



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9240th meeting

Wednesday, 11 January 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Ishikane (Japan)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rutley
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2022/1004)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2022/1004)

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 Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Vice-President of Colombia, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort her to a seat at the Council table.

Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; and Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/30, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/1004, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2673 (2023).

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu: It is a pleasure to address the Security Council at the beginning of this important year for peace in Colombia.

(spoke in Spanish)

It is a special honour to be here in the presence of Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina, who today is Vice-President but who has been a historic peacebuilder in Colombia. I would also like to especially acknowledge Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán, who is also a historic figure in achieving peace in the country. I take this opportunity to thank them both for the confidence and the support extended by the Government of Colombia to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and overall to the entire United Nations system. I want to once again express my solidarity and to reiterate my absolute condemnation of the attempted attack on the Vice-President reported yesterday.

I am also pleased with the participation at this meeting of Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, a prominent indigenous leader and Secretary of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia, which was established by the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, who works day in and day out to promote the rights of ethnic communities throughout the country.

(spoke in English)

The developments described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on Colombia (S/2022/1004) speak of the potential of the year ahead for the consolidation of peace in Colombia. I am confident that, with the commitment of the parties, the year 2023 can bring with it decisive progress to deliver much-needed security and development opportunities for communities in conflict-affected regions.

Just a week ago, President Petro Urrego and Vice-President Márquez Mina travelled to Chocó, one of the most neglected regions of the country, to sign the law to enact the Ministry of Equality. That is an exciting development for Colombia. That new institution, under the leadership of the Vice-President, seeks to address deep inequalities that especially affect women and indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples. It can certainly be an important instrument for advancing the goals of the peace agreement by helping to bridge disparities within Colombian society.

In his report, the Secretary-General welcomes the Government's recent actions to move forward in some of the areas of the agreement with the greatest transformative potential. I echo his praise for steps taken in the past few months regarding comprehensive rural reform, such as the agreement on the purchase of land and the increase in the budgets for agriculture. Further momentum in rural reform issues was seen in the convening by the authorities of the first National Convention of Peasants, which I attended last December. At the Convention representatives of peasant communities shared testimonies and came forward with many proposals for deepening the implementation of elements of the agreement's comprehensive rural reform, thereby once again reaffirming their key role in peacebuilding. Rural reform is now at last clearly moving to the centre of efforts to build a more peaceful and prosperous Colombia.

As the Secretary-General has reiterated, constructive dialogue between the parties, as well as between the Government and civil society, is of the essence. I am very encouraged by the positive environment that characterized the past few months within the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and other forums created by the agreement. I trust that that spirit will shortly translate into joint actions to overcome pressing challenges so as to move forward decisively.

This year is also key to advancing outstanding legislation to implement the peace agreement. Victims' representatives in Congress, as well as members of political parties from across the spectrum, will all have a fundamental role to play.

(spoke in Spanish)

The success of the reintegration process is an essential part of building a stable and lasting peace, as

envisioned by the Government and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the Final Agreement. In that regard, I welcome the recent appointment of Alejandra Miller, a former member of the Truth Commission and a women's rights advocate, as the new Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, which is a key entity in ensuring that success. Her emphasis on mainstreaming gender and ethnic approaches in the reintegration process is extremely encouraging.

The recent extension until 30 June of a basic income, which guarantees access to a basic monthly income for thousands of former combatants, is also a very positive step, while the parties continue to work together to adopt medium- and long-term measures to ensure sustainable reintegration. To that end, it remains critical to ensure the necessary resources to support the thousands of ex-combatants, men and women, who remain committed to their transition to civilian life despite immense challenges and threats.

It is regrettable that, more than six years since the signing of the Final Agreement, violence continues against communities, social leaders and former members of the FARC-EP. In recent weeks, there have been numerous acts of violence, especially in areas prioritized for the implementation of the agreement. Of particular concern is the ongoing violence against indigenous leaders and communities, such as the Awá, and Afro-Colombian communities, such as the Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera, both in Nariño department, where the implementation of the ethnic provisions of the Final Agreement is imperative.

As the Government takes bold steps to reduce violence under its "total peace" policy and implements a new human security approach, the coordinated implementation of the agreement's provisions on security guarantees is also necessary. I am confident that the steps recently taken by the National Commission on Security Guarantees will enable progress towards that goal.

The progress made by the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, a fundamental pillar of the agreement and one of its most innovative aspects, is encouraging. The issuance by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) of its first concluding resolutions is a decisive step towards the first restorative sentences, which could be delivered this year. As noted by the Secretary-General, the

recommendations included in those resolutions, arrived at through a process of dialogue involving victims and participants, clearly illustrate that peace and justice can, and should, be mutually reinforcing. The Mission will continue to support the SJP and Government entities as they prepare to ensure the conditions for the implementation of those sentences.

(spoke in English)

While pressing forward with the implementation of the Final Agreement, Government engagement with illegal armed actors has continued within the framework of the total peace policy. Last month, the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional concluded the first round of peace dialogues in Venezuela amid a constructive environment. They plan to hold a new round in Mexico in the coming weeks. The parties' decision to reinstate discussions is widely supported in Colombian society, and is especially valued by communities affected by the conflict in several regions.

At the request of the two parties, the Secretary-General has agreed to permanently support their dialogue process through my presence at the talks. I have been carrying out that role as part of a supporting group that includes the guarantor and accompanying countries, and the Catholic Church. The parties have also decided to share with the Security Council documents agreed at the negotiating table. I will ensure that the first such document, focused on the rules and architecture of the negotiating process, reaches the Council through the Secretariat.

The new year began with a hopeful announcement by the President of six-month ceasefires with several illegal armed actors operating in various areas across the country. The Secretary-General welcomed that announcement. If carefully designed and carried out with commitment, such de-escalation measures agreed with armed groups can help to significantly reduce the violence and the suffering of conflict-affected communities, while building trust in ongoing dialogues.

There is a fundamental reality that must be acknowledged. The lasting success of the Colombian peace agreement, which we all wish to see, is contingent on the ability of the Colombian authorities to address the persistent violence that poses its greatest threat. The Government is making an admirable effort to do so, in part through differentiated dialogues with the illegal armed groups aimed at ending the violence. If the dialogues are successful, they will make a

great contribution to creating the security conditions necessary for the realization of the various provisions of the Final Agreement. The effective implementation of the agreement in itself would bring about the transformations required for lasting peace to take root.

The Council's decision today to authorize the expansion of the Mission's mandate to include the Agreement's comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter in its verification tasks will enable the Mission to increase its contribution to peace in Colombia. I am very grateful for the Security Council's trust and that of the parties. There are many opportunities ahead for peacebuilding in Colombia. The role of the United Nations and the solid support of the Council remain as important as ever. I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the hundreds of men and women in the Mission and the country team whose day-to-day work is a clear reflection of that commitment.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena.

Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena *(spoke in Spanish)*: I would like to extend my greetings to Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina. She is a symbol, unprecedented in our history, of the country that we are. I also greet our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Álvaro Leyva, who has been a tireless fighter for peace for decades. To a large extent we are gathered at this meeting today thanks to his talent and perseverance.

I am Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, an indigenous member of the Wayuu people, who live in the desert in the extreme north of Colombia. I speak on behalf of the Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples and communities of Colombia as Secretary of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples, a mechanism established in the implementation framework to serve as an adviser, interlocutor and representative of the country's ethnic groups.

I should begin by thanking Japan, which as President of the Security Council invited me to this meeting. I am especially grateful that the Council has agreed to extend the mandate to the ethnic chapter. I extend my thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Above all, it is a recognition that we consider fundamental and that is sending a valuable message to Colombian society as a whole and to the international community.

Ninety per cent of our ancestral peoples were exterminated at the time of the conquest of the American continent, while at the same time, millions of our Black brothers and sisters were literally torn from their land to work as slaves in this lush new land — a bad start and one to which it seems we continue to be condemned. Our inclusion in the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a good example of our struggle to transform a reality that has prevailed for centuries. There has been advocacy and political dialogue at the international level and with the parties, in practice making us a third actor at the table, unparalleled in this process, and which has resulted in the inclusion of an ethnic chapter in the agreement to ensure that the grievances of the Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples are heard.

However, being included in the agreement is different from seeing it implemented to our benefit. That is where the difficulties lie. International monitoring entities, as well as their national counterparts such as governmental control agencies, agree that the implementation for ethnic peoples and communities is being left behind at the end of the process. Much of that is due to the fact that in the face of the entire country and the international community, the previous Government created obstacles to the vital development of the peace process, preventing us from moving forward on those strategies and strengthening them. How can we all avoid committing the same blunder again?

With regard to ethnic peoples and communities in particular, in addition to the allocation of specific budget items, we must implement an institutional framework that takes the ethnic approach into account. We have lived for centuries in a State that does not see us and does not think about us, and when the time comes to make decisions, we are always absent. In order to overcome that, we must start from the principle that the relationship with ethnic bodies should be determined and continued from one Government to the next. That is, we must guarantee autonomy to the ethnic communities and strengthen the organizational structures that make autonomy possible. That should be the North Star in the dialogue with the ethnic groups. We have ancestral structures of governance at the national, regional and local levels, and that is where we should move forward on agreements related to public policy with the Colombian State.

We make up one tenth of the Colombian population, but we inhabit one third of the country's territory,

mostly made up of rivers, lakes and trees — the abundance of Mother Earth. Only a fifth of the land is used for agricultural activities. Given that situation, there must be guarantees of self-determination at a time when we need effective responses to the climate crisis. The complement to the effective exercise of governance is the existence of our own economy, which will ensure that the main tasks of the organizations are fulfilled. In that way, public policy would be oriented towards strengthening sustainability processes within Afro-descendant and indigenous community organizations in Colombia.

In addition to strengthening our organizations and ensuring their sustainability, there is the concern about the issue of land contemplated in the agreement, which has always been a key issue for ethnic groups. The collective protection mechanisms for ethnic groups must have the material guarantees to strengthen them, including the indigenous and maroon guards, which are essential as a contribution to the efforts to achieve what is described as “total peace”. The existence of coca and cannabis crops in ethnic territories, which are sacred plants, should involve a special regulatory mechanism, which has been considered but which the previous Government completely disregarded. The peace agreement mentioned special attention for indigenous communities and territories. It is urgent that attention be paid to them, as they are facing physical and cultural extermination. I respectfully request that the Verification Mission's follow-up efforts be carried out on the basis of an understanding of what the ethnic approach means, which includes the elements noted heretofore. This can be achieved by talking and working with us. In that way, we could better orient the institutional effort, which for centuries has been erratic.

The United Nations system has a varied and long-standing presence in our country. It is very important that it coordinate with the Colombian Government and us, so that the effects of implementation can be maximized through the organizational structures we adopt. Our inclusion in the mandate of the Security Council, the designation of the Vice-President as the highest-ranking official for the implementation of the ethnic chapter and the willingness of the Governments of the United States and Mexico to assist the ethnic peoples of Colombia have encouraged us to invite even more countries to join us in this endeavour.

To the 115 nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary indigenous peoples in Colombia, including indigenous

peoples in voluntary isolation, and to the ethnic and cultural variety of the country's people of African descent, I offer a salute of resistance: after five centuries of being decimated and mistreated, the struggle for a dignified life remains ongoing. As I address the Security Council for the first time today, I hope that it will be the first time of many.

The President: I thank Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for his briefing.

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

Mr. Rutley (United Kingdom): The Government of the United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the consolidation of peace in Colombia through the full implementation of the peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. We welcome the Colombian Government's commitment to implementing the 2016 Agreement as a fundamental part of its work to secure a broad and lasting peace.

We have been pleased to see renewed momentum over the past three months, including the Government's purchase of 3 million hectares from the Cattle Ranchers Association, the reactivation of the National Reintegration Council and the concluding resolutions passed by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We welcome today's Council's decision to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission, to cover progress on the rural reform and ethnic chapters of the peace agreement (resolution 2673 (2023)). It is clear that progress on these two chapters is vital.

As the Secretary-General set out in his recent report (S/2022/1004), violence remains the greatest threat to the consolidation of peace in Colombia. We welcome the decisive action taken by the Government to strengthen public security forces in new reintegration areas, and the Vice-President's announcement of increased funding for safeguarding women leaders and human rights defenders.

We share the Government's concern about attacks on human rights defenders, environmental advocates and other civil society activists. We are committed to supporting efforts to tackle these threats in order to secure a better future for the Colombian people. We also welcome the continued close cooperation between Colombia and its international partners on tackling drugs and organized crime. In that context, we welcome Government-led efforts to secure a

ceasefire, in order to reduce insecurity and alleviate the suffering of conflict-affected populations. We also welcome Special Representative Massieu's support for the Government's ongoing dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

Colombia remains an example to the world of the transformative potential of dialogue and leadership. I saw that commitment first hand on a recent visit. As the Colombian people seek to overcome the remaining barriers to a broad and lasting peace, the United Kingdom is proud to stand with them.

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 peace agreement in Colombia. I thank the briefers for their briefings and welcome Vice-President Francia Elena Márquez Mina and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán to the Security Council today.

First of all, on behalf of my country, I would like to express, as President Lula da Silva has already done, our solidarity with the Vice-President following the unacceptable attempted assassination attempt she has suffered. Brazil emphatically condemns what happened and expresses its unwavering confidence that political extremism and attempts to block progress on inclusive policies will not prosper on our continent.

We are pleased that the Council unanimously approved the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia today (resolution 2673 (2023)) to cover the Ethnic and Rural Reform Chapters of the Final Agreement, as requested by the Colombian Government. Brazil believes that the peace process will benefit from progress in these two central axes of the Agreement and congratulates the Government of Colombia for its decision to prioritize their implementation and involve the United Nations in monitoring the progress.

We are pleased to recognize President Petro Urrego's Government's commitment to intensifying efforts to ensure the security of former combatants and to strengthening policies with respect to women, indigenous people and populations of African descent. The full reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life depends on access to land, housing and productive projects.

As recognized by the Secretary-General in his most recent report to this Council (S/2022/1004), we welcome

the Government's determination and recent actions to strengthen the implementation of the sections of the Agreement with the greatest potential to transform in a positive manner the reality of the regions that have suffered most from the conflict. Indeed, in four months in office, President Petro Urrego's Administration has already initiated important actions as part of its strategy to make progress in integrally fulfilling the peace agreement. The Government's decision to increase resources for the agrarian sector in the 2023 budget by more than 62 per cent demonstrates its seriousness with regard to rural reform. The integrated deployment of State capacity to all corners of Colombian territory, especially historically neglected areas, is essential for the consolidation of peace in Colombia, and agrarian reform will contribute decisively to this end.

Brazil congratulates the Colombian Government for its tireless efforts to seek a "total peace" in the country. We view with great satisfaction the bilateral ceasefire with different armed groups announced on 31 December 2022. We hope that this positive development will effectively reduce the violence affecting the Colombian population, especially Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples, women and the most vulnerable populations. In addition, Brazil hopes that the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional can be announced soon and that the dialogue with that group will make rapid progress.

As we have stressed on various occasions, the Security Council's work in Colombia responds to the aspirations and needs expressed by the Colombian Government. Brazil reiterates its willingness to collaborate with the Government so that peace, gained only through the great efforts of its people, takes root and spreads widely throughout the country's territory.

Colombia has already demonstrated its capacity and political will to overcome the challenges to the full implementation of the peace agreement and to consolidate peace in its territory. Brazil reiterates its confidence in the success of that process.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his informative briefing. We appreciate the critical role that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play in supporting peace in the country. I thank Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for the important perspective he brings from the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples.

I would like to welcome the Colombian delegation, led by Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán, to the Council, and I thank in particular our United Kingdom colleagues for their efforts in drafting the mandate resolution (resolution 2673 (2023)), which received unanimous support from the Council. I welcome Minister Rutley. The United States is encouraged by the steps his Government has taken to advance the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, and we are fully committed to supporting Colombia in this vital work.

Today I would like to highlight four areas of progress and discuss obstacles to peace that must be addressed with urgency. First, the United States welcomes the Petro Urrego Administration's express commitment to fully realize the objectives of the ethnic chapter. We appreciate the leadership of Vice-President Márquez Mina in coordinating those efforts, in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and entities across the Colombian Government, including the newly created Ministry of Equality. The election of Vice-President Márquez Mina is historic and represents the Petro Urrego Administration's commitment to addressing this important issue.

In October, during a visit to Bogotá, Secretary Blinken announced that the United States would be the first international accompanier to the ethnic chapter of the 2016 peace accord. As Secretary Blinken made clear: "there can be no lasting peace without justice and equality for the Afro-Colombian and indigenous people". The ethnic chapter sets a vision for an inclusive peace that addresses a history of inequity and ensures the rights of Afro-Colombians and indigenous people going forward. That is a vision that the United States shares and that we have long worked to help make a reality.

Secondly, the United States supports rural reform efforts to distribute property to farmers without land, and we were encouraged by the significant increase of resources for the agrarian sector in the 2023 Government budget.

Thirdly, we continue to support the ongoing transitional justice process. We support that effort and condemn any actions that threaten the peace process. All victims of Colombia's conflict deserve justice.

Fourthly, we are encouraged by Colombia's effort to broaden democratic political participation. We should

not lose sight of how significant it is to see former combatants participating in the political process.

But while those four developments are cause for optimism, there is still work to be done. Illicit drug production continues to fuel violence in conflict-affected areas, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported record levels of coca cultivation in 2021. Let us be clear, all acts of violence — whether they are attacks against Colombian security forces, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, former combatants or human rights and environmental defenders — impede progress and peace. Authorities must act to combat illicit drug production, reduce violence and ensure illegal armed groups are held accountable.

The Security Council can play a meaningful role in addressing that work, and the United States welcomes today's action by the Council to approve the Secretary-General's important recommendation for the Verification Mission. Resolution 2673 (2023) will help us to better monitor the implementation of comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the peace accord. We must all continue to stand with Colombia in its efforts to consolidate lasting peace after decades of conflict.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Ghana, Mozambique and my country, Gabon.

The A3 wishes to congratulate the members of the Council for unanimously adopting resolution 2673 (2023), which mandates the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. The resolution's swift and unified adoption underscores the Council's commitment to supporting the Colombian people in their search for a lasting peace.

We also welcome the participation in this meeting of the Vice-President of Colombia, Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, and thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena for their informative briefings.

The A3 is horrified by the attempted assassination via explosive device of Vice-President Francia Márquez

Mina. Yesterday's attack was the second such attack, following one in 2019. We condemn in the strongest possible terms this cowardly and despicable attack on Vice-President Márquez Mina — no doubt because of her political commitment and certainly because of her origins and the historic symbolism she embodies. The Colombia that we support is one in which all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or skin colour, participate equally in the political and social life of the country, without fearing for their lives. This attempt on her life underlines once again the urgency of strengthening the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement.

The first steps taken by President Petro Urrego and the new Government in the framework of his vision for the concept of "total peace" are very encouraging and a source of hope for the further implementation of the Final Agreement. After six years of implementation, and taking into account the gains made thus far, we are encouraged by the strong commitment to correcting historical inequalities, with particular emphasis on rural reforms, the ethnic chapter and the protection of women's interests and rights.

The enactment of the law allowing for the continuation of dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación (ELN) and the other armed groups in order to put an end to the violence is an encouraging signal for the future. The layered structure of that process, which includes citizen participation in the design of the national development plan for the period 2022–2026, is a guarantee of inclusiveness. The ELN's decision to analyse the Government's proposals and to accept the talks on the ceasefire are positive signs for the conclusion of a peace agreement. We hope that the second round of negotiations, scheduled for February, will be a step forward in that direction. Nevertheless, the established contacts should be maintained, and the commitment of all parties should be renewed, in order to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion as soon as possible. Without all the parties on board, there can be no lasting peace. In that connection, we welcome the commitment of the guarantor countries to ensuring the continuation and outcomes of those talks.

With regard to the participation of women, the A3 emphasizes the importance of ensuring that women have the platform they deserve as agents of peace. We also welcome the developments recorded in the promotion and participation of women in the implementation of the agreement, whether through their participation in

designing the national development plan; the creation of the Ministry of Equality; the adoption of laws on gender parity on electoral lists; awareness-raising activities aimed at strengthening consideration of the specific needs of women ex-combatants; and the appointment of several women to positions of responsibility. We also welcome the Government's announcement that it will increase funding for initiatives and programmes that combat sexual and gender-based violence. Such crimes must be fought and punished with the utmost firmness. The Government's commitment in that regard, via the adoption of a road map for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), is a decisive step in the right direction.

The sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants depends on effective land reform. To that end, the A3 welcomed the adoption of relevant measures, whose implementation is crucial to the establishment of lasting peace in Colombia. We are also observing with interest the implementation of the 16 national rural reform plans. The A3 welcomes the signing of an agreement between the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers and the Government for the purchase of 3 million hectares of land to be distributed to landless peasants.

The situation in the communities of Cauca, Putumayo and Antioquia, which are plagued by insecurity, is in urgent need of resolution. We welcome the housing construction projects that are under way in several of those areas. Those efforts should be strengthened so as to improve the reintegration of all 13,000 accredited former combatants. In that regard, the A3 is pleased with the reactivation of the National Reintegration Council in order to improve the implementation of that crucial component of the agreement.

We welcome the Colombian Government's commitment to continuing to implement its territorial development programmes — again, on a basis of inclusiveness and with a view to creating greater synergy at the regional and national levels. It is essential that peace efforts be supported by concrete actions aimed at combating the root causes of poverty. We hope that the discussions under way in Congress to enact legislation on the creation of an agrarian jurisdiction and to constitutionalize the rights of peasants will be successful. The rehabilitation of ex-combatants must, of course, incorporate their economic reintegration. We deplore the resurgence of illicit crops in conflict-affected areas, which thrives on a bedrock of poverty combined with a weak State presence. We encourage

the authorities to redouble their efforts to approve new projects, and we urge the Colombian Government to strengthen measures aimed at empowering women to lead development projects. In that regard, the inclusion in the national development plan of a national reintegration system and a comprehensive reintegration programme aimed at building the capacity of former combatants is most welcome.

With respect to the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, the A3 is pleased to note that significant progress has been made, especially in Case 01, which concerns hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and concomitant crimes committed by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, and Case 03, which concerns murders and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by State agents. The A3 welcomes the establishment of a mechanism for dialogue and a system for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth Commission. That system of restorative justice based on the active participation of victims is an essential pillar of the peace process in Colombia and an exemplary model. We are also pleased with the measures introduced to care for child survivors and the families of former combatants. Action in the interests of children contributes to the prevention of conflicts and the construction of a sustainable peace.

However, we remain concerned about the persistence of violence against reintegrated ex-combatants outside former training and reintegration territorial areas. That violence continues to undermine the implementation of the peace agreement in conflict-affected localities. The total number of ex-combatants assassinated, including the 50 killed in 2022, now stands at 355, with a majority of the victims from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. Attacks on social leaders, human rights promoters and members of political parties are particularly worrisome. The A3 reiterates its position that a peaceful Colombian society cannot be envisioned for the long term without correcting the historical injustices done to Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples.

The efforts already undertaken by Colombia require the continued support of its regional as well as international partners. In that regard, the A3 welcomes the reopening of the border and the warming of diplomatic relations between Colombia and Venezuela, which began with the visit of President

Petro Urrego to Caracas on 1 November 2022. We also welcome Venezuela's commitment as a guarantor of the negotiations between the Colombian Government and the ELN guerrillas. We hope that an agreement can be reached with the ELN on a ceasefire and a bilateral truce. We urge the leaders of the ELN and other armed groups that are not yet signatories to the Final Agreement to renounce violence and to demonstrate flexibility and a commitment to ending years of deadly guerrilla warfare in Colombia.

Finally, the A3 reiterates its support for the mission of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and expresses its continued support for the Colombian Government.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina of Colombia to this meeting. I thank Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing, and I listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena.

Over the past year the people of Colombia have made welcome progress in the political dialogue and in nation-building through their united efforts, ushering in a new chapter of peace, development and reconciliation. As the Secretary-General said in his latest report, the peace process in Colombia is in a dynamic new phase (S/2022/1004). I am very pleased that the Council has just unanimously adopted resolution 2673 (2023), extending the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We hope that the international community will seize and build on that momentum and continue to provide the necessary support to the peace process in order to achieve further concrete results. In that connection, I want to make the following points.

First, we must continue to push for the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The new Colombian Government, under President Gustavo Petro Urrego and other stakeholders, has been fully engaged in implementing the relevant clauses of the agreement. Practical measures have been taken, especially in terms of rural reform, land distribution and the elimination of violence. In particular, the National Reintegration Council has recently restarted its work, which should enable former combatants to have access to land and participate in productive projects as an effective way to sustain their integration. While those measures and the progress made deserve recognition, it should also be pointed out that the implementation

of the peace agreement is a long-term and systematic undertaking that requires continued efforts towards its full implementation by all stakeholders, including civil society. Meanwhile, the international community should continue to pay close attention to the situation and provide sustained political support.

Secondly, differences must be resolved through dialogue and negotiations. Colombia ended the conflict through dialogue and started peacebuilding through negotiations, setting a good example for the political settlement of disputes. Last month, the Government concluded its first round of negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and reached a six-month ceasefire agreement with the four armed groups. The decision was also jointly made to carry out an emergency humanitarian operation. We welcome all those developments. We hope that the country will continue to make unwavering efforts on the path of dialogue and negotiations and that the parties will reach a lasting ceasefire and political settlement through negotiations. We will continue to support the United Nations and countries and organizations of the region in playing a constructive role in encouraging peace and achieving peace through negotiations.

Thirdly, great emphasis must be placed on promoting peace. Lasting peace achieved through sustainable and inclusive development shared by all is a fundamental approach to eradicating the root causes of conflict. We are happy to see that the Government has taken a series of initiatives to tackle uneven development, including massive financial flows dedicated to rural reform, which will help narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and break the bottlenecks to development. We have taken note that the Government is engaging in dialogue with different sectors of society on the national development plan for the period 2022 to 2026. That will help combine national development with the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which will be critical to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development in Colombia. China commends the governance approach adopted by the Government, which places emphasis on achieving peace through development, and hopes that the United Nations and international partners will strengthen coordination and work in synergy so as to provide further support for Colombia to develop its economy and improve its people's livelihoods.

Fourthly, the security situation must continue to be improved. Currently, certain areas in the country continue to suffer from instability. Armed groups continue to run rampant in former-conflict areas and remote regions. We support the Government in shoring up development in areas where national security remains fragile and welcome the Government's adoption of public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organizations and take effective measures to protect civilians, including women, children and Afro-Colombians

According to the report of the Secretary-General, Colombia remains one of the countries most affected by the presence of explosive ordnance, including landmines. Last year alone, there were 100 casualties. In that regard, the United Nations Mine Action Service can leverage its expertise and provide technical support to the relevant entities in the country in order to strengthen their demining capacity and eliminate the hidden danger posed by mines.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that China commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for the important contribution it has made to the peace process in Colombia and supports the Mission in continuing to play an active role in moving forward the peace process on the basis of full respect for Colombia's ownership.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Vice-President of Colombia. Her presence attests to Colombia's commitment to achieving lasting peace and valued cooperation with the Security Council. It was with deep concern that we learned of the assassination attempt on her life yesterday. We express our sympathy to her and unequivocally condemn all acts of violence. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his invaluable briefing. Our thanks also go to Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for his informative briefing.

Switzerland's long-standing commitment in Colombia is aimed at contributing to the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. In particular, Switzerland has supported the political participation component of the agreement. It has also committed itself to supporting the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition, together with the Colombian women

and men who have spared no effort on behalf of the victims of the armed conflict. Our contribution has prioritized a holistic, victim-centred approach, based on respect for the law. Switzerland takes pleasure in pursuing its support for building a lasting peace, as a member of the Council.

I would like to highlight three points in that regard.

First, Switzerland welcomes the important efforts of the Colombian Government to advance the full and effective implementation of the peace agreement. The resumption of negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the pursuit to continue the dialogue with the other armed groups, including in view of achieving a ceasefire, are most encouraging. The positive communication between the Colombian authorities and the Comunes party is also a meaningful gesture and a clear commitment to peace. We welcome the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and its ability to adapt so as to be able to support Colombia on the path leading to peace.

Secondly, Switzerland welcomes the unity of the Council shown by its unanimous adoption of resolution 2673 (2022), on broadening the Mission's mandate to cover monitoring the implementation of the rural reform and the ethnic chapters in the peace agreement. Those chapters are vital. The achievement of the objectives set out will make it possible to work on the root causes of the armed conflict and the historical inequalities. While the Colombian Government's recent efforts to combat criminal activity are commendable, we remain concerned about the level of violence faced by members of political parties, social leaders, human rights defenders, former combatants and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/1004) notes, violence against women is an obstacle to their ultimate participation in the peace process. Ensuring the proper functioning of the National Commission on Security Guarantees is critical to their protection and must be a priority. Indigenous children are disproportionately affected by serious acts of violence. In that regard, my country welcomes the recent signing by Colombia of the Safe Schools Declaration, which is an imperative step towards the implementation of preventive measures to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable.

Thirdly, in line with its commitment to peace and sustainable social development in Colombia, Switzerland has responded to the call of the parties to

the conflict and will support the peace negotiations under way with the ELN. Having been chosen once again as one of the supporting States in the negotiations represents a great responsibility for us whose scope we fully realize. We particularly welcome the meaningful representation of women in the process.

Colombia has successfully adopted a victim-centred approach for healing the wounds of decades of violence. Colombia can serve as an example to other countries affected by conflict. Colombia's continued engagement in the Peacebuilding Commission attests to that potential.

Let me conclude with the words of Father Francisco de Roux Rengifo, former President of the Truth Commission,

(spoke in Spanish)

“We can no longer postpone the day when peace becomes a duty and a basic right. Colombia has become inured to peace means, and it will not give it up.”

(spoke in English)

Switzerland encourages the international community and the Council to redouble their efforts to support Colombia in achieving lasting peace and stands ready to promote and support all dialogue.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) *(spoke in French)*: I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu and the representative of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia, Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena, for their briefings. I also welcome the Vice-President of Colombia, Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, at this meeting and join my colleagues in condemning in the strongest terms the attempt on her life yesterday.

France welcomes the clear commitment and recent initiatives taken by the Colombian authorities through the adoption of their “total peace” policy to fully implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Colombia is on the right track.

Let me return to a few specific points.

First, the search for peace through dialogue is imperative. We are very encouraged by the negotiations under way with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the armed groups. We hope that they will be pursued

and lead to a lasting ceasefire that the international community will be able support when the time comes.

Secondly, France welcomes the Government's clear commitment to land access and rural reform. The increased budget for it and the agreement reached with the agrarian sector are positive. The authorities' new approach to the provision of substitutions for illicit crops is also welcome. We encourage the Government to continue along that path in order to offer viable new socioeconomic opportunities to those who suffered in the conflict. It is a vital factor in achieving a lasting peace.

Thirdly, France welcomes the consistent progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, whose issuance of resolutions has paved the way for restorative sentencing and a new chapter on the road to reconciliation. All the parties to the conflict must participate in those efforts for justice and truth, which are an indispensable step in ensuring the restoration of lasting peace in the country.

Finally, we must also be clear-sighted as we look at the road ahead. France remains very concerned about the high level of violence in many parts of Colombia. The security guarantees for former combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders are still inadequate. The roll-out of the emergency protection plan, based on an increased presence of the State at the local level, is a positive step forward, but if it is to be effective, it must also increase the State presence in the areas historically neglected by the Agreement.

By extending the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which is doing outstanding work on the ground, the Security Council has once again demonstrated its strong support for the peace process in Colombia. In a world marked by conflict and divisions, Colombia remains an example of peace for the international community. France encourages it to continue along that path, and we stand ready to offer our full support.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia, for their briefings. I also thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2022/1004). In welcoming Vice-President Francia

Márquez Mina of Colombia to the Security Council for the first time, I would like to express Ecuador's concern and echo the Vice-President's condemnation of the attempted attack on her. I stand with her in solidarity. I also welcome the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, at today's meeting.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia plays an important role in supporting the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. In that regard, the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2655 (2022) on 27 October 2022 demonstrated its commitment to the peace process in the country and, especially, to the implementation of the Final Agreement. Resolution 2673 (2023), which we have just adopted today, is an additional show of support to the Government of Colombia through the Verification Mission's monitoring of the implementation of the rural reforms and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement. I appreciate the input and recommendations in the letter dated 9 December 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/940) on how the verification of those matters will be carried out. That is especially relevant, as the Government has said that land reform and access to land are particularly important for a peaceful and prosperous Colombia. The recent agreement between the Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers and the Government for the purchase of 3 million hectares of land to be distributed to landless peasants constitutes an achievement in that regard. Regarding the ethnic chapter, it has been emphasized in the Council that a lasting peace cannot be achieved without justice and equality for the entire country, including its Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples.

One of Ecuador's priorities for its 2023–2024 term on the Security Council is the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda. We are therefore pleased that Colombia has been considering ensuring the increased participation of women, especially indigenous and Afro-descendant women, in the dialogue mechanisms and in all processes aimed at the establishment of peace in general. The Council sees the peace process in Colombia as successful and as a benchmark for such processes in other regions. In that regard, I would like to highlight the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as a key element in the application of transitional justice in the country.

Ecuador attaches particular importance to its relationship with Colombia, with our historical framework of brotherhood and bilateral cooperation in facing the challenges on our shared border and in combating transnational organized crime in all its manifestations, especially drug and arms trafficking, given their impact on peace and security.

In conclusion, Ecuador reiterates its full support for the peace process in Colombia and the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and important work with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I would also like to thank Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for his insightful briefing and to recognize the participation of Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina in a meeting of the Security Council for the first time, as well as the presence here today of Mr. Rutley of the United Kingdom.

The three months covered in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2022/1004) have seen significant movement in paving the path towards sustainable peace. The Government of Colombia has made it clear that a comprehensive implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is at the core of its ambitions. Malta was pleased to see peace negotiations resumed between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Caracas last month. The reports from those talks are encouraging, and we are looking forward to following the next round of negotiations in Mexico this month. I also congratulate the Government of Colombia on its progress and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on his role of providing political accompaniment to those negotiations. We support the Government of Colombia's efforts for a comprehensive and prolonged ceasefire with combatants and call on all the armed groups to lay down their weapons and engage in dialogue.

Violence continues to be the existential threat to Colombia's peace process. Though 2022 was a year of great progress, it also saw hundreds killed, including children, in large-scale killings, clashes between dissident groups and by explosive ordnance. Threats against former combatants also remain acute, highlighted by the increase in emergency relocations. Violence towards civilians, journalists and social

leaders also remains a great concern, with at least 89 human rights defenders being killed last year. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, indigenous and Afro-Colombians are among the most targeted leaders. Reports detailing a plotted attempt on the life of Vice-President Márquez Mina are concerning, and they reflect the need to remain cautious and recognize that situations can easily deteriorate.

Conflict-related sexual violence also continues to be used to displace communities and as a tactic of territorial control. We call for the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the action plan for the security of women former combatants under the reintegration policy. There must be full accountability for such crimes if there is to be sustainable and long-term peace. We also encourage the Colombian Government to strengthen mechanisms to protect the victims of, and witnesses to, conflict-related violence.

Malta is encouraged by the determination of the Colombian Government in its endeavours towards comprehensive rural reform. That commitment can be clearly seen in the increase in resources for the agrarian sector in the 2023 budget and the unprecedented agreement to purchase 3 million hectares of land to be distributed through the Land Fund.

We also wish to highlight the recent issuance of concluding resolutions by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as a clear example of the victim-centred process that is at the core of Colombia's cutting-edge transitional justice system. We also welcome the recent reactivation of the National Reintegration Council and the designation by the Government of a new head of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. Those are clear steps towards furthering the reintegration process across the country.

The Security Council must equip the Colombian Government with the resources that it needs to continue its progress towards peace. That is why Malta fully supports the request by the Colombian Foreign Minister to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to include the peace agreement's comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapters, and we voted in favour of resolution 2673 (2023). To echo the Secretary-General, such sections of the 2016 Final Agreement are critical

to consolidating peace by addressing the deep-rooted patterns of inequality, including gender inequality, and the exclusion of rural regions and ethnic peoples. I am encouraged that today the Security Council showed a united front in supporting the resolution.

Progress on Colombia's peace process is growing in leaps and bounds and support by the Security Council and the international community is as important as ever. Malta stands with the Colombian people, committed to their peaceful and prosperous future. A new year brings new opportunities. I am confident that the Security Council can remain united in supporting Colombia's future.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his efforts and the update on the developments in the country. I also thank Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for his important insights. We welcome the presence of Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán, important actors for peace in Colombia, at this meeting, which shows the importance of cooperation with the Security Council for the Colombian Government.

We commend the Government of Colombia and President Petro Urrego for their vision, resolve and hard work in promoting the concept of "total peace". They have continued on the path of work for peace chartered by the previous Administration, thereby confirming the desire and resolve of the Colombian people to put an end to the long and painful history of conflict.

The 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is the cornerstone of the peace process in Colombia, and we are encouraged by the efforts of the parties to implement it in full, as well as the readiness to engage in dialogue with non-signatory groups. We welcome the New Year's Eve agreement with several large armed groups operating in the country as part of President Petro Urrego's endeavours for a national ceasefire and lasting peace through inclusive dialogue and reconciliation. We are further encouraged by the process of dialogue between the authorities and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in an effort to maximize the contribution to the new prospects for Colombia and better cohabitation among the population and to help guarantee lasting peace.

The Government and the people of Colombia need the continued support of the international community as they make strides towards lasting peace and fully exploit in full the vast potential for progress during this year. We welcome the expanded mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia contained in resolution 2673 (2023), adopted today, to monitor the implementation of the rural reforms and ethnic chapters of the peace agreement. Those are two critical aspects to ensure the full implementation of the Final Agreement.

We join the Secretary-General's assessment that the peace process in Colombia has entered a dynamic new phase that deserves strong international support. Colombia, its leaders and its people enjoy Albania's full sympathy and support for their noble efforts to consolidate peace. Colombia is a shining success story for peace, which needs to fully materialize for the benefit of all, without anyone left behind. In that respect, we trust that the authorities will continue to do what is needed to reduce the violence. Colombia and Colombians have long seen enough — and too much — violence. They are best placed to know the dire consequences of reckless violence, to the detriment of life, rights and peace, just like the attempt on the life of the Vice-President, which we firmly condemn, and which only aims to derail the process.

(spoke in Spanish)

What Colombia needs now is peace, total peace, through dialogue and justice. We stand resolutely with them on that path.

Mrs. Alhfeiti (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his valuable briefing and for his tireless efforts towards supporting the goals of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, namely, establishing peace in the country. I welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Vice-President of Colombia, and join other Council members in condemning the recent attempts to endanger her life. We also appreciate the participation of Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena.

In the context of today's discussion, I would like to focus on three main points.

First, we welcome the continued progress in key implementation mechanisms of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, including the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the National Reintegration

Council and the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, as well as the important measures taken by the Government prioritizing the essential elements of the Final Agreement, including the ethnic and gender provisions and rural reform. A particularly encouraging development is the Government's initiative to develop Colombia's first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That can be a fundamental tool in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which contributes to building peace in the country.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the persisting threats and violence against civilians, former combatants and political and community leaders. That includes yesterday's reports on finding a bomb near the Vice-President's house. Such acts reaffirm the continued need to preserve any progress made towards establishing peace and security in the country. We believe that dedicated efforts, such as further coordination between the national Government and local authorities, as well as the increased number of police personnel and public security forces working in areas of reintegration and conflict, can minimize the risks that threaten their safety and security. Those developments must be sustained, as such risks threaten the implementation of the Final Agreement in a comprehensive manner.

Thirdly, the recent progress in the dialogue among the parties concerned is a positive step that must be built upon, as it should significantly contribute to reducing intercommunal violence in Colombia, including possible future ceasefire agreements. We recognize the role that the guarantor and other supporter countries have played in that regard, including their continued efforts for supporting peace as negotiations continue. We believe that the real guarantee of the success of such talks requires the parties to fulfil their commitment to implementing the key provisions of the Agreement, including successful reintegration and disarmament processes, security guarantees and an end to violence.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its full support for the Government and the people of Colombia in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace, as well as for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We welcome the expansion of its mandate through resolution 2673 (2023), adopted today, as that will further support efforts for the full and comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome Colombia's Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina and Minister for Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán to today's meeting. We thank the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing on the situation in the country and for his assessment. We also thank Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena.

At the request of the Colombian authorities, the Security Council today unanimously extended the monitoring functions of the Verification Mission to two additional chapters of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace — agrarian reform and ethnic issues. We hope that the involvement of United Nations experts and observers in those two areas as an independent party will be an additional factor in ensuring the implementation of the historic agreement of 2016 in good faith.

We welcome the decisive commitment of President Petro Urrego's Administration to the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. The new Colombian authorities have done more in six months for reconciliation in the country than the previous Administration did in four years. We note the progress in the implementation of agrarian reform, the reintegration of former combatants and the advancement of important legislative initiatives that provide legal support to the peacebuilding processes. The reactivation of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement has been very significant in coordinating the efforts to implement the Agreement. But as Colombians themselves recognize, there is still a lot of work to be done. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the security of human rights defenders and former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, as well as implementing crop-substitution programmes and strengthening State authority at the local level.

Colombia's relations with Venezuela have been enormously important historically to ensuring peace and sustainable socioeconomic development, and we welcome the re-establishment of relations between those neighbouring States, which was reinforced by President Petro Urrego's recent visit to Caracas. History has shown the futility of previous Colombian Governments' mistaken, short-sighted attempts to shut out and turn away from their brothers in Venezuela. We are certain that the normalization of Colombian-Venezuelan

relations will help to regulate the migration situation in the region, strengthen border controls and counter transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.

The international community's support and endorsement will help Bogotá in its efforts to establish peace with armed groups with the noble aim of ending the violence and suffering among the civilian population. We note the bilateral ceasefire with four illegal armed groups. It will be important to implement effective mechanisms for the bilateral monitoring and verification of the truce and to ensure effective State control in areas where the presence of the armed forces is limited as well as where warring armed groups are active.

An essential factor for peace in the country is the achievement of agreements between Bogotá and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional armed group. We are following the development of contacts between the sides and hope that they will be able to reach mutually acceptable agreements that can put an end to the decades-long armed confrontation. Should Colombia turn to the Security Council for support, we are ready to consider various options for international assistance in arriving at a possible agreement. In the meantime, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will continue to work in accordance with its mandate to verify the implementation of various provisions of the Final Agreement. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia intends to continue to provide comprehensive support to the Colombian peace process and the Verification Mission under the leadership of Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his detailed briefing and insights. I also thank Mr. Wouriyu Valbuena for his inspiring testimony, based on his own experience. I extend a particularly warm welcome to Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán and join other colleagues in expressing our solidarity with the Vice-President, whose life was threatened yesterday. I also thank the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for its written advice.

Japan commends President Petro Urrego's commitment to the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace as a core

element of his Government's "total peace" policy. That commitment is manifested in the joint request for United Nations support by President Petro Urrego's Administration and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo in order to implement the rural reform and ethnic chapters of the Agreement. In that context, Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2673 (2023) authorizing additional mandates for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia on comprehensive rural reform and ethnic perspectives. It enables the Mission to further contribute to the consolidation of the peace process. It is an excellent example of the whole Security Council continuing to act in unison to promote peace and security in Colombia. Japan appreciates and continues to support the role of the Special Representative and the Mission.

We strongly hope that the ethnic chapter will be further implemented in a systematic and institutionalized way. Japan welcomes the passage of a bill to establish the Ministry of Equality and Equity as a concrete milestone in realizing social justice for all Colombians, including ethnic minorities, as well as other vulnerable populations, such as women and young people. We would like to congratulate Vice-President Márquez Mina on her appointment as Minister of Equality and Equity. She has been a great social leader in defending the rights of ethnic minority groups, and I hope her efforts will lead to even greater advances in that regard.

The Colombian Government has also taken concrete steps to implement comprehensive rural reform. We hope that the ongoing dialogues with rural populations will accelerate tangible progress in ensuring equitable access to land in rural areas. We echo the PBC's welcome of the progress made in promoting women's participation in the dialogues, which will help to address the root causes of the conflict and create a foundation for sustainable peace.

Japan acknowledges Colombia's tireless efforts to advance the peace process in an institutionalized and inclusive manner. The core institutions and systems of the process, such as the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission, have involved both former combatants and victims in achieving progress. We believe that such an institutionalized, inclusive approach based on the rule of law will eventually discourage violence and protect people in vulnerable situations, such as women, minority ethnic groups,

human rights defenders and community leaders. Japan welcomes the Colombian Government's efforts to achieve total peace, including the recent ceasefire with various armed groups that have not yet signed peace agreements with the Government. We expect continued efforts towards a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire to achieve total peace. Japan fully intends to contribute to discussing how the Security Council can best support those efforts.

In conclusion, as a new member of the Security Council, Japan remains committed to supporting Colombia's efforts throughout its peacebuilding process.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on the Vice-President of Colombia.

Ms. Márquez Mina (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to start by thanking the Security Council, its permanent and elected members and the international community for their constant and resolute work in support of the initiatives and actions that the Colombian State has undertaken in the area of peace and security, which is clearly reflected in the voting on resolution 2673 (2023), whose adoption we just witnessed. This unanimous vote demonstrates the Agreement's importance for the world.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude for the expressions of solidarity in relation to the acts of violence that we are still facing in our country and which seek to undermine our efforts for peace, social justice and the deepening of democracy in Colombia.

I welcome the Government of Japan's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I salute Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for all his efforts and support over the years to make peace in Colombia a reality. I would also like to greet the Secretary of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia, Mr. Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, representative of civil society, who is with us today and with whom we have worked for many years for peace, dignity and social justice for the ethnic peoples of Colombia and for the country itself. I would especially like to acknowledge the excellent work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the Mission's presence on our territory and its actions in favour of victims, civil society, ethnic peoples, women and the

former combatants who signed the peace agreement. The assistance from the international community and the Security Council in political, technical and financial matters has allowed the commitments of the Agreement to be supported and promoted even at times when political will was insufficient or scarce.

I address the Council as a daughter of ancestral lands and as a spokesperson for the Colombian people and representative of a Government that has come to change the history of my country. Today the democratic will to confront violence, social injustices and structural inequalities is calling on our Government of Change to craft policies for people that will make Colombia a world Power in favour of life. We propose alternatives that have deep roots in the earth because we come from diverse places where the inclemency of war and the politics of death have been the rule. Our ears and our hearts are connected to those places, attentive to their desperate cries of pain and to their forms of resistance amid a crisis that continues to weigh on us.

That is why we support the initiatives of the communities that clamour for humanitarian agreements today and why we insist on the ceasefire and all scenarios of dialogue and political agreement that demand that we build a safe and peaceful country. Our central commitment is to safeguarding the lives of the entire Colombian population, to care for those who have taken up the defence of human rights as their main cause, and to protect communities caught in the crossfire. But none of this is possible without respecting those who have committed to and upheld their will for peace without de-escalating armed conflict and ensuring the dismantling of the criminal structures that perpetuate violence.

Inequality in access to land for rural folk, as well as their being abandoned in general, has been one of the main drivers of the war in Colombia. Our Government has set out a clear policy of democratization and distribution of 3 million hectares of productive land for the agricultural, agro-industrial and economic development of the country, with a view to recovery and the building of food sovereignty, in order to stop children from continuing to die of hunger and malnutrition in our country. These hectares will serve to guarantee access to land for the displaced, victims of discrimination, including people of African descent, ethnic indigenous peoples, and the Raizal and Palenquero communities, as well as women, youth and rural folk in general. Our Government recognizes rural

folk as holders of rights. With the support of Congress, we have been able to introduce a draft bill — and obtain approval in half of the debates on it — that seeks to have rural folk recognized as entitled to special constitutional protection.

With the support of President Petro Urrego, on 4 January 2023 we adopted the law creating the Ministry of Equality and Equity. Through this new institutional tool, we are now committed to reducing the gaps in equality and equity gaps that exist in the country. Our objective is to give special consideration for women in all their diversity, children and youth, the LGBTIQ+ population, people of African descent, Black, Raizal, Palenquero and other indigenous ethnic groups, Rom people, rural folk, families and households living in poverty and extreme poverty, people with disabilities, the homeless, the elderly and migrant populations. Many of these populations live in historically excluded and marginalized territories, which are also the most vulnerable to the impacts of the environmental crisis and the humanitarian crisis caused by the armed conflict.

We are making structural changes that will serve as a foundation for “total peace”, with the total peace being understood as the implementation of the agreements already signed between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the Colombian State, on the one hand, and as the progress made in dialogues with different groups that continue to disrupt life in the territories, on the other hand. Total peace will result from closing the inequity and inequality gaps in which our nation had been submerged.

We, the Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, are in charge of coordinating inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination for the development and implementation of the commitments derived from the ethnic chapter for peace. As a result of this coordination mission, we have identified the lack of clear indicators to measure in concrete terms the progress achieved in the implementation of this chapter. One of our main challenges is to design indices that will help to develop actions towards historical reparation for ethnic communities, including indigenous, Raizal and Palenquero communities and people of African descent, who have all disproportionately experienced the effects of the armed conflict and structural racism in Colombia.

The national Government, and in particular the Vice-Presidency has been designing racial justice

policies that make it possible to close the gaps in equity and equality that the communities have experienced since the re-establishment of their territorial ethnic rights. We cannot overlook the fact that these communities' disproportionate treatment is the result of racial-profiling policies in the context of the armed conflict, which is also manifest in and reflected by the drug policy designed to fight the drug-trafficking phenomenon in Colombia.

A new drug policy should have a focus on racial and gender justice that makes it possible to recognize and overcome the differentiated treatment of the populations and place respect for life, the elimination of violence against women, the strengthening of their economic autonomy and empowerment of their political participation at the centre of efforts to build peace and security. On this point, we urge the General Assembly to support the Colombian Government in finding a way forward, a new approach that will allow these peoples, communities, youth and women, in all their diversity, to live in peace and dignity, and not to live in fear in the territories.

We ask the United Nations to open its doors to sincere dialogue, a new path that allows us to structurally resolve the systematic violation of human rights in the country. I call for progress not only in political dialogue, but also in terms of urban peace and equality, bringing about structural advances for Colombian society.

Armed violence has affected our entire society. Nearly 10 million people, one fifth of the current population, are direct victims of the war. In every home in my country there are wounds and scars from what happened. Fear, hatred and revenge have been passed down from generation to generation. Ethnic peoples, rural communities, politics, institutions, arts and culture have been weaned by the experience of violence, provoked or suffered.

That is an undeniable reality that led us to understand that this total war required a broad vision of peace, which in our Government we have called total peace. This total peace seeks to overcome fragmentary peace by recognizing the achievements and progress of previous agreements, including the peace agreement. Total peace is the means that will allow us to reach historically excluded and marginalized territories in order to develop actions for social justice, material equality — actions that allow us to care for the territory as a living space and to combat climate change. Our ability to advance total peace will depend on our commitment to equality, equity, social justice, gender justice and, in general, the entrenching of democracy.

We thank the Security Council for unanimously extending the mandate of the Verification Mission on rural reform and the ethnic chapter, which is an international endorsement of our commitment. However, we urge the United Nations to continue supporting the Government's dialogue efforts with other actors in order to achieve total peace.

Finally, I would like to propose and invite the Council to hold a meeting in Colombia in order to support peace from the territories and to learn on the ground about the challenges we face on a daily basis. It is those challenges that encourage us to continue working for the real, lasting and sustainable peace that will lead all Colombians to live with love and joy. Together we will make dignity a habit, because we deserve to live a good life, and we wish to make Colombia a global leader of life.

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

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

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.