



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9015th meeting

Tuesday, 12 April 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Lord Ahmad/Dame Barbara Woodward	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Boateng
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Mr. Flynn
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United States of America	Mr. Lu

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/2022/267)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2022/267)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to participate in today's meeting.

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/2022/267, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to present the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Verification Mission to Colombia (S/2022/267).

It is an honour for me to be at the Security Council today in the presence of the President of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Iván Duque Márquez. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my appreciation and thanks for his support for the United Nations in

general, and for the Verification Mission in particular. His confidence in the Mission's role has allowed us to assist the Government, the former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and civil society in their efforts towards peacebuilding in Colombia.

As the Secretary-General has said, with the Final Peace Agreement and its implementation, Colombia reminds the world that even an armed conflict of more than five decades, with a painful toll of millions of victims, can be resolved through dialogue, laying the foundations for reconciliation and non-repetition. Today, the United Nations is an exceptional witness to a peacebuilding process that is advancing, albeit to different degrees, along the path laid out by the Final Peace Agreement. The advances are certainly the product, above all, of the perseverance of the Colombian State and the former FARC-EP, and the determined support of civil society, victims and communities in all regions. For Colombia and the world, it is essential to recognize what has been achieved through this process, especially in order to protect it and project it into the future.

Naturally, recognizing what has already been achieved does not mean minimizing the challenges and risks that still threaten peacebuilding in the country. On the contrary, overcoming the obstacles — starting with the growing violence in some regions — and persisting in the complete implementation of the Agreement must be the objectives that guide our work in the remaining years for the full materialization of what has been agreed.

(spoke in English)

The current electoral cycle helps illustrate some of the dividends of peace. For the second time since the signing of the Agreement, elections were mostly free of violence. There is no question that the successful laying down of thousands of arms of the former FARC-EP, which was verified by the United Nations, significantly reduced nation-wide levels of conflict-related violence. Recent elections also saw an increase in the number of women candidates and women elected to Congress, even in the face of major challenges including gender-based political violence.

As the Council is also aware, the recent congressional elections offered Colombians, for the first time, the opportunity to elect representatives of 16 new electoral districts established under the peace

agreement in conflict-affected regions. Despite a range of difficulties that constrained campaigning, Colombia's democracy will no doubt be enriched by the stronger voice of victims in Congress. The United Nations stands ready to support their effective participation, and I trust that the new Congress that will take office in July will work to advance on the pending legislative agenda of the peace agreement.

Peacebuilding is an ever-evolving process with breakthroughs and setbacks, and the reintegration of former combatants is no exception. Despite the challenges, including in the area of security, former members of the extinct FARC-EP and members of the Comunes party were able to campaign and to vote in congressional elections for the second time since the signing of the agreement. Obstacles to their votes were jointly addressed by the authorities, former combatants' representatives and the Verification Mission.

Throughout the countryside and in many cities, those who laid down their arms are building productive new lives through a myriad of projects that also benefit communities and foster reconciliation. The vast majority of the more than 13,000 accredited former combatants remain engaged with the peace process, and almost two thirds of all former members of the FARC-EP are now taking part in collective and individual income-generating initiatives.

Those examples are certainly noteworthy, as is the commitment of authorities and partners, whose work has made this possible over the years. Progress is being made regarding key elements for the long-term success of reintegration, including, most recently, on the provision of land and housing.

Nevertheless, the sustainability of the process remains contingent on additional efforts, including those aimed at halting the violence that still jeopardizes former combatants' plans to build a new life. While I recognize that various measures are in place, more can and must still be done to improve their security.

Two weeks ago, alongside representatives of the Catholic Church and the United Nations country team, I visited Arauca, a region facing a critical situation where more than 100 people have been killed and thousands forcibly displaced this year alone. We met with authorities, civil-society organizations and members of the communities, and what we heard was a desperate plea for help. We conveyed our support to those affected as well as the urgency of authorities

taking action to improve the situation. We also called on armed groups once again to immediately cease the violence and respect international humanitarian law. Arauca is illustrative of the situation of violence in various neglected regions facing illegal armed groups, illicit economies and a limited presence of the State.

The department of Putumayo has been similarly affected by violence in recent weeks. I stress the importance of a thorough investigation by the relevant authorities into the reported deaths of 11 persons, including indigenous and community leaders, in the context of a military operation against members of an illegal armed group in Puerto Leguizamo.

Violence is also exacting a particularly high toll on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the form of killings, displacement and the increasing recruitment of minors.

The continuation of such suffering in the very communities that were most victimized during decades of conflict calls urgently for the full implementation of the peace agreement. It is important to recall in that regard that the agreement was conceived as an interconnected set of mechanisms whose comprehensive implementation would not only end the conflict with the FARC-EP but address deep-rooted factors that continue today to underpin the dynamics of violence in many areas of the country.

For instance, if implemented in a coordinated manner, the security guarantees provisions set out in the agreement have the potential to boost key areas such as reintegration, political participation and transitional justice. Similarly, progress in bringing long-needed rural reform and in combating illegal drugs, in particular through voluntary crop-substitution programmes, will reinforce reintegration and security. Given the differentiated effects of the conflict, gender and ethnic provisions are meant to be mainstreamed throughout.

The effective use of the institutions devised by the Government and the former FARC-EP to set those changes in motion is essential. Likewise, strengthened joint work within the ad hoc mechanisms developed throughout the years could also help the parties fulfil their obligations and meet the expectations raised by the agreement. A clear example is the ongoing pilot to enhance former combatants' capacities to locate minefields, which is possible only thanks to the collaboration of the Government and former FARC-EP members and the support of the United

Nations. The contributions of that work to clearing contaminated areas will directly alleviate the suffering in communities, preventing mines from claiming new victims and fostering development.

(spoke in Spanish)

After years of continuing work, in June the Truth Commission will release its final report, which is based on the testimony of thousands of victims, all the actors in the conflict and sectors from the length and breadth of Colombian society. The legacy of the Commission will represent more than a single narrative of the past and will consist of translating that plurality of experiences into recommendations and specific initiatives that will contribute to overcoming the dynamics that led to and prolonged the conflict.

At this point, I wish to recall the Secretary-General's recommendation that wise use be made of the Commission's report. I trust that it will be precisely in that spirit that both victims and perpetrators, as well as Colombian society and its institutions, will receive this legacy and make it their own. The United Nations will stand ready to support the Commission in its crucial work of raising awareness of the report following its publication.

I wish also to stress the historic nature of the first public hearings on acknowledgement of responsibility to be undertaken by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in the coming weeks. In those hearings, former commanders of the FARC-EP, members of the public security forces and third parties will have a forum to demonstrate their commitment to truth and the rights of victims, which is the reason for being of that comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. That is a decisive step towards defining the sanctions that the jurisdiction will decide on. Its potential for ensuring reparation will be key to satisfying the expectations of victims. I welcome the recent announcement by President Duque of the establishment of a road map for the care and support of members of the public security forces who voluntarily appear before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Peace in Colombia is invaluable. We must continue building it and protecting it in order to ensure its success, not only for the good of Colombia but also because of the example that it sets for the world. The Secretary-General, during his visit to Colombia last November, said:

“In a world of geopolitical divisions, interminable wars and multiplying conflicts, Colombia sends a clear message: it is time to invest in peace”.

We welcome all the efforts that the Government, led by President Duque, will continue as making in the months to come. At the same time, I am aware that leadership will soon pass to a new Administration, the third since the agreement was signed, which will take on the responsibility of the executive in its implementation.

In order to continue to make progress in that direction, it is vital that the parties, civil society and political stakeholders acknowledge the progress made, commit to making progress on outstanding tasks and decisively respond to challenges. In that context, the Security Council's continuing support will be crucial, as always.

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

I now call on the President of Colombia.

President Duque Márquez *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, please convey my greetings to your Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Dame Barbara Woodward. I am very pleased to be able to also greet Mr. Ruiz Massieu and all the representatives here today, as well as the entire organizational team at the United Nations and the members of the Colombian delegation. As President of Colombia, it is an honour for me to be here at the Security Council today and to do so at our request to share with Council members the results of my country's peacebuilding agenda.

Our country has endured the shame of violence for many decades, with much senseless fratricidal violence inflicted by illegal armed groups that have sought to tear apart our nation and undermine institutional stability. That said, Colombia is a country that embraces the substantive principles of peace, as enshrined in article 22 of our Constitution, in which our political charter, as our society's beacon and guidepost, stipulates that peace is a duty and a right that we are obliged to comply with. That core virtue of article 22 is also endorsed by article 2 of our Constitution, which fully and clearly states that the principal duty of the State is to protect the lives of its citizens and honour the rights and freedoms of all its citizens at all times, wherever they may be.

Based on that premise, we must acknowledge that over the past 40 years, Colombia has launched various peace processes with illegal armed groups, some

more successful and with better results than others. Nonetheless, our institutions have constantly sought to promote the principles of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration together with another key element, which is the ability to adapt to circumstances, progress and developments in international law and the willingness to build peace, with even greater certainty since the world witnessed the advent of the Rome Statute, enabling us to ensure that crimes against humanity do not go unpunished.

The process undertaken in 2016 is one of those developments, and it unquestionably presents our country with both challenges and opportunities. It is also important to consider within the context of the international community the fact that after the agreement was signed, we continued to deal with latent threats from illegal armed groups such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and terrorist groups linked to drug trafficking, including organizations such as Los Pelusos and Caparros, dissidents from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and, of course, the terrifying drug-trafficking group known as the Clan del Golfo.

In the light of these multidimensional threats to security, we need to build peace throughout the territory of Colombia. From the very first day our Government took office we set in motion a vision for a public policy that we call Peace with Legality. It is our guiding principle for building peace without impunity while seeking to adapt to ensure clear, effective, verifiable implementation that is open to scrutiny by all members of our society, in accordance with the Constitutional Court of Colombia. And so from the first day that we announced the Peace with Legality policy, we asked the United Nations to ensure that its Verification Mission would support us throughout the process for the entire four years of our term of office. I would like take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his commitment and leadership aimed at ensuring that this support, which should be independent and impartial, can provide the assistance that Colombia needs within the concert of nations and the context of multilateralism. I also want to thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu and his team for their consistent participation in the work of developing public policies that can enable our reach to extend throughout our territory.

Based on that perspective, our focus on Peace with Legality is comprehensive and we aim to ensure progress in all areas, while maintaining a critical view in order to

improve in those areas where improvement is needed. It is because of that comprehensive focus that I would like to mention the many achievements in our country, which have been supported by the Security Council, as is noted in all reports that have been published since then, as well as bilaterally by a number of the countries represented here in the Security Council.

Let me begin with the issue of reintegration. If the reintegration of individuals with a violent past did not turn out well, it would affect the full development of a genuine peace process throughout the country. That is why we stress that there are now approximately 12,800 people who had taken the wrongful path of arms who today are in a trustworthy, credible process of reintegration into Colombian society. There are a number of features that make the process unique, beginning with the fact that seven qualitative guarantees are established for each person, including psychosocial, economic and legal support and assistance entering the labour market. It is very important to emphasize that today many of those former combatants or those in the process of reintegration are involved in productive projects. More than 8,600 are directly involved in individual or collective productive projects — producing, selling, marketing and building a better life for their families. However, as Mr. Ruiz Massieu noted, we have gone even further to address issues related to land, housing and property. I have had the opportunity to visit seven former territorial spaces for training and reincorporation that had been handed over during the first transition phase to create settlements for former combatants. We have shifted to the provision of property that individualizes the rights of each family, affords them genuine economic freedom and allows them to re-enter Colombian society.

Here it is crucial to emphasize that the first set of considerations presented to me by Mr. Jean Arnault, Mr. Ruiz Massieu's predecessor, were the shortcomings of the process. We are tackling those shortcomings through our policies aimed at enabling people to reintegrate into Colombian society. Today, more than 85 per cent of them are now participating in our country's social security, pension and health-care systems, which is unprecedented in other peace processes around the world.

Let us talk about the victims. That is the second element of our comprehensive vision. Our Government promoted the extension of Law 1448, on land restitution for victims, to enable us to use State resources to help

the situation of the millions of Colombians who were affected by the decades of violence. In that regard, it is also important to point out that our Government was able to move from conducting three proceedings for collective reparation to more than 50, providing an unprecedented budget and economic reparations for almost 400,000 victims in only four years, which is also an unprecedented milestone.

In line with the principle of giving the victims a voice and a vote and political representation and influence in public decision-making, we supported regulations enabling 16 victims, elected by popular vote in the most violence-ridden regions of the country, to be able to sit in Congress with a voice and vote, beginning on 13 March. That historic decision also reflects another cross-cutting aspect, which is that those electoral districts are in deepest Colombia, the part of the country that is demanding more and more development efforts.

That leads me to the third point that I want to share today. The development plans with a territorial focus are the cornerstone of peace for Colombia. Twenty months after the start of their implementation and before I assumed my presidency, there were only two development programmes with a territorial focus. Today we have 16, after conducting 14 community round-table processes, which I am proud to say have enabled Colombia to see more than \$4 billion invested in 170 municipalities, encompassing more than 11,000 villages and 6 million Colombians, 2 million of whom have been victims of violence. Those development plans involve investments in water, electricity and education and an almost unprecedented investment in secondary roads, and are one of the best examples of Colombia's commitment to the territories, with investments that with or without the agreement are historic. I am pleased that we have been able to undertake public works based on taxes and more recently launch a national brand, led by the State, so that all producers, whether former combatants, victims or residents of those areas, can reach every market in our country, and so that when products with that brand are purchased, they contribute to the well-being of people who are betting everything on a productive life.

Fourthly, the comprehensive rural development of our country is key to that comprehensive vision. Today our Government can say that we have distributed almost 52,000 titles to rural property in Colombia in under four years, meaning that our Government has distributed the

largest number of titles to land in the history of our country. We have been able to incorporate more than 1.6 million hectares into Colombia's land bank. By August of this year our investments in secondary roads will be the highest in public works and job creation in rural areas in the country.

It is that comprehensive approach that in the middle of the pandemic enabled us to record the largest agricultural exports in Colombia's history, with the element that made the difference being farming by contract. Farmers can sell without a middleman, and with micro-insurance and financing schemes can have a predictable income over time. Approximately 300,000 rural producers will be incorporated into the programme by the end of August. Another very important aspect of our comprehensive vision has been substitutions of illicit crops. Fifty per cent of the eradication in the areas under the model has occurred during our Administration, in the understanding that we have to consider all the tools at our disposal in order to address the threat of drug trafficking.

Yet another element related to that comprehensive approach is humanitarian de-mining. Today we are able to share that 50 per cent — half — of all of the de-mining in Colombia has taken place during the almost four years of my presidency. And within our comprehensive approach, we have differentiated according to gender and by ensuring that Afro-Colombian communities — Raizales and Palenqueras — and members of indigenous communities today have a specific budget assigned to them. For the first time in Colombia, we have a new law that makes it possible for those communities to directly contract with the State, on a larger scale, in order to have an impact on our development programmes.

I also want to bring up the very important aspects related to the principles of truth, reconciliation and non-repetition. We have provided full economic support to the relevant institutions and in our design of public policies. We are supporting the first restorative processes in our country for those who have been deprived of freedom and for providing reparations for victims. But this is also the time to say that when our Government was looking to the future and considering how to correct the errors of the past, we were able to amend the Constitution so that neither drug trafficking nor kidnapping would be designated as connected to political crime and thereby covered under amnesty

in the future. That is a significant correction that we promoted even before being elected to the presidency.

Today we are seeing how Colombian military forces have reported on all their work over the past 50 years, defending the legal system of our country and calling for the opening of a class action suit based on the claim that more than 400 members of the police and armed forces were victims of violence. That is a documented contribution without precedent in such cases. Today we also hope that those most responsible for crimes against humanity will tell the truth to Colombia about the kidnappings, the recruitment of minors, crimes against women and, of course, those attacks on the public security forces. And I want to express our sincere desire to make progress with effective reparations — the Colombian State has followed through with that — but those responsible for crimes against humanity must also undertake economic, material and credible reparation based on the fact that many of their contributions fall far short of expectations.

I also want to discuss the challenges we face. We have unfortunately seen violence during the peace processes in Colombia. In many previous processes, people viewed as former combatants were killed after being demobilized. But it is important to put into context what the Office of the Ombudsman of Colombia stated in its most recent report.

“Studies conclude that the implementation process following the peace agreements with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) has had the lowest number of fatalities per 1,000 in the reintegration process.”

That fact alone shows us the efforts that have been made with regard to security. We cannot consider it a victory because such incidents should not occur. However, historically, we have seen how the commitment to protecting those involved in the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process has produced results.

It is also sad to see how the murderous hands of drug traffickers continue to wreak havoc in some areas of Colombia. However, let us also start by acknowledging that, over the four years of our Government, we will have the lowest average and overall homicide rate of a presidential term for more than 40 years.

That, too, is already an achievement for our society, just as it is an achievement that we have recorded

the lowest kidnapping rates since there were such indicators in our country. However, I could not address the Council without mentioning some concerns.

Drug trafficking is the greatest enemy of peacebuilding in Colombia. Eradication and substitution efforts have been made, and there have been historic efforts in terms of seizures, reaching record levels last year, with Colombia seizing 670 tons. But we see how consumption in the world continues to grow. While there is no sense of joint responsibility, by which the countries that most affect consumption adopt more direct and clearer public policies, it will continue to be a great burden for Colombian society. It is therefore appropriate to say that in this Chamber.

I would like to share a few final messages. One such message has to do with what our Government, through its budget plan, will leave for the next Administration. We have moved on from fragility to a planned budget process with measurable benchmarks, like the one used by the United Nations.

In Colombia, there are no enemies of peace within institutions and democracy. We all want peace. We are all working for it, and the only enemies of peace are those who have sought to undermine our nation through violence.

Today, we can also say that significant progress has been made on many important issues, regardless of the peace agreement. The greatest challenge to a peace process is not the signing; it is the implementation over time, given that the process will take place over nearly three Administrations.

Not even the pandemic prevented Colombia from moving forward in the peace process. Not even a migrant crisis, the largest-ever experienced by a Latin American country, a category five hurricane or the social and economic ravages of the pandemic deprived us of the progress shared today, which is reflected in the report of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2022/267).

Today, Colombia wants to continue moving towards building peace with legality. But that also requires that the many cases of recruitment of minors, harassment of women and attacks against the security forces and the impacts of drug trafficking be resolved in the context of transitional justice.

It is, of course, very important that Colombia continue to guarantee the actions of its security forces,

while always respecting international humanitarian law and human rights and always ensuring that it is the oversight bodies that investigate any operation where they have been involved in what are known as urgent actions by our country's investigative service.

Our nation has a zero-tolerance policy towards human rights violations by the security forces, but it also has a security force that, in the country every day, earns the affection of the citizens, including those being reintegrated, to whom it provides protection.

I will conclude by saying the following. Peace in Colombia is not a political or an electoral issue. It is not an ideological matter. It has no individual owners, but is the joint objective of an entire nation and its institutions.

The future challenges for peacebuilding, given the progress described, are based on the premise that there is a genuine, indisputable, non-ideological and impartial truth and that all the necessary measures exist under international law, bearing in mind the transitional period, but that there are real restrictions on such freedoms for those who are ultimately responsible.

As we have requested, the Organization can assist in the application of penalties under the transitional justice system, which is a mechanism to strengthen the peace process, resulting from our Government's efforts.

Today, Colombia appears before the world with visible, indisputable results and without bias, but knowing that we face challenges ahead, which we do not seek to hide, but which must unite our nation in this objective.

I would like to end by sharing what Secretary-General Guterres said last year during his visit to Colombia. Amid so many difficulties in the world, so much intolerance and such great adversity, Colombia is a beacon of hope. The tasks still pending, due to the reach of time, cannot conceal the achievements that Colombia has consolidated, which, more than the individual success of a Government or of me, as President, are those of a society that has always wanted to defeat violence.

I would like to thank each one of those present for the way in which they have welcomed the periodic reports. I would also like to thank the Verification Mission for its irrefutable approach in acknowledging what has been done well in Colombia.

We are a nation that has confronted violence, but that will always defeat it through the rule of law and our institutional capacity to deliver the services of the State to our country's most remote areas and to sow harmony in the hearts of Colombians.

As a Government, our position has therefore been not to see any political agenda in this or to seek any electoral opportunity. On the contrary, it has been to establish institutionality so that such institutionality can speak eloquently of what a country is capable of achieving under article 22 of our Constitution, which states that peace is a duty and a right that must be complied with.

The President: I thank His Excellency President Duque Márquez for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

First, my thanks go to Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his detailed briefing and insights. I would once again like to extend a particularly warm welcome to President Duque Márquez. I also thank him for his very detailed remarks and insights on the situation in Colombia. His Excellency's presence here today testifies to the importance that he, himself, places on the role of the United Nations and the Security Council in supporting Colombia on its journey towards lasting and sustainable peace.

It has been a huge privilege for the United Kingdom to work alongside Colombia. May I offer our congratulations to President Duque Márquez, the parties and, indeed, the Colombian people on the progress that has been achieved in just over five years since the signing of the peace agreement. We recognize the investment that the Government has made during that time to support the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life.

Colombia serves as an important example that an enduring resolution of differences is possible only through peaceful dialogue. During the past quarter, as we heard again today, we continued to see some significant progress in the implementation of the peace accord. As the report (S/2022/267) notes, this year is a real turning point for the transitional justice system, and its three components continue to advance in their crucial work.

We look forward to seeing the final report of the Truth Commission in June and the first sentences being

handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We recognize the fundamental importance, as part of this process, of perpetrators acknowledging their crimes before the victims themselves, and we share the Secretary-General's confidence in the real fortitude and courage Colombians will continue to show as they confront what has been a painful past in order to move towards healing and true reconciliation.

Notwithstanding the important progress made, our concerns remain for groups that continue to be disproportionately affected by violence, displacement and confinement. In this regard, as we have heard from Special Representative Ruiz Massieu today, we continue to be alarmed by the increase in violent incidents and insecurity in several areas, which has claimed the lives of former combatants, social and environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Indeed, if I may, in my capacity as the United Kingdom Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, I saw directly, when I engaged with the representatives of these groups in a virtual visit in late 2020, the powerful insights they provided in this respect.

I am sure I speak for all colleagues when we say we were shocked and saddened by the murder of Jorge Santofimia in Putumayo. His commitment to environmental protection and peace had made him a real example of the benefits that come through successful integration. To address this violence, we urge the Government to continue to expand its efforts to provide adequate protection and security, improve State presence in conflict-affected areas, as we have heard today, and strengthen the institutions that investigate and prosecute those responsible for these crimes.

While challenges to full implementation remain, as we have heard from His Excellency President Duque Márquez, progress has been made. The election of 16 victims into special peace seats in Colombia's House of Representatives really does represent a historic step forward. It presents an opportunity to widen the democratic participation of victims and the communities most affected by conflict. We also welcome the restorative justice process and mechanisms that have been introduced. As Colombia now looks forward and ahead to presidential elections next month, we again call on all political stakeholders to ensure that these elections will be peaceful and inclusive and that

elector parties maintain their commitment to the full implementation of this important peace agreement.

In conclusion, Colombia's experience shows us all the importance of holistic and inclusive approaches — approaches that help to build and sustain peace — as well as the real value of engaging the full peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations, including the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, to catalyse international support. For its part, the United Kingdom remains fully committed to supporting the peace process in Colombia, as all parties continue on their path to lasting peace, and, in partnership with Colombia, we will continue to look to consolidate and strengthen and build upon the gains that have been achieved thus far.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council wishing to make statements..

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the country (S/2022/267) and for his views.

We welcome today the President of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez. His participation in today's meeting is, of course, significant. It is perceived as wrapping up the work of his Administration on implementing the peace process.

We are convinced that those taking the floor after us, members of the Security Council, will say a lot of nice words to try to avoid the thorny issues that abound in the report of the Secretary-General. However, in Russia, we speak the truth to our friends. Therefore, today we are not going to gloss over the serious concerns we have as to the fate of the peace process in Colombia.

Colombia is not just an ordinary country for the Security Council. At one point, the Council became a sort of guarantor of peace in the country, thus de facto putting its reputation on the line. We therefore are all very carefully following developments in Colombia. I will not hide the fact that our grounds for concern are increasing each year.

Of course, Colombia has achieved some progress in implementing the Final Peace Agreement for Ending

the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, but today we would like to focus on the problems with implementing that Agreement. I shall start with the fact that the Duque Administration has consistently avoided mentioning the Final Peace Agreement. Instead, it prefers to talk about the policy of peace with legality, which is a programme that the Security Council did not approve, nor was it agreed to by the other party to the Final Peace Agreement, to which President Duque Márquez referred today as the former combatants. The very use of this term shows that genuine national reconciliation in his country has unfortunately still not been attained. The Final Peace Agreement's plan for a root and branch transformation of Colombian society has therefore not occurred. With eight years having elapsed since the Final Peace Agreement was signed, this situation risks undermining the very basis of the peace process and destroying what the Colombian people have moved towards so painfully for so long.

We are not basing our views on subjective considerations. There are many grounds for such distressing conclusions in the report issued by the Secretary-General for this meeting. The common thread running through it is concern at the pace of Colombian post-conflict settlement. The main problem remains the inability of the Government to ensure the physical safety of the participants in the peace process and of community leaders. The challenge of filling the vacuum in State authority in remote areas of the country is unresolved, as is implementing comprehensive agrarian reform and the coca crop-substitution programme.

It is clear that a decrease in the level of violence and ensuring security of the participants of the peace process is a key factor in achieving lasting peace. However, it is precisely in relation to such issues that there are significant failings. In the country there is still an armed standoff, there is forcible redistribution of the spheres of criminal influence fighting for control over drug trafficking, and the shooting of participants in the peace process. The security situation has deteriorated to such an extent that even the Constitutional Court was forced to announce an unconstitutional state of affairs and require the Government to take urgent measures to improve the situation. There is indeed a great deal to improve, and it needs to be done urgently.

After the signing of the Final Peace Agreement, 315 participants in the peace process have been killed. Over the past year alone, the number of cases of armed violence has increased sixfold. According to the Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its data from the first two months of this year, more than 274,000 Colombians, in one way or another, have come up against various manifestations or consequences of armed violence. Local non-governmental organizations have also shared their data from the beginning of the year : there were 31 large-scale reprisals, and 13 signatories of the Final Peace Agreement and 50 civilian activists were killed.

Warning signs have been signalled by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which on 23 March published a country report entitled *Humanitarian Challenges 2022*. The document states that there are currently six armed conflicts in the country in which various rebel groups are countering Government bodies. It appears that someone goes missing without trace every two days. In Colombia today almost 53,000 people are internally displaced, a figure that is an increase of 120 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020. The situation with advancing agrarian reform does not encourage optimism. Of the 3 million hectares promised under the peace programmes, two-thirds have been added to the land registry but only 16 per cent has actually been transferred.

Against that backdrop, it is regrettable that representatives of Colombian civil society were not given the opportunity this time to present their assessments of the Government's work to the Council in person. However, it is a positive that non-governmental organizations can at least still inform the members of the Council of their views in writing. One can conclude from the content of those letters that as far as the peace process is concerned the past four years have been treading water or have reduced the security situation in the country to the level of the period when the Final Agreement was signed. The civil society organizations agree that the Peace with Legality initiative is not a way to ensure compliance with the obligations under the Final Agreement. That depressing assessment confirms the general concern that the prospects are that the country's crisis may worsen and that the situation is not stabilizing, let alone making any consistent forward progress.

It is also important to remember that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the involvement of all major political players and parties, including the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. However acute the internal differences may be, only dialogue without preconditions can lead to mutual understanding. In that

regard, unilateral decisions on a ceasefire, including during electoral processes, play an unquestionably positive role.

We are not about to ignore the fact that we also noticed an unfortunate desire to gloss over reality in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/267), with the holding in March of the second parliamentary elections since the signing of the Final Agreement and the election of an additional 16 parliamentarians being presented as a significant milestone and a historic opportunity. In our opinion that is overdoing it, given that parliamentary elections are a natural democratic process that according to the Colombian Constitution should take place every four years. As for the additional 16 seats, according to the Final Agreement they should have been filled in 2018. In other words, this is actually a four-year delay.

In the context of the forthcoming elections to express the will of the Colombian people, I would like to express the hope that the priority for the country's future leader will be scrupulous compliance with the obligations under the Final Agreement. However, if a policy that consists basically of substituting concepts prevails once again, Colombia may very soon be facing the worst possible effects of such a policy. We all would very much like to see President Duque Márquez's country avoid that.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia will continue to support the Colombian peace process with a view to making it sustainable and irreversible. The responsible work that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia is doing under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is critical in that regard, and we hope to be able to count on it in future.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I want to express our condolences to our American colleagues while the nature of the attack on the subway station in Brooklyn is being verified. We already know that some people have been hurt and we express our sincere regrets to our fellow New Yorkers.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (A3). We thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and welcome the participation in today's meeting of His Excellency President Iván Duque Márquez.

The A3 congratulates the people of Colombia on the successful congressional elections that have just been concluded. The conduct of the election campaign in relative calm underlines the resilience of the Colombian people and their commitment to durable peace. We wish them well in the upcoming presidential elections and hope that the election of the 16 special district representatives will mark the start of greater political inclusion for the conflict-affected communities.

More than five years into the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the Colombian peace process remains an inspiration to many countries seeking to end protracted civil wars. For decades Colombia was known for its long civil war and the extensive violence of paramilitaries and drug cartels. Today, the country is a testament to inspired leadership in seeking and maintaining peace. The breadth and ambition of the Final Agreement reflect the boldness of the vision of the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. The people of Colombia are rightly proud of that hard-won peace. We also want to register our sincere admiration for the victims and survivors who, despite their deep scars, are rebuilding their lives while supporting the peace process. The A3 recognizes the significant progress that has been made in the implementation of the Final Agreement, challenges notwithstanding. Nonetheless, we reiterate our call for its full and comprehensive implementation. We urge all stakeholders not to lose sight of the dividends that will come with sustainable peace. We are encouraged by the assurances that the various presidential candidates have committed to the comprehensive and full implementation of the Final Agreement.

The full reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society remains key to the success of the peace process. In that regard, the A3 commends the Government's efforts in facilitating access to land for productive projects, as well as the consolidation of former territorial areas for training and reintegration. We call for increasing the support and security given to the former combatants living outside the former territorial areas, including those of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin.

The A3 attaches the greatest importance to the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement and urges for greater commitment to its implementation. We welcome the plans in the Special High-Level Forum with Ethnic Peoples to develop a road map for 2022 to address issues

facing former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian descent and reiterate the need for allocating adequate, reliable resources to that initiative. We further encourage the parties to capitalize on the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement to resolve any differences.

Transitional justice remains the cornerstone of Colombia's peace process. There can be no sustainable peace without proper reconciliation. The A3 commends the progress within the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. In particular, we recognize the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in ensuring justice for victims and underscore the importance of ensuring its autonomy and independence. In addition, we look forward to the report of the Truth Commission in June this year and encourage the Colombian people to build on its recommendations in order to further cement national reconciliation.

We are cognizant of the complementarity between terrorism and illicit trading, especially of narcotics. We applaud the Government of Colombia for its arrest of the renowned drug lord known as Otoniel and hope that his arrest will facilitate the dismantling of criminal organizations and their support networks. The successful resettlement of former combatants can be sustained only if they are kept away from the illegal narcotics business. We urge the Government to prioritize rural infrastructure development, as well as the implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops.

The A3 is deeply concerned about the persistent violence targeting former combatants, conflict-affected communities, including the Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, social leaders, women peacebuilders and human rights activists. We are particularly concerned about the reports of intensified violence by armed groups, including the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), and their attacks on innocent civilians. We underline the need for urgent implementation of the security guarantees by the National Commission on Security Guarantees for the most vulnerable, taking into consideration gender needs. We will continue to support all efforts aimed at consolidating the peace process, including through the incorporation of groups that are not parties to the Final Agreement. The A3 urges for engagement in constructive dialogue between the Government and

the ELN in order to capitalize on the opportunity for national reconciliation and stability in Colombia.

Finally, the A3 reaffirms its solidarity with the Government and the people of Colombia in their pursuit of peace and prosperity. We also offer our unwavering support to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We wish President Duque Márquez the very best in his future endeavours.

The President: I align myself with the opening remarks of the representative of Kenya with regard to the evolving situation in Brooklyn. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been caught up in that incident.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his briefing today as well as for his tireless efforts and those of his team and the United Nations country team on the ground.

I would like to welcome President Iván Duque Márquez. His presence here today and the information he has shared with us illustrate once again the importance that the Colombian Government attaches to engagement with the Security Council and the entire international community. We greatly appreciate the direct exchange that makes our discourse more transparent.

(spoke in English)

In the five years since the signing of the historic peace agreement, much progress has been achieved. Thousands of former combatants have laid down their arms and been reintegrated into their communities. Transitional justice mechanisms have been established and proven effective. The former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo has been transformed into a recognized political party. Victims and previously excluded and marginalized populations have been given a seat at the table and in Congress, making processes more inclusive. There is broad support for the peace accord and the transition among Colombians. We sincerely commend the people, Government and President of Colombia for those efforts, the engagement and the activism aimed at creating a more peaceful, just and prosperous country for all.

At the same time, as we have heard here, many challenges persist. In particular, some rural areas have in recent months seen an increase in violence,

including sexual violence and child recruitment, which threatens the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and might risk rolling back some of the progress made. The biggest challenges to peace in Colombia remain the attacks and violence by armed groups and criminal gangs against community and social leaders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian representatives, human rights defenders and LGBTI activists. Women are especially targeted among those groups. Former combatants who have laid down their arms are threatened, making it harder for them to successfully reintegrate into society. We are appalled by such attacks, which jeopardize the peace process as a whole. A recent horrific example was the attack on 27 March in Bogotá that killed Salomé and Daniel and injured more than 30 people. There have also been attacks, death threats and a kill list from the Águilas Negras, who did not stop short of targeting the vice-presidential candidate as well.

It is vital to ensure that the Colombian Government continues and intensifies its efforts to protect and safeguard all who are targeted and threatened, and that it strengthens the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible for such violence. The Government has a responsibility to protect its citizens, including in rural areas. Criminal gangs and armed groups must be dismantled once and for all. Rural security should be improved, the presence of State services in rural communities and conflict-affected areas enhanced and alternatives for illicit crops and economies developed. Without comprehensive rural reforms that also include the right to land for victims of the conflict, there will be no peace and development in Colombia.

The gender provisions of the Final Agreement continue to be implemented and financed at a slower rate than other parts of it. As we stated in the joint media stakeout in January with Norway and the United Arab Emirates, the implementation of the Agreement's gender provisions and ethnic chapters is an essential condition for lasting peace. After decades of senseless conflict, the Colombian people in March held their second congressional elections since the signing of the Agreement. The elections have shown that the Government and the people of Colombia are indeed working hard to achieve a peaceful future for their country. The creation of 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace is an important step towards implementing the agreement, by including the voices of

historically excluded populations in conflict-affected areas, members of indigenous communities and representatives of victims and women's organizations. We have been happy to see the highest number of women candidates ever as well as an increase in the number of women elected to Congress. We encourage the Government to address gender-based political violence in the upcoming presidential elections by ensuring that security measures are in place so that the right to vote for all Colombians is protected.

Finally, we welcome the progress that has been made in transitional justice processes. The Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition has delivered strong results to hold perpetrators to account. We would welcome a stronger focus on conflict-related sexual violence and the opening of a dedicated special case for such crimes. While it is important that all victims receive justice, accountability is also key to reconciliation and building a more peaceful society.

Let me conclude by thanking President Duque Márquez for his Government's positive engagement with the Security Council during his tenure. We look forward to continuing this work and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I want to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his valuable briefing and his efforts along with his team concerning this dossier. I would like also to offer a warm welcome to the President of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, who is participating in today's meeting. We thank his Excellency for his comprehensive briefing on developments in his country.

As Colombia advances towards peace, it is important to reflect on its successes so far, celebrate the achievements of the Final Agreement and above all stress the importance of being committed to building on them. Notwithstanding the ongoing challenges, we must also recognize that the Colombian Government and other stakeholders have shown that they are determined to overcome them. The incoming administration will be faced with responsibilities but will also have great opportunities to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace comprehensively and completely.

Since the Council's last meeting (see S/PV. 8951) on this issue, Colombia has successfully held congressional elections. That constitutes another success that will complement the efforts to comprehensively implement the Final Agreement, which is essential to Colombia's path towards realizing lasting and sustainable peace. In that context, we hope that the benefits of the recent pact for non-violence during the elections, signed by 13 political parties, will extend beyond the elections so as to represent a commitment to promoting peace, tolerance and dialogue in the long term. We also welcome the increased numbers of women participating in parliamentary elections. Their full, equal and meaningful participation will contribute to sustainable peace. Although the elections were carried out in a relatively calm environment, concerns remain about the security situation and persistent violence in Colombia, including in Arauca, Chocó and Putumayo. Those challenges will need special attention, including by implementing reintegration and the security guarantees included in the Final Agreement with the aim of ensuring protection and security in Colombia.

If peacebuilding initiatives are to be successful, they must be led and owned by local communities. We have recently witnessed the launch of a series of important community integration efforts, the Council for Peace and the Peace Mediators initiatives, that include local authorities and former combatants and deserve to be highlighted. In addition, the Government's expanded efforts to implement the community-based reintegration strategy also stress the importance of achieving peace through economic, social and political reintegration. We encourage continued work to achieve those goals.

Lastly, the United Arab Emirates continues to support the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and its survivor-based approach and central role in restorative justice, which enable reconciliation and justice to take place simultaneously. We note in particular the importance of the recent diversification and expansion of its cases, including for example the impact of violence on the environment and conflict-related sexual violence. In the same vein, we look forward to the upcoming report from the Truth Commission. We hope that Colombian communities will support the process and the results as much as possible, because the report is an essential step on Colombia's path towards reconciliation and the acknowledgement of responsibility.

In conclusion, as the presidential elections in Colombia approach, we look forward to a peaceful,

safe and inclusive electoral process. The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its full support for the Government and people of Colombia in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace, as well as for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the valuable role it plays in the country.

Mr. Lu (United States of America): I thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his briefing today. We appreciate the vital role that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play in supporting peace in Colombia. And we welcome the presence here today of President Duque Márquez and appreciate his consistent engagement with the Security Council.

As indicated in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/267), Colombia continues to make demonstrable progress in its efforts to implement the peace accord. We are encouraged that the recent legislative elections took place with few disruptions. For the first time, 16 victims' seats in Colombia's House of Representatives were filled. A record number of women ran for office and were elected to Colombia's Congress, and the elections saw increased participation by indigenous and Afro-Colombian candidates. We are also encouraged that most presidential candidates pledged to continue implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We look forward to the release of the final report of the Truth Commission in June. We know it will include some difficult conclusions, and we call on all parties to reflect carefully on its findings.

While we commend the progress made to date, much work remains to be done. The Secretary-General's report indicates intensified levels of violence in several departments, as well as ongoing attacks on former combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders. Violence, trafficking in persons and displacement have disproportionately affected ethnic communities, with six Afro-Colombian and 13 indigenous leaders killed during the reporting period. Accelerating the implementation of the Final Agreement's ethnic chapter remains critical, as its implementation has lagged in comparison to its other chapters. The gender provisions are also being implemented and financed at a slower rate than other parts of the Agreement. Despite the success of the recent elections, women's participation in the electoral process is affected by gender-based political

violence and discrimination, as well as unequal access to resources.

As we all know, the full implementation of rural economic plans is a generational project. For that reason, Colombia's current and future elected leaders must continue to support the peace accord's implementation for rural development and make progress on improving rural security, addressing land tenure and tackling the root causes of those challenges. It is equally critical that the Security Council continue to support the United Nations Verification Mission as it builds on Colombia's achievements. Colombia has made great strides towards a just and durable peace since 2016. With the support of the Verification Mission and the Security Council, we look forward to continued progress in protecting human rights, ensuring justice for the victims of the conflict, advancing rural development and building a secure and prosperous future.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me and for my country to take the floor to comment on the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. At the outset, we would like to congratulate the Government and people of Colombia on their tireless efforts to find and strengthen a path of peace and prosperity for all Colombians. The presence of President Iván Duque Márquez at this meeting is yet another demonstration of the seriousness of Colombia's commitment to the full implementation of the Agreement. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his briefing.

With the presidential elections in Colombia approaching, we are pleased to note that Colombian society is united in its prioritization of the consolidation of peace. In that sense, the peace process in Colombia has achieved the most important thing, which is the trust and commitment of Colombians and of the main political forces in the country. Colombia continues to make progress in implementing the Agreement in all its dimensions. We realize that the road is long and there are always new obstacles to overcome. Only five years have passed since the signing of the historic agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, a third of the estimated period needed to fully implement its provisions, many of which demand continued effort on the part of the Colombian State, with gradual progress, in order to yield the desired results

on the ground. We hope that the next administration of the country will be able to continue the efforts of recent years.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report (S/2022/267), the persistent violence in several regions of Colombia calls for

“the full implementation of security guarantees provisions of the Agreement to reinforce the security measures implemented by Government and State authorities.”

Confronting the illegal armed groups and criminal organizations that continue to operate in regions characterized by poverty, illicit economies and ineffective territorial control by the State will be an unavoidable challenge for the next Government of Colombia. Brazil is closely following every stage of the process. Colombia has shown that it has the political will and the conditions necessary to control violence against ex-combatants — which in some cases is blended with drug trafficking and urban violence — and to bring development to the countryside and areas that have historically lacked Government support. We are aware of how difficult the challenge is, and we trust in the willingness and ingenuity of the Colombian people to continue moving forward.

The legislative elections in March point to another challenge that Colombia has overcome. The security and smoothness of the electoral process were assured, especially in the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. We are pleased that democracy has taken a step forward in Colombia, ensuring more space for the effective participation of regions historically affected by poverty and conflict. Brazil looks forward to the final report of the Truth Commission, which will be a fundamental document for Colombian society's efforts to overcome the violence of the past and continue to consolidate peace.

As we underlined at the meeting in January (see S/PV.8951), Colombia is a special case on the Security Council's agenda. Colombia is here on its own initiative. It was Colombia that invited the Council to play a role in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which is a triumph for its people and one achieved without this body's participation. The Council should not lose sight of the fact that its role is limited to verifying the implementation of the agreement. The broader development and security strategies are prerogatives of the Colombian State.

In addition, the verification of the Agreement in Colombia allows this body to play an important and innovative role for international peace and security. At this sensitive geopolitical time, the dossier enables the Council to help consolidate a concrete case of success that changes for the better the lives of millions of Colombians affected by decades of armed conflict. In that sense, we gladly recognize that while the Council is important to Colombia, Colombia is also important to the Council. I believe firmly that the collaboration between the Council and Colombia represents important support for the consolidation of peace.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his briefing. We also welcome the presence today in the Security Council of President Iván Duque Márquez of Colombia. We recognize the commitment of his Government to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We are also pleased that his presence has encouraged various delegations to speak in Spanish during this meeting.

I want to mention and acknowledge in particular the work of Colombian civil society, whose representatives have joined us in previous meetings and shared their perspectives, giving us a broad, diverse and multifaceted understanding of both the successes and the persistent challenges to peace in Colombia. The participation of civil society in all United Nations platforms, including the Security Council, establishes a favourable balance that cannot and should not be ignored.

The recent legislative elections held throughout the country, including in the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace, constitute an important milestone in the process for the consolidation of peace that should be underlined and recognized. The will of the people was freely expressed, and we note the registration of the largest number of female candidates in history. That is certainly another step in the right direction. However, there is still room for progress with respect to the increased participation of women, particularly in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. It is important to continue making progress with respect to all of the Peace Agreement's pending gender indicators.

Although the incidents were isolated, the violence we saw during the electoral process contravenes

the pact for non-violence promoted by the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence and civil-society organizations. The indisputable progress in the implementation of the peace agreement must be strengthened, as is happening with programmes and public policies that are having an impact on the structural causes that foster violence. The effects of violence on children are of particular concern. The report of the Secretary-General on the matter (S/2021/1022) contains some worrying figures. We hope that once the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopts its conclusions, the recommendations it makes will be addressed in full. We agree with the Secretary-General's observations regarding the need to strengthen security measures in accordance with the provisions of the Peace Agreement.

The report for this period once again highlights how important the transitional justice system in Colombia is to the consolidation of reconciliation efforts. We reiterate our support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in its delicate task, in particular its support for the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and its painstaking commitment to disarmament and demining actions. We are aware of the impact that the reports issued by both the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission will have. The request that Colombia made to the Security Council for support in implementing the Final Agreement has been an example to the rest of the world and a hallmark for the Latin American and Caribbean region that demonstrates the strength of our brother people of Colombia.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): I would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his briefing, and his team for their dedicated work. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency President Duque Márquez. We recognize and commend the efforts of the Colombian Government to comprehensively implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and to achieve reconciliation in Colombia. We stand ready to support Colombia and the incoming Administration through the transition period and beyond in order to preserve the gains that have been made and continue their implementation.

We meet in the wake of parliamentary elections in Colombia, where — positively — the peace accord was not subject to debate, where the majority of the voters could fulfil their democratic right in peace and security

and where for the first time citizens in conflict-affected areas in rural Colombia could elect representatives to 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace.

Ireland welcomes the significant increase in the representation of women in Parliament. The election also saw the highest number of women candidates in Colombia's electoral history. We further welcome the agreement by the parties to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement until 2023 and encourage the full utilization of this essential platform for dialogue. We are concerned, however, about the threats, intimidation and political violence that affected some electoral candidates, especially women and members of the Afro-Colombian community. We condemn the attempts by illegal armed groups to intimidate and interfere with the political process in some communities. As we look forward to the presidential elections, it is essential to ensure that both candidates and voters can take part in the exercise of democracy without fear of intimidation or violence.

We continue to be concerned about the persistent violence in Colombia, especially the levels of displacement, confinement, intimidation and targeted killings. The increasing impact it is having on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and their leaders is worrying. Another 40 social leaders and human rights defenders have been killed for standing up for their rights and the rights of their communities, including Luz Marina Arteaga, a human rights defender from Meta department who was killed while awaiting protection measures. The attack on a police station in Bogotá on 26 March in which two children were killed is also deeply deplorable. Such incidents show clearly how important it is for the National Commission on Security Guarantees to work to tackle illegal armed groups and provide a safe environment in Colombia. There can be no impunity for such crimes. The security guarantees set out in the Final Agreement are fundamental to the peace dividend for those who have laid down their arms to work for a peaceful Colombia. We note the Constitutional Court's recent determination to ensure the protection of former combatants and the implementation of the security-guarantee provisions of the Agreement.

Ireland commends Colombia's transitional justice system for fostering a victim-centred approach to reconciliation and truth. We welcome the announcement

by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open three new macro-cases, and specifically its commitment that all three cases will address conflict-related sexual violence, as well as its announcement that public hearings on cases 01 and 03 will take place between April and June. When those indicted recognize that they committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, and fully acknowledge their responsibility for those crimes directly to the victims of the conflict and their families and communities, it will be a seismic moment for truth and reconciliation in Colombia. Ireland also recognizes the watershed moment represented by the Truth Commission's publication this summer of its final report, which will contain more than 27,000 testimonies from victims. We know from our own past that such truths, while difficult to confront, can open the space for building the stable peace and equal society that every Colombian deserves.

Colombia's peace accord remains an exemplar of what can be achieved when parties to a conflict dedicate themselves to peace and focus their efforts on the victims and a better future. I would once again like to recognize the work of President Duque and his Administration in implementing the Agreement. Ireland has stood with Colombia during the process to peace and over these first five years of implementation. We reaffirm our partnership and friendship as we look to the important work ahead and the realization of the dream of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Colombia that benefits all of its peoples.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): At the outset, let me join others in welcoming the participation of His Excellency President Duque Márquez in today's meeting. I also want to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

This is the first time that the Security Council is meeting in the presence of President Duque since the historic signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Lasting Peace, five years ago this past November. We join others in congratulating the people of Colombia on the rapid progress they have continued to make on the path to peace and development since the signing of the Agreement. We deeply appreciated President Duque's statement today, in which he highlighted Colombia's many areas of progress and the confident strides it has made in recent years.

The successful holding in March of congressional elections, including the voting in the 16 newly created special transitional electoral districts for peace, held for the first time in the rural areas of the 167 municipalities worst affected by the conflict, is a positive indicator of the consolidation of Colombia's peace process. It was heartening to see the large-scale participation of women candidates in the elections. We were also pleased to see that political alliances included the implementation of the Final Agreement in their policy priorities and agenda platforms. We hope that positive trend will continue in the upcoming presidential elections as well.

The progress made in the implementation of the Final Agreement, especially in recent months, is encouraging. Stabilization road maps for rural reform have been prepared, illicit crop substitution is under way, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has held hearings and expects its first indictments in June and the Truth Commission has done commendable work. The parties also extended the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement until 2023. We welcome those positive developments, which clearly demonstrate the strong commitment to the Agreement by the Government and the political parties in Colombia.

It is important to recognize the many ambitious objectives the Final Agreement has set, particularly on security, rural reforms, crop substitution and the rehabilitation of former combatants. However, as we have heard today, its implementation continues to face challenges. For instance, incidents involving threats, killings and displacements of members of cooperatives have had a disruptive effect on the reintegration initiatives. Disputes over territorial control between illegal armed groups, including various Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo dissident groups, as well as illegal trafficking routes, remain a concern. We appreciate that despite those challenges, the Colombian authorities are making progress in addressing the security, housing and land guarantees enshrined in the Agreement. We believe that prioritizing rural reform aimed at increasing employment and livelihood opportunities is fundamental to sustaining peace.

India values its bilateral ties with Colombia, with whom we share a relationship spanning more than six decades. The increase in the frequency of our high-level visits and engagements, especially over the past year, is a testimony to the strength of our partnership,

which is based on shared democratic values and development goals. Despite the disruptions caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, there has been a steady increase in our bilateral trade, which grew by 22 per cent in 2020 and 2021. India has built a significant presence in Colombia. Over the years, the bilateral relations between our countries have deepened and diversified in areas such as space, health, science and technology and biotechnology. We are committed to expanding and deepening our cultural development and trade partnership with Columbia.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that while the peace process in Colombia continues to be a source of inspiration, the international community has to continue to fulfil its responsibility to support the people and the Government of Colombia in their journey to consolidate and sustain peace. As a long-standing friend and partner of Colombia, India will continue to stand in solidarity with its people and Government in their quest for lasting peace and economic development.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence here today of the President of Colombia, Mr. Iván Duque Márquez.

In a world shaken by conflict, Colombia is an example to the international community. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Lasting Peace is a historic achievement. Former guerrillas have laid down their arms. We are seeing the gradual reintegration of former combatants. Justice is paving the way for reconciliation. Society at large is striving every day to build peace. After half a century of violent conflict, we must therefore recognize and commend the major progress that has been made. However, building peace also means being able to clearly assess the implementation of the Agreement and highlight the challenges that remain. I would like to address four specific aspects in that regard.

First, the holding of the congressional elections without any major disturbances is a positive. The fact that for the first time voters were able to elect representatives from the 16 districts for peace is a step forward, and that configuration should be strengthened in the future. We hope that the presidential campaign will continue without any tensions and that the election will be held in a safe and inclusive manner in all parts of the country.

Secondly, the continuing violence, particularly in the department of Arauca, is a major concern, as many of my colleagues have pointed out. We learn of killings of former combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders in every report of the Secretary-General.

Every massacre, killing and displacement of people endangers the peace agreement. As the Constitutional Court has signalled, the current security guarantees are inadequate. On a positive note, the National Commission on Security Guarantees convened for the first time in a year. It is important for the Commission to continue meeting on a regular basis, as stipulated under the agreement, in order to deliver on the implementation of a policy to dismantle illegal armed groups.

Thirdly, it is important to strengthen the presence of State authorities in remote areas, both for combating violence in those areas and for providing viable socioeconomic opportunities to those who have suffered the most from the conflict. In order to achieve a lasting peace, more needs to be done in terms of rural reform and access to land and housing. The aspects of the agreement that address inclusion and the needs of women and youth are also essential.

Finally — and this will be my last point — we welcome all the progress achieved on justice, as well as the progress of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, especially in its decision to open three new cases, demonstrating the maturity of its system. The handing down of the first restorative sentences will mark a turning point and place victims at the heart of the process. We encourage all parties to speak the truth. The Truth Commission is doing a remarkable job and we look forward to its next report in June.

The peace agreement is gradually taking root. We want it to become irreversible, and the best way to guarantee that is by ensuring its full implementation.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would like to extend a warm welcome to President Iván Duque Márquez and thank him for joining us today. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Massieu, for his comprehensive briefing.

Allow me to start by congratulating Colombia on having carried out what were perhaps the most inclusive, diverse and peaceful elections in recent times. Never have so many women run for Congress and never have the numbers of elected women been higher. Verified victims from rural, conflict-affected areas were also

elected to represent transitional electoral districts for peace. Those are indeed further concrete outcomes of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

The Truth Commission's report will be published shortly. For most Colombians, it might be difficult to come to grips with the country's violent past, but the Commission's report and the subsequent follow-up on its recommendations are necessary steps for the national healing process, which is likely to take years and generations. The victims must also remain in focus for the years to come.

Norway appreciates and admires all those who have given truthful testimony to the Commission and to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, be they former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), members of the public security forces or third parties. At the same time, we find the continuing reports of attacks and threats against human rights defenders most worrying. More must be done to ensure the protection of children, human rights defenders and indigenous leaders and that the perpetrators of attacks against them are brought to justice. The security guarantees provisions of the agreement need to be implemented fully in order to tackle the persistent violence. To that end, we expect the expedient implement of the orders issued to the Government after the Constitutional Court declared an unconstitutional state of affairs regarding the guarantee of former combatants' rights to life, physical integrity and peace. Moreover, a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups is much needed, and civil-society representatives should be permitted to contribute to it.

Competition over land and access to natural resources have fuelled grievances and armed conflict in Colombia. Deforestation accelerates land degradation, increases Colombia's vulnerability to climate change and exacerbates natural disasters. The poor are then impacted disproportionately, human security is undermined and the cycle of environmental degradation repeats. We do, however, commend Colombia as a regional leader in the field of climate change mitigation and forest protection, and encourage it to continue its efforts on climate and environmental issues as part of the peacebuilding process.

Relevant initiatives related to land use and rural reform need to be fully implemented. That could help solve one of the structural causes of Colombia's conflict.

We commend the Government for securing additional land for former FARC-EP combatants and encourage the acceleration of that strategic undertaking. We also stress the importance of ensuring the effective functioning of institutions for dialogue and conflict resolution, and encourage the Government to make sure that the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, as well as the National Reintegration Council, are in full operation at the end of its term. The same goes for the official entities that consider gender and ethnic issues. The tripartite cooperation on land mines is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when all parties — the former FARC-EP, the Government, the United Nations and donors — collaborate.

Let me conclude by assuring President Duque that Norway remains committed to accompanying Colombia in his efforts to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement, both under the present Government and in the future.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I warmly welcome the presence of President Iván Duque Márquez at today's meeting.

China commends the Government of Colombia, led by President Duque and other relevant parties, for their efforts in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. China welcomes the positive progress made in the peace process over the past five years. This past month, Colombia held congressional elections. Sixteen representatives were elected to Congress to represent special electoral districts for peace established for the first time in conflict-affected areas, marking a very important milestone.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/267), more than 10,000 former combatants have been reintegrated and fully supported, tens of thousands of rural families are gradually abandoning illicit crop cultivation and the number of former combatants joining productive projects and cooperatives has increased steadily. Those achievements are worth cherishing. The Colombian peace process has set an example for ending conflict and rebuilding peace through dialogue and negotiations. The peace agreement embodies the Colombian people's common aspiration to lasting peace and development, and it will play an irreplaceable and

important role in achieving long-term national stability and regional peace and security.

Colombia will hold presidential elections in May. We hope that the new Government will continue to fully implement the peace agreement, address the difficulties and challenges in its implementation and consolidate the gains of the hard-won peace. The full implementation of the agreement is a long-term effort of systematic engineering and there is still a long way to go to deepen and consolidate peace, which will require the tireless efforts of all parties in Colombia and the international community.

Since the beginning of the year, violent conflicts have intensified in many areas, including in Arauca department, with illegal armed groups seriously threatening the safety of former combatants and ethnic minorities. The process of reintegrating former combatants has also suffered some setbacks. We are confident that the people and the Government of Colombia will be able to meet those challenges, fully and effectively implement the security provisions of the peace agreement, strengthen the protection of former combatants, improve security controls and strengthen effective governance in the former conflict areas, speed up the dismantling of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, combat the recruitment of children by armed groups and enable women and young people to play their full roles in peacebuilding.

Accelerating development is critical for consolidating peace dividends and ending violent conflicts. We hope that the Government of Colombia will overcome the current global energy, food and supply chain crisis and the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic, accelerate the provision of land and rural reforms for former combatants, ensure the sustained alternatives to the cultivation of illicit crops, expand basic social services in former conflict areas and promote balanced development in all regions.

China supports Latin America in speeding up its integration process and hopes that the countries of the region will play an active role in helping Colombia to fully tap its development potential and eliminate the root causes of violent conflicts.

The peace process in Colombia is irreversible. That is the solid consensus among people from all walks of life in Colombia, as well as the international community. We look forward to the people and the Government

of Colombia making further gains in State-building and development.

China commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for its important role in supporting the peace process. We hope that the Mission will prioritize listening to the people and the Government of Colombia, strengthen its coordination with the United Nations country team and continue to provide strong support for the full implementation of the peace agreement. China is ready to work with the international community, respect the leading role of the people and the Government of Colombia in implementing the peace agreement and play our constructive role in Colombia's journey towards comprehensive peace, stability and development.

The President: The President of Colombia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

President Duque Márquez (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank everyone for their statements during this historic meeting. As President of Colombia, I reiterate that this is my first time coming to the Security Council, at our request, to move forward, show what we have built and point out the challenges that lie ahead of us. I would like to express my gratitude for the Council's general attitude in support of that, and in support of Colombia's development of comprehensive policies to bring together peace and the rule of law and of the work that is being done throughout all of our country's institutions.

Colombia requested the support of the Security Council. We also requested the establishment of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which has supervised and guided all of those developments independently. I value the virtually uncontested and unanimous general attitude with which the Council has addressed the Colombian people. In addition, I believe that while we share many of the concerns that members have expressed here today, we are facing them with determination. I would now like to briefly address some of them.

With respect to gender issues, Colombia has taken historic steps. For the first time in our history, we have a woman Vice-President and Chancellor, who is here with me today. Our Public Service Administration Department has confirmed that for the first time, about 46 per cent of all high-ranking State officials are women. Today, members of the Council highlighted

the participation of women candidates, but the number of women in the Colombian military forces is also currently the highest it has ever been.

Let me also point out that the 13 March elections were not the only time that gender parity was reflected on the lists of those elected. In December, the names on the lists for the municipal youth council elections alternated equally between those of men and women, with some 60 per cent of those elected being women. Those are examples of participatory democracy. I also want to emphasize that women make up more than 50 per cent of beneficiaries of land provision programmes and productive projects in each of the areas we described this morning. It is very important to take that into account.

When it comes to ethnic issues, as a State, Colombia took a decisive step to make sure that our Government's development plan is aligned with the objectives we shared this morning. We have a budget outline, spending plan and follow-up for the largest public investment in our history for indigenous communities and communities of African descent.

It is also important to note that the security challenges described in the Council this morning are alive and well in Colombia today. We have had to face dissidents of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. We have had to face the threat of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional from groups such as Los Pelusos, Los Caparros and Los Puntilleros, all former unitary groups that are now dismantled. We also determinedly faced down the Clan del Golfo, a group that has killed more social leaders than any other, and whose main leader has been captured and will soon be extradited to the United States and then extradited again, under the agreement for continued collaboration with the Colombian justice system, to return to Colombia to serve his sentences for the crimes he committed against Colombian society.

During this presidential term, the aggregate indices for homicides and kidnappings in our country are the lowest they have been in recent history. We know, however, that there are regions in the country that have also been under threat, and I want to briefly share the relevant data.

Between 2010 and 2015, illegal armed groups in Colombia perpetrated homicides and kidnappings against a total of 369 social leaders, with the highest of those cases arising in 2012 and 2013. Between 2015

and 2017, such cases increased by more than 21 per cent. That trend continued from 2017 to 2018, with cases tragically jumping from 84 to 115, for an increase of 27 per cent. In 2019, there were 108 such cases, a decrease that we cannot celebrate because we are talking about people's lives — about the victims of the cruellest violence. However, through that decrease, we were able to establish a stabilization and a downward trend, confirmed from information collected by the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia. Between 2020 and 2021, we saw those crimes decrease by a further 20 per cent. We will not celebrate that either. In fact, we refuse to celebrate it. But we have to defeat these armed groups — these terrorist groups — because terrorism lurks everywhere.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate before the Council, in view of the reports of violence in Arauca department, which borders Venezuela, that in accordance with resolution 1373 (2001) of September 2001, States must not sponsor, support, participate in or facilitate their territories for the purposes of attacks in another State. That is another reality we have had to fight. We know, however, that it is an ongoing battle and we must never stop fighting. We will not stop bringing social investment and security to all parts of our territory.

Let me make something clear. Colombia's community action leaders are among the most threatened social leadership groups in the country. They are the most threatened group, but also the group that has received the most financial support from the Government. I personally attend their meetings. There is a law that facilitates their protection, growth and involvement in public investment, while also offering them a generalized social leadership training programme through the State. It is very important that this message be heard. Of course, we value the progress made in the electoral process, but it is absolutely clear to us that our democracy must be strengthened day after day.

I wish to conclude by making a comment that I believe is timely. All the remarks I have heard here seek to be constructive, but comments were also made that should be viewed from the perspective not only of consistency but also of moral authority. We accept all constructive comments, because we are here voluntarily, with a will to build our country. However, it is very important that those who today are attacking a defenceless country should not be broadcasting

messages of peace to the world even as they commit fratricidal acts that we all reject, because the sorrow we see in Ukraine today is that of humankind calling for that genocide to come to an end. There can be no justification for whatsoever for such acts.

It is therefore very important that here, in the Security Council, in this guiding body of the United Nations system that was created for humankind to resolve its conflicts through multilateral dialogue, we should not hear talk of peace from those who today are waging war and sowing destruction.

I wish to close by warmly thanking all present for mentioning the possibility that we in Colombia can know the truth. We will receive a report from the Truth Commission, which will represent an opportunity to bring us together, not divide us; to build, not destroy; and to engage deeply in a process of reflection, without bias and with complete independence. That is the wish that we have in our institutions.

My visit here and my presence here as Head of State of Colombia is to reiterate that our participation in this multilateral forum, and the invitation for this multilateral forum to be present in an ongoing manner in Colombia, make it possible for us to demonstrate with facts what we have achieved. We do not intend to behave as if all challenges had been overcome. They do exist, they are historical, and there are long-standing debts in some regions. But Colombia, as a society united in its desire for peace, unequivocally wishes to overcome the challenges of violence.

That makes it possible for me also to offer a clarification on the comment made about the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, as follows.

When I became President, I asked for 90 days to evaluate the 17 months of talks that had been held prior to my Administration, in order to know where the point of departure was, and, after carefully reviewing all the indicators, it became clear that during those 17 months more than 100 people had been killed, more than 400 acts of terrorism had taken place and more than a dozen people had been kidnapped in Colombia.

Our message was clear. We would open the door only to an understanding based on the release of all those kidnapped and an end to the violence, because accepting an approach to the State so long as those levels of violence continued would represent a justification

of violence as a legitimate mechanism of approaching talks in a democratic State, and that should not happen.

We know that our challenges are great, but Colombian State policy will continue to be based on those two principles. Violence must be overcome, and what we have said concerning truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition is aimed precisely at ensuring that violence does not lead to fresh expressions of fratricide.

Today our country, after long decades of suffering violence, has more robust, better structured and more

stable institutions and a greater territorial presence. The approach to peace with legality I have described means that the Security Council and this multilateral forum, accompanied by the intensive work of the Verification Mission, can feel proud of the fact that, as Secretary-General Guterres said, Colombia is a reference point for peacebuilding in the world.

The President: I thank Mr. Duque, President of Colombia, for joining us today.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.