations with ethnic groups, in recognition of the disproportionate impact of the conflict on their communities. However, its implementation continues to lag behind, requiring concerted efforts across State entities and the continued support of the international community.

The legislative branch, which has been key to moving forward on peace implementation since the Agreement was signed, still has an important role to play, including in rural reform. For example, Congress recently approved a bill that incorporates an agrarian jurisdiction into the Colombian judicial framework and defines its structure. However, another important bill to operationalize the jurisdiction is still awaiting action in Congress. That is an example of the importance of ensuring that all State entities do their part to advance the implementation of the Agreement.

(spoke in Spanish)

After the signing of the Agreement, the reduction in violence in the territories lasted only briefly. Without a resolute effort by the State to fill the gaps left after former FARC members laid down their arms, other armed groups began to gradually expand their reach, and that has continued to this day. As a result, complex conflict dynamics are now present in several areas and are affecting people's daily lives, especially in Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The Agreement provides for various tools to address the security situation in several regions of the country, including a public policy just decreed by the President on dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. It is precisely the slow implementation of the set of security guarantee measures provided for in the Agreement that has contributed to the persistence of issues that engender violence. Recently, following the assassination of a well-known social leader, I accompanied the parties to the peace dialogue table with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) on their visit to the southern part of the department of Bolívar, an area in which the expansion of armed groups and their struggle for territorial control are endangering the civilian population. There we heard from representatives of local organizations and leaders, and here I would like to recognize the importance of their work and their resilience in building peace. They made a clear demand for greater security guarantees and social investments and called for the peace dialogues to continue. That is not surprising, given that Colombians are still clearly committed to peace. According to the most recent survey conducted by the United Nations, more than 80 per cent of citizens in conflict zones support dialogue as the primary means of conflict resolution. On the other hand, I am particularly concerned about the situation in Cauca department, where the armed actors' impact on the civilian population has worsened. I particularly deplore the bombings that have claimed lives.

Even in places where ceasefires are not in force, the conflicting parties have a responsibility to adhere to international humanitarian law. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly said, even conflicts and wars have rules. At the same time, I regret that in Miravalle, in the department of Caquetá — which the Council visited in February and where former combatants inspired the world with their rafting ecotourism project — threats from armed groups have now forced them to abandon their homes and life projects. Insecurity is clearly the main obstacle to reintegration and the success of the

Agreement. Since it was signed, 421 signatories have been murdered. Given that state of affairs, I can only reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all armed actors to respect the lives, welfare and freedoms of communities and of those who have already chosen the path of peace.

The complexity of the dynamics of violence affecting Colombia requires a multifaceted response. The implementation of the Agreement must go hand in hand with complementary strategies to neutralize the persistent violent incidents. Communities need the security guarantees provided for in the Agreement to be implemented in a context of increased State presence, complemented by violence reduction measures agreed on as part of the various dialogue initiatives under way between the Government and other groups. In order to move towards peace, it is necessary and strategic for those efforts to be concurrent. In that connection, the role of the United Nations is intended to promote the development of those simultaneous efforts.

Beyond the verification of the implementation of the 2016 Agreement, the United Nations has responded to the call of the parties — the Government and the other parties — to support the ongoing dialogue initiatives. With regard to the dialogue between the Government and the ELN, we have been supporting the important work of the negotiations table, which has shown, on several occasions, its capacity to reach significant decisions, despite the challenges inherent to any negotiation process.

Given the current crisis situation, I encourage the parties to meet the expectations of Colombian society and overcome the paralysis at the table. To that end, it is essential that both parties take decisive steps to re-establish the leading role of the national round table and restore mutual trust.

As a result of the Government's talks with fronts of the group known as the Estado Mayor Central, territorial development measures are being constructed in some regions. At the same time, those talks face important challenges, with the fragmentation of the group and an upsurge of violence in other regions. It is essential for the parties to set a negotiating agenda with a horizon of a transition towards peace.

Ceasefires are useful tools in situations of armed conflict to contain violence between the parties and its effects on the civilian population, on the one hand, and to allow for confidence-building between them, on the other — a fundamental element for any peace process.

I stress that, while the impact of bilateral ceasefires is limited in some regions by the presence of a multiplicity of armed actors, they are a significant step in the right direction. I take this opportunity to encourage the parties to extend the ceasefires and broaden their scope.

Finally, I welcome the installation of the peace dialogue table between the Government of Colombia and Segunda Marquetalia in Caracas on 24 June. I encourage the parties to establish solid foundations so that the process contributes to breaking the cycle of violence afflicting the civilian population, in particular, and benefits peace in Colombia.

(spoke in English)

Transitional justice lies at the heart of the peace agreement. As the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues its critical work, differences persist among signatories to the Agreement regarding the scope of some of its provisions.

In a joint effort with the guarantor countries, I have sought to foster constructive dialogue among all actors in the search for a solution. That is fundamental for enabling the transitional justice process to continue assisting Colombia in its transition from conflict to peace.

As the Council witnessed during its visit to the country, Colombia's peacebuilding efforts have been manifold and have yielded some promising dividends, even if significant challenges remain. I cannot emphasize enough the urgency of the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 peace agreement as the core task at hand.

I am confident that the Government led by President Petro Urrego will lead a joint effort with all State entities to achieve its far-reaching goals. While this endeavour is essentially Colombian, the support of the international community and of the Council, in particular, will continue to be of the utmost importance.

The President *(spoke in Russian)*: I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tovar.

Mr. Tovar *(spoke in Spanish)*: I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the latest developments in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, in the light of the Secretary-General's quarterly report on Colombia (S/2024/509).

It is an honour to participate in this meeting alongside the President of Colombia, Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, whom I thank, on behalf of thousands of signatories, for allowing me to speak today as the representative of the high contracting party to the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement.

I take this opportunity to thank the Security Council and the United Nations for their quarterly and unanimous support — for nearly eight years — of the historic final peace agreement of Havana. We are particularly grateful to the guarantor countries — the Republic of Cuba and the Kingdom of Norway — for their daily support since the time of negotiations.

This morning, the Organization's inauguration of the monument for peace in Colombia demonstrates our — the signatories' — solid commitment to comply with the Agreement upon laying down our arms. That responsibility requires us to monitor, through the bodies created by the Agreement itself, the state of its implementation, especially for all those who, like us, bet on peace. That includes victims of the social and armed conflict, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, LGBTIQ+ people, social leaders and human rights defenders.

Taking into account the magnitude of the obstacles, and President Petro Urrego's ambitious policy of "total peace", whose main pillar is the full implementation of the Agreement, we would like to make several observations.

We believe it is essential and urgent to strengthen inter-institutional coordination and reinforce comprehensive State intervention in the territories. As agreed in Havana, the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement depends on the coordinated work of 53 State entities and of 15 bodies that today, nearly eight years into its implementation, are not yielding the expected results. Some such entities that are regularly mentioned by the Council and by the Secretary-General's reports are the highest-level entity, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, as well as the Special Forum on Gender, the High-level Forum of Ethnic People and the National Reintegration System.

Violence in the territories continues to destroy the lives of entire communities and further limit the

ability of the authorities present to carry out their responsibilities. The involvement of minors in the conflict and violence against reintegrated women and people from ethnic communities are major concerns.

Clashes between illegal armed groups in dialogue with the Government generate violence in rural areas and serious obstacles to the implementation of the Agreement. The recent forced displacement of the Miravalle territorial training and reintegration area, in Caquetá, after the ultimatum of the dissidents of the self-styled Estado Mayor Central is emblematic of the lack of implementation of the security guarantees contained in the Agreement, of the lack of State presence in the regions and of a precarious reincorporation process.

We have demanded that the protocols agreed by the "total peace" policy with the armed groups in dialogue clearly and forcefully define the protection of the lives and integrity of the signatories, the civilian population and their organizational processes.

We also warn that the level of impunity for homicides and other forms of violence remains extremely high. The Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General has not yet produced significant results. The State must fulfil its obligations to the women and men who laid down their arms in a negotiated solution to decades of war, in order to work for peace.

The success of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace lies in its ability to deliver justice, for the benefit of the many victims of the conflict, combined with the guarantee of legal security that must be provided to the signatories, the members of the security forces and other contributors to the conflict who fall under its jurisdiction.

In recent months, we have been able to report to the Council and the State of Colombia with regard the legal uncertainty created by the Jurisdiction. Although we are still in dialogue with the Jurisdiction, no solution has yet materialized.

On a positive note, we welcome the State's progress with regard to the purchase and delivery of land in the framework of the comprehensive rural reform and, recently, the approval by Congress of the Agrarian Jurisdiction, as well as the willingness to update the main implementation road map, which we call the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Final Agreement.

In an action plan which we recently delivered to the Colombian Government, we detailed specific goals to show results in the short and medium term. We are at the State's disposal to continue working on it and above all to promote its implementation.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the Council for inviting me here today, for its continued and decisive support for our peace agreement, whose successful implementation has the potential to establish a standard against which current and future peace processes in Colombia, and around the world, will be measured.

We are convinced that, with the Council's will and valuable support for Colombia, peace will prevail.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Tovar for his briefing.

I now call on the President of Colombia.

President Petro Urrego (*spoke in Spanish*): I wanted to come here because in Colombia, first and foremost, there is not much clarity with regard to this mechanism. It was thought that Government officials came here, in accordance with diplomatic protocol, as a kind of routine visit to the Security Council, and it was not understood or publicly discussed what the words meant in the letter from President Santos Calderón to the Secretary-General (S/2016/53, annex) in which the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was presented as a unilateral State declaration, which means a State commitment — not one of any particular Government — to comply with the commitment made to humankind, which in my opinion takes on a binding legal meaning, as lawyers say, which is mandatory for the country with its existing norms or requires changing them if necessary, as stated in the Agreement. The peace agreement proposes a national political pact among all the existing political and social forces in the country to find ways to change the norms if they do not allow for the peace agreement to be implemented. That had not been well understood, which is why I wanted to come today, to show Colombian society the extent of our commitment.

It has been said here that there is violence again in the areas where the peace agreement was signed. The violence has not expanded in Colombia, but rather has become more and more geographically concentrated. We do not have a national conflict. We have regional conflicts that have been in the same geographical areas

for decades, and the question we should ask ourselves is: why? Why is Colombia continuing to fail? For two and a half centuries, we have been waging war against ourselves for different reasons in different global contexts and failing in the peace processes in which we are engaged. Colombia has had dozens of civil wars in its history and dozens of peace processes. And yet the violence continues.

I am not looking to history, but to the present time, and we would like to review the numbers. The Truth Commission, which resulted from the peace agreement and presented its work, is one of the most important examples of implementation. It states that, since 9 April 1948, the day there was a popular insurrection in Colombia owing to the assassination of the liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who was going to be president of Colombia, 700,000 people have been killed — 700,000 people killed initially for political reasons. It was a genocide against liberal, rural political communities in the middle of the twentieth century. Then it was the result of the State repression against the armed insurgency that emerged from the first conflict and wanted to change the Colombian State at the time of the Cold War and more or less similar to other conflicts in the world. And now that the insurgent struggle has practically been settled with peace agreements, all that remains in the Colombian countryside is an old organization, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, with which we have once again begun peace talks. We are entering an even more diffuse sphere of violence in the same areas, as has already been described here, which I am going to call the wars of the illicit economy, the wars of greed, but which do not allow us to have total peace, to move into an era of peace, as most of the peoples of the world have done.

In Colombia, it is believed that violence is the norm and that peace is something for others, something foreign to humankind, a kind of pact that could even be called satanic, demonic and communist, as some of the extreme right call it. Peace is seen as something revolutionary, while the violence that has been with us for generations is seen as normal. The violence has furthered the illicit economy. Greed has appropriated violence. It uses it as an instrument for concentrating capital. In Colombia, that is done through violence and exclusion.

Colombia today, according to the statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, is the most unequal country in the world. That is why it is violent. Until equity is built, which

means building democracy, the violence will continue to replace peace agreements with corpses. We must consider how to build equity. According to what was signed in 2016, which is under the United Nations stewardship, an effort was made, perhaps the first since the 1991 peace agreement which changed Colombia's Constitution, to observe one of the factors of inequality in particular.

If we are talking about the most unequal society in the world, inequality is obviously expressed in many factors. There is inequality between men and women and economic inequality between those who have the most, who are very few, and the majority of the economic population. There is ethnic inequality, because it is the indigenous and black populations who are at the bottom of the poverty pyramid, which is a racist exclusion. There is cultural inequality and age inequality. Young people are considered pariahs. Even now, hundreds of young people who simply wanted to protest about their condition remain imprisoned, of whom 3,000 were arrested, 60 were killed and dozens were blinded because they were shot directly in the eyes. That was merely three or four years ago.

There is an evident inequality, and that is the point I want to underline because it is linked to the 2016 Agreement and the territory of Colombia due to its geographical reality. The Andes reach a hot and dry zone and split into three mountain ranges. Its geography is more complicated than the Balkans and the Caucasus. Very few areas have that kind of geography, which leads to enormous natural and cultural diversity. An empire could never be built in those mountain ranges — neither Indigenous or Spanish. It also leads to great territorial diversity. Colombia is the most socially unequal country in the world, and that inequality is located in the territories. Some of its inhabitants are rich and others very poor. There are places similar to those we might see in the poorest parts of the planet and very rich areas, like the surroundings of this building. The point is that these are in the same country, but in different territories, with territorial segregation.

Colombia, therefore, has not been able to solve its violence problem of violence, which has lasted two and a half centuries because, in its nation-building process, it has been unable to include all its territory in a single democratic nation that would allow us to overcome our social, cultural and economic differences and differences in skin colour so that we can all live together as equals, with the same power, within one nation. That does not exist in Colombia.

That is why, in the signing of the 2016 peace agreement, a high contracting party, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), originating from the peasants excluded by the violence of the mid-twentieth century, including territorially, set an agenda that was a bit convoluted, in my opinion, to include peasants and the most excluded areas of rural Colombia in the country's national development and democracy. That is the 2016 peace agreement.

The Agreement does not lend itself to an urban or a post-modern reading, having to do with artificial intelligence, connectivity and fibre optics. Rather, it is the resolution of a problem that arises from Colombian history, starting with Spanish colonialism. It is a story of slavery and feudalism that we still have not been able to overcome. That is the agenda. The excluded territories are therefore called development programmes with territorial focus. There is talk about inclusion plans for that excluded territory through a series of investments, such as the road plan, the health plan, the pension plan and the education plan. Within those territories there is an approach that is important for the Council to analyse. We call it the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, PNIS for short — excuse the acronym, but such are the technocratic inventions of a peace agreement. The Programme is for the zones of illicit economies within the development programmes with territorial focus, that is to say, within the excluded territories.

In short, since Colombia, the most unequal society in the world, excluded those territories, the populations living there — in order to survive — have resorted, in part, to latching on to the illicit global economy, as determined by an organization, much like here in the United Nations. The only way to live and survive there is through the illicit economy. But since there are no contracts, checks, signatures or attorneys who can resolve conflicts by pointing to contractual provisions, these are resolved with weapons and, therefore, with violence.

The 2016 peace agreement proposed a change from illicit to licit economies within the territories covered by the National Comprehensive Programme. It proposed solutions for peasants that did not live in FARC areas — agrarian reform, in other words, to solve what the Spaniards created two and a half centuries ago when they brought their feudal structure of land ownership.

In Colombia, in a population of 55 million, there are 10 million peasants. But 90 per cent of the fertile land is owned by just 1 per cent of the population, who, instead of using the fertile land to produce food, has used it to launder the assets of drug trafficking and defends it tooth and nail? That is why we have millions of displaced people and hundreds of massacres. That is what the 2016 peace agreement sought to resolve. The Agreement thus sought to ensure the social, economic and political inclusion of Colombia's peasant population.

What has been the result thus far? The peace agreement did not produce a national agreement. It was not possible to achieve the national pact it speaks of, which has been submitted to the Council as a unilateral declaration of State and a commitment of Colombia before humankind. It has not been possible because the Colombian population has been literally split in two throughout this century — one side wishes to see a military solution to the conflict, the other a negotiated solution. Those are quite distinct. But the people have expressed their will through the ballot box. The peace agreement signed with the FARC was defeated by 65,000 in a referendum. The results were not quite equal. The people said no with a 65,000-vote majority.

A new Government, under President Santos Calderón, who signed the Agreement as a high contracting party, was elected under the slogan of tearing peace to shreds. He was elected by an electoral majority over me, who came in second place. Whether or not there was cheating, as some might assert, what is certain is that it now a political fact. As a result, over four years, a good part of the mechanisms for the fulfilment of the Agreement were interrupted.

And now I have been elected, not by a large majority, but also by half of the population, which, this time, was a majority thanks to the excluded youth of Colombia. The Agreement is before us and has been in place for two years, during which we have tried to implement it. What conclusions do I bring the Council?

First, the rural reform set out in chapter one was, in truth, ignored. Of the 3 million hectares slated to change land ownership, only 17,000 hectares changed hands. My Administration has processed 183,000 hectares. That is significantly more, but still slow and quite far from 3 million hectares in land ownership changes — not to mention the formalization of that process, which require land titles.

The task of clarifying the truth about what happened in the conflict has been meted out to various

tribunals — paramilitaries go to justice and peace tribunals, and FARC guerrillas and the military go to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. And those who truly caused the conflict, those who ordered it because it made them rich, are involved in 17,000 stalled cases in the ordinary justice system.

Due to the fragmented process, even with regard to the same facts, the truth has fragmented and weakened. We are having difficulty in clarifying the truth in most of the cases of violation of the fundamental rights of the Colombian people through violence. The transformation of the territory is the key point of the peace agreement. We have talked about agrarian reform, transformation of the territory and truth for reparation, justice and — I would say — reconciliation. Those three axes are affected by the first difficulty — a lack of speed, because the rules did not allow for it — the second, which is the fragmentation of the truth, and the third, which is that the previous Governments did not really want to prioritize public investment in the excluded territory, and everything that was written about the PDETs remained largely unfulfilled, because Colombia has traditionally invested its public economic resources in its areas of greatest wealth.

That is why we are the most socially unequal country in the world, and the peace agreement was aimed at changing that mindset in order to prioritize the areas in Colombia that historically had been the most excluded, areas inhabited by enslaved and Indigenous peoples, who served the Spaniards, and where their descendants remain to this day. That change in mindset, which required compliance with the 2016 Agreement, has not happened in the country. Those are the difficulties, which mean in the context of chronology that the numbers are lagging behind the proposals made in the peace agreement.

What do we propose to do about that? We propose the following — in order to speed things up, to do our duty to humankind as a State and as Colombian society. I have to persevere with the idea of a national pact, by inviting the collaboration of the political, social and economic leadership of the half of the population that has been opposed to the peace agreement, both the agreement that has been signed and the one that we still have to achieve. Politically speaking, that is crucial. I have not wanted to break completely with those whom today we would call our opposition. We have respected them, we have talked to them and invited them to reach a common agreement on changing the rules.

And that is the problem. There is obviously no desire for a national agreement on changing the rules. But if we have the most unequal society in the world, how can we not change the rules? If we are to build equality, those rules must be built. The peace agreement does have some of those rules, which is why I am going to propose to the Colombian Congress, the courts and society that we once again use the fast-track system. That English term is what Colombia uses for a faster method for enacting laws in Congress. It has been done before, but the then Santos Calderón Government's projects had to do with the initial phases of the peace agreement with the FARC. Now we have to propose changes to the rules that enable us to deliver the products planned in the peace agreement — comprehensive rural reform, a health plan, a housing plan, and so on, together with truth that is comprehensive, not fragmented, and the territory's integration into our national development. We therefore propose the following points.

First, we should modify the rules for future authorizations and the medium-term fiscal plan to allow us to finance the territories' inclusion in development by prioritizing investment there. That technical economic jargon has to do with the fact that Colombia's entire public investment for the next 30 years is already committed. In that regard I am hardly more than a figurehead at the head of the budget for a series of works, basically dual carriageways, which serve the areas surrounding Colombia's richest big cities. That is where the money is going and that is why we cannot finance territorial inclusion, which is the central axis of the peace agreement. That requires a change in the rules, which is what we are proposing here, so that the plan for future authorizations will include full financing to transform the territory's infrastructure and public investments.

Second, we will change the distribution of the general system of allocations to enable resources to be directed to the PDET areas to finance health, education and other projects. That is also an institutional legal structure in Colombia, which has a formula for distributing national resources to municipalities in general but has not been modified to prioritize the series of geographic areas termed the PDET municipalities in the Agreement. That reform is necessary to ensure that PDET municipalities have a greater proportion of resources for their own social investment.

Third, we need to release coca growers from prison. That is part of the Agreement but has never been implemented. There are 35,000 coca growers

imprisoned in Colombian jails in brutal, overcrowded conditions with no human rights. Prisoners as a whole would have a better life if we were to free the 35,000 farmers imprisoned for growing coca, which is simply a plant but which has been criminalized by the relevant bodies of the United Nations itself. That is a point under the peace agreement and I want to see it enacted with a fast-track law.

Fourth, we should optimize and make new mandatory investments in creating productive substitutions for illicit economies and a path to employment and industrialization. In a very neoliberal way, the PNIS, which was put in place to deal with coca cultivation, became an individual transfer programme administered from Bogotá, whereby I send someone to a faraway region with 10 million pesos and they grow a different crop. It failed. Of 90,000 agreements with farming families, only 96 have been completed. It has been a massive failure because of how it was done. If we make a plan, I am going to call it a Marshall plan for productive investment in the areas where most of the world's cocaine is produced — in order to be sold on the streets around here. We can cut off most of the world's cocaine supply, because what coca farmers want to do is grow cocoa and turn it into chocolate; grow corn and turn it into flour; go fishing and turn their catch into fishmeal or frozen food; plant trees and turn lumber into furniture and take that furniture to China and the United States and Europe. That is called transforming the economy and it is done with capital, which should belong to coca farmers in an associative way, as ordained in the peace agreement. That has not been done but it is our goal. Cocaine is another issue that is international in nature.

Fifth, we need to establish structures for hereditary family concessions in the jungle areas of Colombia. By climatic and historical coincidence, the PDET areas where the illicit economies are located are in the Amazon jungle or the most biodiverse jungle in the world, the Chocó, between Ecuador and Panama. That is where 90 per cent of the conflict is, because it is where 90 per cent of the coca cultivation and illegal mining are, and because it is where farmers displaced by the violence of the mid-twentieth century moved to, farmers who took up arms to defend their lives and who formed the social base of the FARC. That is a second international issue — the jungle. It represents the lungs that, after the oceans, absorb most of the carbon dioxide on the planet. It is what is keeping us alive. While the United States is the greatest emitter of carbon dioxide

in North America, we are the greatest carbon dioxide sponge in South America. And yet the armed conflict in Colombia is dogged by two current issues — the world's drugs, which the world consumes, and the climate crisis. We can ensure that the coca farmers, the armed groups and the local communities can help Colombia stop producing cocaine and absorb more of the world's carbon dioxide.

Sixth, we need agrarian reform based on modification of the current regulations for expedited administrative purchases of land. While the law as it stands does not prohibit such purchases, it refers them to the courts, which take decades to determine that a fertile but unproductive estate can be handed over to farmers. The result of this mechanism is that 3 million hectares became 13,000 during the previous Government and have become 180,000 during this one. To put that in perspective, it would take us 50 years to comply with the peace agreement, when the FARC and the State determined that it would take 10. Today's farmers will die of old age before they own land. That is how modern agrarian reform in Colombia has been prevented and it is why the land, while still fertile, is still unproductive, with 15 million hectares built on feudal tenancy and with one main beneficiary, though not the only one — the country's major drug traffickers, who have turned the land into a savings bank. Changing the rules has therefore become crucial.

Seventh, we need a single system for truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation for all stakeholders in the conflict — paramilitaries, civilian third parties, the military and guerrillas — and according to the FARC peace agreement, that includes drug-trafficking groups associated with the conflict, so that rather than seeing some put down their weapons just for others to take them up, we disarm all signatories and thereby achieve general disarmament in the country's conflict zones.

Eighth and lastly, we have to extend the time frame for the implementation of the Agreement by seven years and expand the PDET areas of the country to include impoverished areas in Colombia's big cities. Those are legislative measures. They are not laid down by the President or the FARC. They must be Government measures. To be enacted they must form part of a national pact, which we have been unable to achieve since 2016. A fast-track procedure would enable us to shorten the time needed to comply effectively with the signed peace agreement. We are going to present it to the country and Congress, but we would like it to leave it here for the Security Council's endorsement as part

of the State's unilateral declaration signed with the FARC's high contracting party. I met with them a week ago in the Palacio de Nariño, the seat of Government. And I will conclude, and apologize, in essence, by urging the Council, as part of the United Nations, to take decisions.

If I were to put a value on what agrarian reform represents, adding to it what the inclusion of the excluded territory of Colombia represents and adding to that what a single truth, reparations, justice and reconciliation system would represent, in pesos it would be between about 160 and 200 trillion pesos. That is about \$50 billion that Colombia does not have. What is more, Colombia does not have it precisely because I am dealing with an economic situation that is both national and global. We have gone into debt in order to tackle issues related to coronavirus disease, with varying degrees of success. Money had to be issued. We had an expedited debt with the International Monetary Fund repayable in two years, this year and the next, which has forced me to increase the debt from 70 to 112 trillion pesos. Several tax reform proposals were torpedoed. The wealthiest sectors in Colombia are reluctant to pay more taxes.

We are literally being strangled financially. How can we comply with the peace agreement when there is a budgetary noose round the Colombian Government's neck? That is the reason for the proposal that I have put before the Security Council. It does not entail seeking cooperation from individual countries. That does not work. The money is channelled. It is inefficient and efficiency is what we need. I believe that, if we can strengthen the financial capacity of the Colombian State, we do not need handouts. And there are two methods proposed by the Colombian Government that would be key and are aimed at the three axes of the 2016 Peace Agreement — agrarian reform, territorial inclusion and a single truth, justice and reparations system.

First, the risk posed by Colombia's debt must be removed. As I said, the economic blockade model is used to defeat adversaries. It destroys a country's economic sectors, immediately impoverishing it. Why were Marshall Plans used to rebuild Allied economies in post-war Europe and post-war Korea, while Colombia, whose peacemaking efforts are so huge and which has much to teach the world in so many areas — narcotics, transitional justice, mine clearance, reconciliation, getting combatants to sit down together, how to help combatants rebuild themselves as free people and so forth — is not afforded the space for

economic reconstruction when it needs the economy and the money to solve the problems caused by violence, especially when those problems intersect directly with global issues such as drugs, cocaine and the climate crisis in the jungle?

Might there not be a much more honourable, dignified and powerful deal? Peace in Colombia would end the cocaine problem worldwide, at least until such time as the market finds another supplier or consumers switch drugs, as they do in the United States. Peace in Colombia will save the world's third lung for climate stability. We need to fund it using our own Colombian resources. We have risked \$7 billion above the market interest rate to pay down our debt.

Why? Surely a country that emits carbon dioxide makes human life more insecure than a country that absorbs it. What kind of a market theory has been imposed on life when it means that Colombia has to repay its debt at an interest rate of 8 or 9 per cent and in dollars while the United States can do it at the market rate? And if the issue is about where emissions are occurring, I could also point to China. I do not believe in sectarianism in geopolitics but why Colombia, when it is Colombia that is absorbing emissions? And why does Colombia have to bankroll peace when it is Colombia that through that peace can achieve greater climate and social stability, if we consider the impact of peace on the drugs market and on the chemistry of the atmosphere in terms of carbon dioxide? I put forward that proposal, because exchanging Colombian debt can be equated with climate action, removing the risk of Colombian debt — we would pay at the market interest rate, that is not a problem — but that additional money goes towards the peace process. And, secondly, we are undertaking climate action because the peace process, owing to the geographical area in which it is located, the Amazon rainforest, the biogeographic Chocó rainforest, preserves the rainforest and the lungs of humankind.

We would like to put forward those two measures as a means of collaborating with the world, so that the 2016 peace agreement between the high contracting parties of the State of Colombia and the FARC can be made viable in terms of time, place and manner and that would also serve to silence the guns of the new groups in the illicit economies that were not replaced and in the territories that were not included so that a new period of peace — and not a period of war — can resound throughout Colombia, which is what all of Colombia wants.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank His Excellency President Petro Urrego for his statement.

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by welcoming the participation of President Petro Urrego in this meeting, as well as the participation of Mr. Diego Tovar representing the Comunes party. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

First, let me thank President Petro Urrego and all our interlocutors in Colombia for hosting the Security Council's very valuable visit in February. We welcome his continued commitment to full implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and to build sustainable peace in Colombia. The next two years of his Government will be critical, so we thank him for his report and his update on his fast-track proposals.

The 2016 Agreement is a blueprint to transform Colombia and its territories which requires a whole-of-society effort. Now is the time to build consensus and accelerate efforts across all three pillars. We welcome the reinvigoration of the high-level coordination mechanisms of the Agreement and urge collective action between the Government and the State entities to demonstrate that commitment to peace delivers for all Colombians.

We welcome Colombia's continued focus on addressing the root causes of conflict. We remain concerned about persistent levels of violence and threats, particularly in Cauca, Valle del Cauca, and Caquetá, and reports that areas for training and reintegration are closing owing to insecurity. We strongly condemn the targeting of peace signatories, human rights defenders, women and social leaders and indigenous communities. We call on Colombia to ensure their safety and security, as well as to bring the perpetrators to justice. We encourage Colombia to use the security guarantee mechanisms established in the Agreement, and we look forward to the implementation of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups.

As Colombia takes forward building peace through dialogue, civil society participation is essential. We welcome the agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) on 25 May for its inclusion in the process. We also call upon the ELN to recommit to ending the use of kidnapping and take concrete steps

to protect communities. We note the recent divisions within the so-called Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), and we welcome and recognize that some entities remain committed to the ceasefire. We call upon the EMC FARC-EP to refrain from violence and demonstrate its commitment to peace through dialogue.

The United Kingdom will continue to partner with and support Colombia along its path to sustainable peace. Now is the time to drive forward implementation to achieve lasting change.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his statement. I welcome the presence among us of President Gustavo Petro Urrego and Mr. Diego Tovar, signatory of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and former combatant of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia.

More than seven years after it was signed, the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement is crucial. What is at stake is peace in Colombia. France welcomes President Petro Urrego's commitment in that regard. For almost two years now, he has been striving to complete that transition and extend it to other armed groups. The establishment of an inter-institutional coordination process is a positive development. That should accelerate the implementation of the Agreement. The Government's strong commitment must now be translated into concrete changes for the benefit of the people. It must also lead to a greater presence of the State in the territories.

Reducing violence is essential if the peace agreement is to be fully implemented. France welcomes the progress made in rural reform. It attests to the Government's determination to address the structural causes of the violence. France stands ready to support the Colombian Government in that area.

The ongoing violence, particularly in the Pacific region and in Cauca and Valle del Cauca, is a serious threat to the country's future. Negotiations between the Colombian Government and armed groups must continue to complement efforts to implement the peace agreement. That is particularly the case with regard to discussions with the self-proclaimed the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, in the interest of communities affected by the violence. The extension

of the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the signing, in May, of the agreement on citizen participation in negotiations are steps in the right direction.

Another central pillar of the peace agreement is transitional justice. Significant progress has been made under the aegis of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In that respect, Colombia is an example. The first restorative sentences should enable progress to be made towards reconciliation. The conditions must be created for their full implementation once they have been rendered.

I listened very carefully to what President Petro Urrego said with regard to the need to have the resources to fund responses to climate issues. I would like him to know that France and the World Bank are in favour of suspending debt to enable the funding of projects in the area of addressing climate change challenges. We stand ready to work with Colombia on that.

The United Nations plays a key role in the peace process in Colombia. In particular, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia provides invaluable assistance in monitoring ceasefires. The Security Council must continue to give its full support to the Colombian authorities. Peace in Colombia depends on it. It is also a question of preserving the achievements of the Peace Agreement as an example of the peace process.

Finally, I am delighted that the technical assistance of the Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in implementing the recommendations of the Truth Commission will be renewed this week at the Human Rights Council, at Colombia's request.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): During our visit to Colombia in February, a group of women from a region particularly affected by the conflict presented me with a basket full of letters. Each letter expressed the same dream: the right to send their children to school without violence and to aspire to a future of opportunity. They dream of something that should be self-evident: peace.

I would like to thank Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and for the great commitment he and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia have shown. I welcome Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of Colombia, and thank him for his Government's full commitment to "total peace". I also welcome Mr. Diego Tovar,

representative of the high contracting party, whom we met in Caquetá. I would also like to express my gratitude to Minister Murillo for sharing his observations on the “total peace” policy during an informal exchange that Switzerland organized yesterday for the members of the Council.

The fact that the two signatory parties to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, after having unveiled together a monument of peace this morning, are gathered in the Chamber for the first time in history, underlines their commitment to peace and stability. It also illustrates the crucial support of the international community and the Council in realizing that aspiration. And while many challenges remain, they can also represent an opportunity to be seized.

Allow me to mention three that seem particularly important to us at this stage.

First, as we heard today, the deteriorating security situation in Colombia is worrisome. The frequency of hostilities between armed groups is increasing in several departments. Grave violations against children, including their recruitment and use, are on the rise, as highlighted in the Secretary-General’s latest report on this matter (S/2024/161). The growing number of victims of anti-personnel mines is also alarming. Those developments not only threaten civilians, but they also erode the social fabric of affected communities and complicate measures to address the root causes of the conflict, such as rural reform. It is therefore urgent to reverse these trends.

Secondly, we call for the renewal and strengthening of bilateral ceasefires with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP). The establishment of a negotiating table with the Segunda Marquetalia and the announcement of a de-escalation process should also help better protect affected communities. Switzerland reaffirms its support for the Colombian Government’s ongoing efforts to broaden peace through dialogue.

Achieving lasting peace is a complex process, and it is essential that explicit commitments to strengthen the protection of civilians are honoured. It is also crucial to ensure coherence and coordination between the various negotiation processes and to advance territorial transformation initiatives aimed at promoting socioeconomic development in conflict-affected regions.

Thirdly, better intra-institutional coordination for the implementation of the final peace agreement remains indispensable. In that respect, Switzerland welcomes the creation of a peace cabinet in order to strengthen convergence between the various State institutions. The perspectives and contributions of civil society, starting with women’s organizations, must be included in planning processes.

And, despite the progress made in dealing with the past, challenges remain in finally bringing closure to the relatives of the more than 110,000 people officially considered missing. As Luz Janeth Forero Martínez, Director of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing in Colombia, pointed out at our recent meeting on the subject,

(spoke in Spanish)

“If we found at least one missing person every day, it would take more than 300 years to find them all”.

The full implementation of the final peace agreement and the “total peace” policy is crucial to preserve the progress already made and to realize the dreams I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. The unity of the Council and the international community is essential to continue supporting Colombia and to contributing to the implementation of the solutions built by the Colombian people in order to achieve sustainable peace.

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 and Sierra Leone, and my own country, Guyana (A3+).

We wish to thank Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and, indeed, commend him and his team at the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for their very important work. We welcome the participation of the President of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, and the representative of the high contracting party, Mr. Diego Tovar, and thank them for their briefings.

The A3+ welcomes the progress in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, including efforts to enhance coordination and coherence among the relevant entities. Even with the challenges, the A3+ believes that Colombia is a success story in progress. Peace is never perfect, but it can be sustained when everyone works together. We are therefore encouraged

by the Government's strong commitment to improving coordination and accelerating implementation at all levels.

We also commend the work undertaken by the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement to review the Framework Plan for Implementation and to develop a rapid response plan to accelerate implementation of the Agreement. We believe that this first review could be instructive in driving forward implementation.

We also welcome the development at the Agency for Rural Development and see as positive the first revision of the development plans with a territorial focus, which will address a key gap hindering implementation. Additionally, we note the efforts of the Government to address budgetary and institutional obstacles to enable the full implementation of the peace agreement, as outlined by President Petro Urrego.

These achievements notwithstanding, and cognizant of the structural and other challenges being faced, we continue to urge more robust implementation. On rural reform, which is a central pillar of the peace agreement, there continues to be limited progress in land acquisition. We stress the need for more timely execution, given the increase in resource allocation. We urge the Government to step up efforts to consolidate the reintegration process by frontally addressing obstacles to implementation. Delivering on the commitments related to land allocation and access to housing and security are critical to securing livelihoods in the reintegration process and sustaining peace. These challenges must be addressed comprehensively and require strong coordination and synergy among the relevant institutions and sectors.

The A3+ is also seriously concerned about the lack of substantive implementation of the ethnic chapter. That is critical to the overall success of the peace agreement, as it seeks to safeguard the rights of ethnic peoples, specifically Afro-Colombians and Indigenous peoples, and address the issues affecting them. We note that efforts to implement the pact for the implementation of the ethnic chapter have remained in the early stages. We continue to call for greater efforts to be made to enhance the effective implementation of that chapter, in consultation with the relevant communities and through strengthened coordination at the national and local levels.

In that regard, we hope that the procedural challenge regarding the creation of the Ministry of Equality will soon be resolved and that progress can continue towards the goal of achieving 60 per cent implementation by 2026.

We see as positive that the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional have continued to implement the agreements signed, including on the participation of society in peacebuilding efforts. While negotiations continue to face challenges, we urge continued dialogue and encourage the parties to honour their obligations under the bilateral ceasefire agreement. We also encourage the parties to extend the ceasefire before it expires in a few weeks. Similarly, we call for the extension of the ceasefire with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), which expires in a few days, both to secure the continuity of peace for the Colombian people.

We also commend the Government's commitment to pursue peace through dialogue and will continue to monitor closely the ongoing peace dialogues between the Government and illegal armed groups. The A3+ welcomes the Government's decree formally adopting a public policy to dismantle armed groups and criminal organizations. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the fact that violence and threats by illegal armed groups persist. We condemn all forms of violence, including against women, children, social leaders and human rights defenders, as well as the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. We further condemn the rise in violent clashes, including attacks by the EMC and other illegal armed groups, and we commend the efforts of the Verification Mission in securing the release of hostages, strengthening dialogue and preventing further confrontations. We take note that efforts are also being made to finalize a national action plan on women and peace and security, and we continue to emphasize the importance of ensuring that adequate resources are deployed to support the plan's implementation and ensure maximum impact at the national and local levels.

The A3+ takes note of the preparations being made for the implementation of sentences by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In that regard, we recognize the efforts to coordinate between the Government, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and all stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of the sentences and encourage greater engagement at all levels. We also reiterate the importance of legal certainty for those

under the Special Jurisdiction. We underscore the importance of having a common understanding of how that aspect of the Final Agreement is implemented, and we urge all parties to align their efforts to achieve its effective implementation.

In conclusion, the A3+ recognizes the efforts of the Colombian Government to accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement, while also acknowledging the obstacles still to be surmounted. The people of Colombia deserve sustainable peace. That is why the A3+ reaffirms its full support to the Government and the people of Colombia in their goal of achieving the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. We also reiterate our support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and the team of the United Nations Verification Mission as they accompany Colombia in the process of achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would like to start by welcoming President Petro Urrego to the Security Council and thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and Mr. Tovar for their briefings today. The Colombian Government's consistent high-level participation in these Council briefings is a testament to the importance of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which addresses the long-term effects of conflict-related atrocities and abuses. The United States has strongly supported the Agreement since its signing in 2016, as well as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which plays a key role in implementing it.

However, we have to be clear that just as that conflict played out over years, so too will the work of alleviating its consequences, including the current challenges to security, stability and countering narcotics. To get there, the efforts to fully implement the peace agreement, including justice for the victims and survivors, must be accelerated. To that end, the United States commends the Special Jurisdiction for Peace for its vital work supporting victims and survivors of the conflict. The Agreement relies on transitional processes that advance justice and accountability. In particular, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace works to end impunity for conflict-related crimes, pairing truth-telling, acknowledgement and reparative justice with criminal prosecutions that focus on victims and survivors and promote a durable peace.

In addition, we welcome progress towards rural reform, a challenging but comprehensive and vital component of the 2016 Agreement. To advance the comprehensive rural reform chapter and create more equitable, sustainable and peaceful communities across Colombia, more must be done to expand land rights, climate-smart agriculture and access to financing. That goes especially for women and marginalized racial, ethnic and Indigenous communities. As my Secretary of State Blinken said in announcing that the United States would be the first international entity accompanying the ethnic chapter of the Agreement, "There can be no lasting peace without justice and equality for the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous people."

Moreover, we welcome the continued dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), as well as the Verification Mission's support for the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for the bilateral ceasefire. It is our hope that the Mechanism will reduce the violence and instances of kidnapping and extortion, which are currently having an outsized impact on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The recent launch of the Cauca mission exemplifies the kind of holistic approach required to address that violence, reinforcing Colombian and United States efforts to prevent the forced recruitment of children by armed groups, while pursuing additional development and security efforts. Because to be clear once again, a vast majority of the youth living in conflict areas prefer the path of peace and cooperation. We therefore need to stop treating young people as simply drivers of conflict or victims needing protection and instead empower them as leaders and equal partners in developing constructive solutions. That includes helping them heal from trauma and incorporating their full and meaningful participation in peace dialogues.

Finally, a note on the Colombian Government's negotiations with Segunda Marquetalia, including the recent announcement of a unilateral ceasefire. The ELN, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and Segunda Marquetalia remain designated terrorist organizations under United States law. Those designations reflect our solidarity with Colombia's efforts to support victims and survivors as they seek truth and justice and to end impunity for terrorists and other illegal armed groups. Past peace processes have shown that a security strategy is essential in order to pressure illegal armed groups to negotiate in good faith and to prevent impunity for their abuses. We will therefore continue to track the

discussions between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, noting as those negotiations continue that it is essential that the parties abide by their commitments and ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, including unhindered humanitarian access. We will continue to look for more progress on those efforts before considering expanding the Verification Mission's mandate to monitor the ceasefire between the FARC-EP and the Colombian Government.

Mrs. Blokar Drobíč (Slovenia): I would like to thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and to warmly welcome President Petro Urrego and Mr. Tovar to today's meeting. The presence of the President of Colombia assures us of his country's commitment to implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and achieving comprehensive, inclusive, just and sustainable peace.

A clear message from this morning's Peacebuilding Commission meeting on Colombia is that the international community recognizes the Final Agreement as a model approach to peacebuilding. Peace processes are always fragile, and Colombia needs strong support from the international community. At the same time, Colombia can be an important example of the fact that even the most complex and demanding issues that go to the very roots of society can be solved through agreement, that arms can be laid down and ceasefires can hold.

We commend the Colombian Government and State entities for their ongoing endeavours to achieve the agreement's comprehensive implementation. We are happy to see further progress in implementing comprehensive rural reform, a fundamental aspect of the Agreement. However, as noted in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2024/509), resolute action and a highly coordinated, comprehensive response are still required. To that end, we encourage all sectors in Colombia to collaborate on policies and plans for the full implementation of the various chapters of the Agreement and to transform them into concrete outcomes.

One area requiring such action is the transitional justice process, which includes the responsibility to uphold the rights of victims and achieve reconciliation. We value the important advances made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In anticipation of the first restorative sentences, further constructive dialogue among all the parties concerned is vital to overcoming obstacles to the work of the Special Jurisdiction for

Peace. While upholding the Special Jurisdiction's autonomy, we encourage the Colombian Government to give it the support it needs. It is essential to ensure that all who participated in the conflict contribute to the truth and acknowledge their responsibilities and are able to do so safely. Again, the ultimate objective is to honour commitments to the victims and to ensure non-repetition. At the same time, we remind the Special Jurisdiction of its unique responsibility to deliver justice promptly and afford legal certainty.

Strengthening the integrated presence of the State and the transitioning of national territory in rural areas are crucial not only to the implementation of the Agreement but also to resolving Colombia's continuing armed conflicts. Recent events in Miravalle serve as a stark reminder that armed conflicts, acts of violence and internal displacement continue to disproportionately affect populations in certain regions of the country, particularly children, women, social leaders, human rights defenders and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. We call for an immediate cessation of all violence against the civilian population, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and the recruitment and use of children by armed actors. Furthermore, full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be upheld at all times and promoted in dialogues with armed groups. Those dialogues and the resulting ceasefires must be accompanied by security guarantee measures in order to safeguard communities, especially in rural areas that have been disproportionately affected by the conflict and by development gaps.

Environmental peacebuilding can contribute to expediting recovery among communities that have been marginalized and disempowered by violence. To that end, we encourage the Colombian Government to continue leveraging environmental and climate action in an inclusive and participatory manner with a view to enhancing post-conflict reconstruction, community reintegration and trust-building among local communities.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the presence here today of President Gustavo Petro Urrego and thank him for his statement to the Council. Colombia is a brother country with which we share a history, deep ties and an unwavering desire for peace. I also want to take the opportunity in this forum to express our profound repudiation and condemnation of the armed attack on Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Colombia's Vice-President. I am grateful to the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/509), and to Mr. Diego Tovar, representative of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, for his briefing.

I want to reiterate Ecuador's support for the implementation of the 2016 Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which represents an international benchmark. I acknowledge the progress that the Government of Colombia has achieved and President Gustavo Petro Urrego's political will to implement the Agreement as he tackles the structural challenges that have fuelled violence in Colombia. In that context, I appreciate the Government's efforts to prioritize the implementation of comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter, both key components of the Agreement. The Government's efforts must go hand in hand with measures to end the violence that continues to affect the security of the civilian population, particularly women, Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities and land restitution claimants, ensuring the State's presence throughout Colombian territory. I urge for the prompt completion of the second action plan of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. Coordination between the various entities under the stewardship of the executive, as well as the allocation of resources, is essential to the successful implementation of the ethnic chapter and comprehensive rural reform. It is crucial to ensure that those issues are addressed in order to ensure a climate of peace and rural development.

The signing of the agreement on the participation of civil society in peacebuilding is an appropriate step in the dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). That agreement is fundamental to an inclusive peace in the territories. Likewise, the maintenance of the ceasefire between the Government and the ELN sends a message that must be accompanied by compliance with previous agreements. The dialogues undertaken by the current Government must ensure a definitive end to the violence perpetrated by outlawed armed groups and to the illegal economies spawned by transnational organized crime.

My delegation acknowledges the pivotal role of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in the implementation of the Agreement and in guaranteeing the right of victims to truth, justice and reparations. I want to reiterate my support for the Special Jurisdiction's autonomy. It is

crucial to ensure that it can make headway in handing down judgments. The participation processes that it has facilitated for Indigenous and Afro-descendent victims, such as the workshops held in relation to macro case 5 with victims of sexual and gender-based violence, are of great value in designing restorative projects that address the specific needs of victims.

Ecuador appreciates the strides made in facilitating coordination among State entities and ensuring the effective and sustainable reintegration of former combatants. Security guarantees are decisive for the fulfilment of the agreements, which is why the threats posed by illegal armed groups that continue to affect former combatants are a cause for concern.

Lastly, as on previous occasions, I reaffirm Ecuador's support for the work carried out by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Mr. Hyunwoo Cho (Republic of Korea): I warmly welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of Colombia, and Mr. Diego Tovar, member of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, who is representing the high contracting party of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) to the 2016 Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. I am grateful to the Special Representative Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his informative briefing.

The peace process in Colombia has entered a new phase since President Petro Urrego's Administration was inaugurated in 2022. President Petro Urrego has consistently demonstrated his strong commitment to the full implementation of the peace agreement, driven by his visionary "total peace" policy. Despite challenges, the Administration has achieved remarkable outcomes during its first two years, such as the notable progress in instituting comprehensive rural reform and the ongoing peace dialogues with three different armed groups. We hope that President Petro Urrego's commitment will yield further concrete progress in the years to come. As a member of the Security Council and a strategic cooperative partner of Colombia, the Republic of Korea would like to highlight three points.

First, we welcome the reaffirmation by President Petro Urrego of the Colombian State's duty to fulfil its obligation to implement the peace agreement. We also call on all Colombian State entities to be fully committed to the implementation of the Agreement

by strengthening institutional coordination. Since the Agreement is a product of a national consensus, its full implementation must take precedence over differing political views if enduring peace is to be secured in Colombia. As a development partner of Colombia, the Republic of Korea has been supporting Colombia's peace process, through rural development projects focused on farmers and women in conflict-affected areas and is committed to further doing so on the journey towards resolving the root causes of the armed conflict.

Secondly, the Republic of Korea supports President Petro Urrego's strong leadership in driving the "total peace" policy, recognizing that the policy and the implementation of the peace agreement are mutually reinforcing. Nevertheless, persistent violence against former combatants, human rights defenders and women, as well as Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, needs to be swiftly addressed. In that regard, we welcome Colombia's formal adoption of the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. We also underscore the importance of reinforcing State presence in the territories under the control of armed groups, as they have intensified their control over several local communities during the bilateral ceasefire. The ceasefire should not serve as an opportunity for the armed groups to strengthen their influence.

My delegation is also concerned about the constant recruitment of youth and children by armed groups. The armed groups forcefully recruit them, and many times use social media to glamorize their lives to attract those who do not know the consequences of their decisions. To that end, we urge the Colombian Government to develop a mechanism to monitor and control malicious use of social media by armed groups and to include the recruitment of youth and children as a key agenda item in the ongoing peace dialogues with armed groups.

Lastly, the Republic of Korea reiterates the importance of advancing the women and peace and security agenda in Colombia's peace process. My delegation hopes that the national action plan on women and peace and security will be finalized soon, thereby contributing to accelerating the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in both the implementation of the peace agreement and the "total peace" policy. In line with that, we encourage the Colombian Government to allocate necessary resources to the entities responsible for the implementation of the gender provisions of the Agreement.

My delegation takes this opportunity to thank Colombia for its sacrifices for peace and security during the Korean War. It is now Korea's turn to reciprocate by supporting Colombia's peace process. The Republic of Korea also reaffirms its unwavering support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia's invaluable work towards achieving lasting peace in Colombia.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I also thank Mr. Diego Tovar for his statement. I also warmly welcome the President of Colombia, Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, whose presence here is a clear testimony to the country's political will towards total peace. We are encouraged by the efforts of his Government to accelerate the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, including developing a rapid response plan, reviewing the Framework Plan for Implementation and the recent progress in comprehensive rural reform.

Nonetheless, not only the Government and State entities but all stakeholders throughout Colombia should be in the driver's seat to implement action plans, strategies and frameworks for peace. People on the ground may well have the most knowledge about specific challenges in certain contexts. Thus, we call on all Colombian stakeholders to voice their concerns and opinions, gather their collective wisdom, engage in dialogue and find the best way to advance peace.

Bearing that in mind, I would like to mention four points today.

First, while acknowledging some positive developments in reflecting the needs and ensuring the participation of peasants, women, youth and ethnic peoples, we call for further progress in that regard through the full implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. All Colombians must be protected and secured to fully participate. In other words, their human security, one of the pillars of "total peace", should be ensured without any fear of violence, including in rural areas.

Secondly, in that vein, we look forward to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) delivering its first sentence and completing the comprehensive transitional justice process. That will provide healing to the victims of violence and uphold their rights while rebuilding conflict-affected communities. We encourage the SJP to further promote dialogue and cooperation among related actors.

Thirdly, Japan welcomes the ongoing peace negotiations with different armed groups, including those between the Government and Segunda Marquetalia in Venezuela, as well as with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP). We also hope that the current ceasefire, which is the longest-ever agreement between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, will be further extended via dialogue. Japan commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for supporting Colombia's efforts to promote dialogue and prevent escalation by supporting smooth communication.

Fourthly, this morning, President Petro Urrego participated in a meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to which civil society was invited. He presented his priorities and shared the successes and challenges of Colombia's efforts towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As many PBC members reiterated, it is necessary to address the root causes and societal vulnerabilities in a comprehensive manner. As the informal coordinator between the Council and the PBC, Japan encourages the Council to leverage the PBC's advisory role well in advance of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia mandate renewal in October.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Japan's unwavering support for Colombia and its people's endeavour for peace.

Mr. De Bono Sant Cassia (Malta): First, let me warmly welcome President Petro Urrego to the Council. I also thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and Mr. Diego Tovar for their insightful briefings.

The 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a road map to achieve sustainable and lasting peace in Colombia, and we welcome the Government's commitment to its full implementation. It is crucial that swift and concrete actions be taken to ensure that the peace agreement delivers transformative change and tangible results. We encourage greater coordination across State institutions and the building of broad political consensus to help accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement across Colombia.

We welcome the Government's decree formally adopting the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, as well as a related action plan, to address structural drivers of persistent violence. Malta commends the Government's efforts to

reduce violence through dialogues with armed groups, as part of the Government's "total peace" policy.

We welcome the bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and hope to see its extension in the coming weeks. We are also pleased that the ceasefire between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo has continued to hold, despite complex circumstances, and we encourage its further expansion to all relevant departments.

The commencement of formal peace dialogues between the Government and Segunda Marquetalia in June is also encouraging. It is critically important that parties seek to strengthen commitments to civilian protection, including child protection.

Many communities are forced to suffer the consequences of violence as armed groups and gangs compete for territorial control. The rise in violent clashes have been particularly alarming in departments on the Pacific coast, such as Cauca. The civilian population is bearing the brunt of the violence, particularly women, girls and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. We encourage the Government to do all in its power to promptly strengthen an integrated State presence across Colombia's territory. Security guarantees must be in place to protect those vulnerable to violence, discrimination or coercion, including human rights defenders, social leaders, indigenous people, children and LGBTQI+ persons.

It is also imperative that former combatants who have committed to the peace process are ensured security and stability. The forced displacement of former combatants from the territorial area for training and reintegration of Miravalle, due to security threats, is very concerning, and we hope that more can be done to support this community and ensure the protection of all former combatants.

Malta remains very concerned about the increase in grave violations against children in Colombia, disproportionately impacting Indigenous children, children of African descent and girls. Child recruitment by armed groups is unacceptable, and we call for their immediate and unconditional release. Accounts of children being killed, maimed and subjected to sexual violence are alarming and must be strongly condemned. We call on the Government to take immediate action to protect vulnerable children and reiterate that child

protection is prioritized in the agendas for peace dialogues with armed groups.

Justice for victims of crimes committed during the armed conflict is essential for enduring and sustainable peace in Colombia. We commend the meaningful progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and we welcome the approaching issuance of its first restorative sentences. It is important for victims, as well as all those under the Court's authority, that those sentences are issued without delay. We call on all the parties involved to overcome obstacles and create the best possible conditions for this long-awaited and critical moment in Colombia's peace process.

In conclusion, Malta reaffirms our support for, and solidarity with, the people of Colombia in their path to sustainable peace. We look forward to seeing further progress in the implementation of the peace agreement in the coming months.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Colombian President Petro Urrego and Mr. Tovar, representative of the Comunes party, and I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

Eight years ago, with the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, Colombia emerged from half a century of conflict and embarked on the path of building comprehensive, lasting and sustainable peace. Thanks to the unremitting efforts of all parties, the peace process has seen continuous progress, gradually expanding to new areas and constantly yielding peace dividends. This process brings not only opportunities for peace and development to Colombia, but also hope for reconciliation and tranquillity to other war-torn regions in the world.

The Colombian Government, led by President Petro Urrego, has demonstrated a firm political will and resolve to implement the peace agreement as a top priority and presented the vision of "total peace". China highly appreciates such efforts. Peacebuilding and consolidating peace is a complex and systematic project that requires sustained investment and joint efforts. We hope that all parties in Colombia, under the leadership of President Petro Urrego and the Colombian Government, will strengthen their confidence, maintain unity and continue to explore policy measures and development paths that are in line with Colombia's reality. We also support the efforts of the international community and the Security Council to provide ongoing assistance to the peace process in Colombia.

First, it is vital to keep promoting national development in Colombia. Development is the foundation for achieving sustainable peace. China applauds the commitment of the Colombian Government to prioritize rural reform and territorial transformation in the implementation of the peace agreement, as well as its continuous and scaled-up efforts in land allocation, poverty reduction and infrastructure development, among others. We believe that those endeavours will effectively contribute to improving people's lives and addressing the root causes of the conflict. China looks forward to and supports continued support and assistance by United Nations agencies and international and regional partners to that end.

Secondly, it is crucial to continue to promote the process of dialogue and reconciliation. China supports the Colombian Government and relevant armed groups in resolving their differences through negotiations. We welcome the compliance by the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional with the ceasefire agreement, which resulted in the longest ceasefire in Colombia. We hope that the two parties can bridge their differences through dialogue and maintain the positive momentum. We also hope that the peace talks between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, as well as the Segunda Marquetalia will yield positive results. China attaches great importance to the key role of transitional justice in achieving fairness and justice and promoting peaceful reconciliation and looks forward to the first restorative judgment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Thirdly, the security situation must continue to improve. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2024/509) pointed out that despite recent improvements in the security situation in Colombia, armed groups remain active in some former conflict areas and remote areas. In addition, local communities are still facing the threat of landmines, and some former combatants have been repeatedly attacked. We welcome the Government's decree and the implementation of relevant policies on dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and support the Government's efforts to further increase the deployment of security forces in areas beyond its effective control so as to better protect women, children, ethnic minorities and former combatants. We also support the ongoing work of the United Nations Mine Action Service and other agencies to leverage their

expertise and provide technical support to Colombia in order to eliminate landmine hazards.

Under the leadership of Special Representative Ruiz Massieu, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, has made tremendous efforts to promote the peace process in Colombia. China commends the Mission's work and will continue to support its important role.

I would like to reiterate that China firmly supports Colombia in independently exploring a development path that suits its national conditions and firmly supports the Colombian-led and -owned peace process. We remain committed to working with the international community in order to help Colombia achieve even greater success in achieving comprehensive stability, peace and development and in improving the well-being of the Colombian people.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the situation in Colombia and for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of Colombia, Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, and the representative of the high contracting party, Mr. Diego Tovar.

We are pleased to note that the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is resuming its legitimate central position in the discourse by the Colombian Government, as well as in our discussion in the Security Council. We see it as a proof that there is no alternative to the Agreement as the basis for the entire peacebuilding process in Colombia. We welcome the fact that the State and its President is taking personal responsibility for the Agreement's implementation. This is a mature and wise step.

We see the real efforts undertaken by Bogotá in this area, which was noted, *inter alia*, in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/509) and in the statement made today by his Special Representative. We hope that such efforts will help to overcome the differences, which persist in practically all areas of the Agreement's implementation. For example, it is important to ensure that the pace of implementation of the agrarian reform is increased, as this is a key provision of the Agreement,

and that drug replacement agriculture programmes be developed.

Another pressing issue is ensuring the reintegration and physical security of former combatants. That is exemplified by a recent forced displacement of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia from the former territorial area for training and reintegration, in Miravalle, due to threats coming from the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC). That egregious development occurred in the same Caquetá department where Council members very recently saw, with their own eyes, a very successful example of former combatants returning to a peaceful life in another reintegration zone, under the leadership of today's briefer, Diego Tovar. We call for proper security guarantees for the signatories of the Agreement, which can be achieved only by enhancing the State's presence in conflict-affected regions.

We realize that listing problems is easier than resolving them and that all of these problems are very well known to the Colombian leadership. The Security Council had an opportunity to see that first-hand in the course of our visit to Colombia in February. However, it is important to point out that unlike the previous Administration, which rather than implementing the Agreement was involved in openly sabotaging it, the current Government, under the leadership of President Petro Urrego, is trying to find ways to overcome the obstacles.

We will carefully study the report on the implementation of the Final Agreement. We believe it is Colombia's responsibility to determine the specific modalities for overcoming the challenges cited by the President and to decide on the feasibility of the changes. The Council's job is to independently and impartially monitor compliance with the spirit and the letter of the Agreement as endorsed by the Council in resolution 2307 (2016), and to provide the greatest possible international assistance to the parties to implement it. We sincerely hope that heightened political differences will not shift the focus from the agenda of implementing the practical measures for compliance with the Final Agreement. That also applies to the controversy surrounding the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We call on the parties to engage in dialogue with a view to addressing each other's concerns while preserving the independence of that very important body of transitional justice.

We are monitoring the progress of the Government's dialogue with other groups within the framework of the "total peace" policy. It is encouraging that the ceasefire regime with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) is generally being observed. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for the ceasefire is playing an important role in that regard, with the key participation of the United Nations Verification Mission. However, there have been problems in reaching political agreements with both the ELN and the EMC, whose many fronts pulled out of the dialogue with the Government. We hope for positive results from another round of negotiations with the EMC. We welcome the start of a peace process with the Segunda Marquetalia armed group. Success in that regard could be an example for other negotiation tracks. We have reiterated that those dialogue processes and other peace initiatives undertaken by Bogotá need to be carried out with an understanding of the primacy of the Final Agreement and in line with it. Today's historic meeting, with the participation of both parties to the Agreement, is a step in the right direction. A true symbol of the Colombian people's desire for reconciliation can now be also seen in the garden at United Nations Headquarters.

For its part, Russia will continue to provide all possible support to the peace process in Colombia and to the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, under the leadership of Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the President of Colombia, who has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

President Petro Urrego (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to respond to some of the questions, obviously based on my experiences as President, though not everyone in Colombia agrees with me.

First of all, in regard to ceasefires and what we have called cessations of hostilities, I should make something perfectly clear. Previously, when the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) — my organization, because I was an armed rebel against the Colombian State under the 1886 Constitution, which we repealed after laying down our weapons — was participating, a ceasefire was a kind of truce between the State and the insurgents who had taken up arms against the State. That was about a contest for political power, with two opposing armies, the insurgents and the State. In peace processes there are ceasefires between the two armies, and we saw that a number of

times in Colombia. There was one between the FARC and the Colombian State before the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

It is not so easy to do it in that way today because the variously named armed groups currently exist in areas of the former territories under development plans with a territorial focus. They are not really fighting the State. Their essential goal is not political power but rather the control of areas important to illicit economic activity, where the rivers provide gold through the massive destruction of nature, and especially by providing transportation routes for cocaine to the ocean, as well as crop-growing areas, laboratories and ports for transport and export.

In such cases, a ceasefire is when the State stops attacking a drug-trafficking group. The armed group wants a ceasefire because it can then continue its illicit business more or less free of State pressure. That illicit trade serves only to give the group a greater capacity for violence and to make it stronger and more violent in the future. That is why we have established the concept of a cessation of hostilities. The cessation of hostilities is not with the State, it is with the civilian population. Because as criminal groups maintain their illicit economic activity, it is the civilian population that is most harmed — either because the groups want to keep people quiet, settle scores or ensure the necessary clandestine structures to transport large quantities of illicit shipments — and that is why the worst violence is between groups, because they are engaged in typically capitalist competition for the market, but with arms.

The violence is therefore different from what we experienced 10, 20 or 30 years ago. In those days a ceasefire could sometimes be a trap or a trick. The State no longer attacks and business goes on, as does the killing of Indigenous people and those who for whatever reason get caught in the business's crossfire. Our priority now is ensuring a cessation of hostilities, meaning first showing that the civilian population will not be attacked.

In all the negotiations we have conducted, child recruitment is the first point of discussion. The groups use children because they know that we could bomb them, and it would involve a force much greater than the armed force deployed in illegal areas, but those groups know that I am opposed to bombing children anywhere in the world. I therefore cannot do it in my own country because that would be the worst possible

inconsistency in Colombian international policy. Approximately 700 children have died in bombings. That figure may be much lower than we have seen in other parts of the world, and we are against bombing children anywhere — especially with the support of international Powers. We cannot bomb children, so our intelligence services have to be very strict in their operations on land and at sea. So far this year we have seized more than 800 tons of cocaine at sea on its way to other countries. Those seizures make the forces of violence in Colombia economically weaker, which is why we conduct interdiction activities.

To add some clarity regarding what is happening now, many of the dead, not all 427, were peace combatants, located in what the peace agreement established transitional areas for training and reintegration, areas where people could transition quickly into productive social and political life. However, seven years later they are still there. I refer to them as concentration camps, for one cannot keep a population from having a way out for eight years — closed in at a certain location that, being located in an area that is near to or strategic to an illicit economy, has become a source of vulnerability for the lives of people who signed on to a peace at the cost of hundreds of lives. In general, but not always, it is not the State that is killing those people. It is the illicit economy that is killing them, which sees them as rivals. Given that, and given the fact that drug traffickers, along with Colombian politicians, are trying to relive the old paramilitarism in such areas as Oriente Antioqueño, Magdalena Medio Santandereano and northern Magdalena Medio Bolivarense, which is the heart of Colombia, the peace agreement established that, if this happened following the signing, or if there were assassinations of signatories — something that has happened and continues to occur — then a special investigation group would be established in the Prosecutor's Office.

The previous Prosecutor's Office, led by Mr. Barbosa Delgado, was wholly ineffective and practically did not exist. That is the reason that there have been no convictions of murderers of former combatants. The new Office today announced the bolstering of the powers of 25 Government prosecutors, which is what we need, including increasing the budgets so that they are much more powerful in investigating. But the peace agreement also established that an international mission could be established to support investigations, so that paramilitarism would not be recreated and so that peace agreement signatories were not killed and could enjoy

security in their political activities and freedom under a democracy.

As Head of State, I would ask the Security Council to set up an international mission to complement and support judicial investigations carried out by the Attorney General's Special Investigations Unit, so as to determine who were the masterminds and authors of the systematic assassination of former combatants signatories to the peace agreement, as well as to halt the resurgence of paramilitary groups that, with the help of drug traffickers and some type of political assistance, are again expanding, although currently in a sputtering way, in Magdalena Medio. I think the time has come. And I think that such an international legal investigation mission, which would be complementary to the Attorney General's Office, which should lead the investigations, could help us to ensure that we do not tragically repeat history in Colombia.

Lastly, I would refer to a series of groups — including the oldest, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, which has been present in various stages of violence in Colombia, as well as the Estado Mayor Central, which refers to itself as Disidencias de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, which, in my opinion, is not that, for it is divided into two halves, one concentrated in the Valle del Cauca, which is focused on exporting cocaine, and the other in the jungle north of Santander and Magdalena Medio, which has joined the ceasefire with us that is being negotiated. For that reason, as part of the negotiations, we have included a protocol, which should be signed, aimed at working with the State to destroy the illicit economy and replace it with a legal one. The Estado Mayor Central-Cauca decided not to sign the protocol and prioritized illicit economic activities over peace. That is why there is an increase in violence in the Valle del Cauca.

We have therefore carried out a military offensive in Cañón de Micay, where 75 per cent of the Cauca coca leaf is found and from where cocaine is exported via the Pacific Ocean, destined for Australia, East Asia and the Northern Pacific. The response to that military action has been deaths and bombings, including attacks on family members of Government officials in Cauca, such as the son of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, who was murdered, as well an attempt, in her own town, on the life of the country's Vice-President, who is an Afro-descendant from Cauca, but also some of the most senior members of the civilian Government in Cauca, as well as Indigenous leaders, farmers and others. The

Estado Mayor Central-Cauca is increasingly becoming a neo-paramilitary group that exports cocaine. And we have told them that we will only move to negotiations if we succeed in signing the protocol to dismantle the illicit economy.

Negotiations have been initiated — and we must say that they are just beginning — with the Segunda Marquetalia, which also emerged from the old Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, as well as with the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, known in Colombia as the Clan del Golfo, which I want to include in the peace agreement with the former when it comes to Special Jurisdiction for Peace. For the agreement provided that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace listen to all participants in the conflict — not just some, as is happening at the moment — which means military, paramilitaries, guerillas, civilians and, as explicitly mentioned, drug trafficking groups linked to the conflict. I think that is an issue on which we need to have much deeper discussion with the United States. But that is what the peace agreement signed in 2016 provides, and it is a unilateral declaration of the State at this moment.

The Government has already launched a system of pension bonds for all farmers under the territorial development plans. That is an outcome from this Government and its pension reform. The Government also began a preventive health programme, which includes, as far as possible, visits to all homes in the areas covered by the plans. That too is an outcome from this Government, which was provided for in the peace agreement. We have also contracted with

civilian groups from the territory, which is essentially a community effort that includes department assembly Indigenous sessions, community councils and Afro-descendant groups. Some major road business operators have tried to impede engaging with community efforts, but this is an economic and political empowerment mechanism for the population living in the country's excluded communities. Those are all achievements we have been making progress on.

I will conclude by saying that we are going to launch a twenty-first reintegration policy that I refer to as incorporating former combatants into economic and social life. To date, this has been done by providing land and turning ex-combatants into agricultural workers, which in fact they already were. But I think there is also potential when it comes to plans for rural electrification, connectivity, improving rural houses, organizing cooperatives that could use our existing resources for clean energy and fibreoptics through communities and groups working for Internet connectivity and clean energy. That would be a way for the whole host of former combatants to have better, quicker, more powerful and perhaps even more lucrative opportunities to reintegrate into civilian life in their own areas.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I think I speak for all members in saying that we genuinely wish you, Mr. President, every success with peacebuilding in Colombia. We thank you and Mr. Diego Tovar for participating in today's meeting.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.