



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9303rd meeting

Thursday, 13 April 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation)

Members:

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| Albania | Mr. Hoxha |
| Brazil | Mr. Costa Filho |
| China | Mr. Geng Shuang |
| Ecuador | Mr. Pérez Loose |
| France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| Gabon | Mr. Biang |
| Ghana | Mr. Agyeman |
| Japan | Mrs. Shino |
| Malta | Ms. Gatt |
| Mozambique | Mr. Fernandes |
| Switzerland | Mrs. Baeriswyl |
| United Arab Emirates | Mrs. Alhefeiti |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| United States of America | Mr. DeLaurentis |

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/222)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/222)

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

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Mr. Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, President of the Comunes party.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/222, 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*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to present the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/222) on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and to inform the Security Council about important developments related to the consolidation of peace in the country.

As always, it is a pleasure to be in the company of Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán. I take this opportunity to thank him and, through him, the Government of Colombia for the continued collaboration with the Mission and with the United Nations in general.

I am also honoured to be in the presence of Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, former Commander of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), a signatory party to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and now President of the Comunes political party. Mr. Londoño's leadership in the transition from war to peace has been, and will continue to be, fundamental. His participation today is certainly testimony of the commitment of thousands of former combatants to the Final Agreement. I am pleased that today's meeting provides a first opportunity for the Council to hear directly from both signatory parties about the current status of implementation.

The recent meeting between President Gustavo Petro Urrego and Mr. Londoño Echeverri in Bogotá, as well as their joint visit to the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Mesetas, in the Meta department, in the wake of a serious threat by an illegal armed group against dozens of former combatants and their families, are an example of how the parties can work together to address the multiple challenges facing the process and to advance implementation. I had the opportunity to be part of that visit and to hear at first-hand the concerns of men and women in the reintegration process and witness their constructive dialogue with the authorities.

I am glad to report that, during the visit — the first one by President Petro Urrego to one of those areas — the President announced several measures to strengthen the reintegration process and security, as well as to expedite the implementation of the agreement more broadly.

While I regret that that group of former combatants had to leave the area where they invested so much effort and work into their reintegration into civilian life, it is positive that an orderly relocation plan to a new location with greater security and access to productive land was agreed upon for them and their families. Members can rest assured that the Mission will continue to support former combatants and their families and to monitor progress on the announced measures. The security of

former FARC-EP combatants and the protection of social leaders is, and will continue to be, our top priority.

(spoke in English)

The situations I described to begin this briefing are an illustration of one of the key themes of the Secretary-General's latest report — that is, the critical importance of both aspects of the “total peace” policy put forth by the current Government — on the one hand, the core task of fully implementing the Final Agreement and, on the other, its efforts through dialogue, however challenging that may be, to reduce the levels of violence by other illegal armed groups so as to expand the scope of peace in the country.

The two aims have become inextricably linked. It is hard to envision either fully succeeding without the other, given the realities on the ground in many of the conflict-affected areas where violence by remaining armed groups is a major obstacle to the implementation of the Final Agreement, and where insufficient implementation also fuels the conditions for that violence.

In recent days, the Government has made clear, through additional actions, its commitment to the Final Agreement. An important example of that is its decision to establish an office headed by a high-level official, within the presidency, tasked solely with looking after the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. The President also announced plans to cut through legal and bureaucratic impediments to implementation and to involve a whole-of-cabinet approach to complying with the agreement.

This is the first time the report of the Secretary-General includes matters related to the comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement as part of the mandate entrusted to the Mission by the Council. Those provisions of the agreement are of enormous magnitude — from bringing much-needed infrastructure and investments to remote rural areas, to ensuring equitable access to land and redressing the specific impacts suffered by ethnic communities during the conflict.

I am therefore glad that the Mission is already cooperating with the Government and State entities, as well as mechanisms created by the peace agreement, as they work to deliver on the expectations of Colombian peasants, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. It is precisely in those rural areas and for

those vulnerable populations that we can see again the way in which fuller implementation of the agreement and dialogue processes with armed groups can be mutually reinforcing.

In acutely conflict-affected areas, such as the Pacific coast, progress on provisions of the agreement aimed at increasing the State's presence and at providing development opportunities to historically neglected communities can help address the root causes of the conflict, while steps towards de-escalation through dialogue can contribute to reducing violence, thereby enabling better conditions for implementation.

(spoke in Spanish)

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) continues to move forward in its essential mandate of investigating and sanctioning crimes committed by all parties during the conflict. As State entities prepare to implement the first sentences themselves, the trial phase has begun in cases involving former FARC-EP commanders, members of the public security forces and civilian third parties.

Recently, the fundamental role of the truth about what happened during the conflict was highlighted in a powerful act of reconciliation between Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri and retired Army Colonel Luis Fernando Borja, who is appearing before the SJP within Case 03 so-called “false positives”. During a gathering with students at a university in Bogotá, both described the stories that led them from being part of the armed conflict to the path of peace on which they walk today; expressed their desire that the acknowledgement of their responsibilities contribute to the reparation of victims, reconciliation and non-repetition; and invited youth present to understand the value of peace built on truth and justice.

Also with regard to the transitional justice process, civil society organizations, particularly those of women, LGBTQI persons and victims, continue to insist on the prompt opening by the SJP of Case 11, on sexual and gender-based violence. Undoubtedly, the decision announced last year by the Jurisdiction to investigate those serious crimes, which the Council took note of in its 22 October 2022 press statement (SC/15063), is a step in the right direction. I hope that, as it already does in other cases, the SJP will soon be able to open this case and work to honour the rights of the victims.

Advocacy by women's organizations has also been palpable in the process of designing the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. I am pleased to report that, under the leadership of the Government, a series of regional forums have begun for the development of the action plan, with the participation of women leaders from all over the country, including women former combatants.

I would like to conclude by referring to the ongoing peace dialogue processes. As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report, negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) continue to advance. Just as I welcome the constructive spirit that characterized the first two cycles of dialogue, held in Venezuela and Mexico, I hope that the talks during the next round, which will take place in Cuba next month, will yield additional results in terms of violence reduction and the participation of society in peacebuilding. The tragic loss of human lives in recent events serves to highlight the urgent need for the parties to make progress in negotiating a bilateral ceasefire.

Also noteworthy is the dialogue and ceasefire process under way between the Government and the group self-identified as Central High Command-FARC. After six decades of armed conflict, an environment conducive to peace will not be created through more bloodshed among Colombians, quite the contrary. In that regard, I urge all illegal armed actors not to waste the opportunity presented by the bold pursuit of peace through dialogue. The United Nations will continue to support every effort aimed at alleviating the impact of violence and at consolidating peace.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Šimonović.

Mr. Šimonović: On behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission, I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council. Building on the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with Colombia since 2020, the Commission encourages the Security Council to consider the following.

Continuing to show unified support to the Government of Colombia in its efforts to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

Calling for broad international support, including via the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the United Nations country team, the multi-partner trust fund and the Peacebuilding Fund, for the Government's commitment to implement all chapters of the Final Agreement.

Welcoming the revitalized cooperation between the signatory parties in overcoming challenges in the implementation of the Final Agreement, including through the renewed use of the implementation architecture.

Encouraging the full and timely implementation of the ethnic provisions across the peace agreement including as it relates to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.

Showing particular support for the Government's efforts to implement the development programmes with a territorial focus and the comprehensive rural reform of the Final Agreement, which are key to reinforcing State presence in conflict affected areas and to enable more equal access to land for rural and conflict-affected populations, including rural women and former combatants.

Supporting the Government with the socioeconomic reintegration of former combatants as a key element for sustainable peace in Colombia.

Commending the Government of Colombia for the progress made towards the national development plan which includes peace as one of its cross-cutting elements and highlights the centrality of the Final Agreement to achieve the plan.

Stressing the continued urgency of ensuring the security and protection of former combatants, social leaders and communities, including the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, who continue to be the victims of violence in areas still affected by conflict, the presence of illegal armed groups and limited state presence.

Closely following up with the Government on measures taken to provide protection for young community members and leaders to ensure their full and effective participation in relevant political processes and to support their peacebuilding efforts, as well as to prevent the recruitment of young people to illegal groupings.

Reiterating the importance of the role of Colombian women and the centrality of their full, equal and meaningful participation in peacebuilding, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2023/222).

Expressing full support for the efforts of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to advance the goal of the agreement to uphold victims' rights in Colombia and for the work under way to follow up on the recommendations of the Truth Commission.

The Peacebuilding Commission reiterates its commitment to supporting the Government of Colombia and its peoples in their efforts to build peace and share their unique experiences in peacebuilding with the Commission.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Londoño Echeverri.

Mr. Londoño Echeverri (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Council today. I am Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri. In 1976, when I was 17 years old, I voluntarily joined the ranks of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). At 57 years old, as Commander of that guerrilla group, I signed the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace with the Colombian State.

At the beginning of the Havana talks, the two high contracting parties proceeded from the idea that the social and armed conflict, which had been going on for more than 50 years, was due to objective causes that needed to be resolved. They included the inequitable distribution of landownership, the exclusion of the farming population and the underdevelopment of rural communities.

The first point of the peace agreement, aimed at finding a civilized solution to the country's scandalous concentration of rural property, provided for the creation of a Land Fund in the hands of the State, initially consisting of 3 million hectares, to be distributed over a period of 12 years to those most in need of land and willing to work it. Today, more than six years after the signing of the agreement, the official figures show that only 251,122 hectares have been allocated since the creation of the Fund — barely 8.37 per cent. The only coherent explanation is the lack of political will demonstrated by the previous Government, which was

characterized by its opposition to the implementation of the agreement. For the same reason, barely 32 per cent of the 7 million hectares that were promised have been formalized, while the subsidies and credits promised for access to land were merely sketched out in regulations without any genuine design or planning that would make them feasible.

Regarding the other two major components of the first point of the agreement — national plans for comprehensive rural reform and development based on a territorial approach, which were aimed at reducing rural poverty by 50 per cent in 15 years — it must be said that their effective implementation has been inadequate. We once again saw a lack of political will on the part of the Duque Márquez Administration, as well as insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, limited implementation and a high risk of corruption. We have also seen reports recently that State officials misappropriated more than COL\$500 billion that the Órganos colegiados de administración y decisión-Paz mechanism approved for such plans.

As for the second point of the agreement, on political participation, the most significant progress made was the final approval of the statute guaranteeing the exercise of opposition and the special transitory circumscriptions of peace. However, there have been major delays in the implementation of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics as a result of the insufficient resources allocated to it. While it was part of the regulations, along with its respective bodies, it was never put into operation. The previous Government did nothing to create a closed-circuit television channel for parties and social organizations, nor did it bother to make the regulatory adjustments that would make that possible.

The former FARC fully complied with the agreement's third point on ending the conflict. We laid down our arms and became a political party, in addition to appearing without delay before the justice and truth mechanisms contemplated in the fifth point. We have delivered the truth in innumerable cases; we have begged for forgiveness time and again from victims; and we have contributed to providing reparations and the principle of non-repetition in a decisive manner. We await the first convictions by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which should take place within the framework of what was agreed in the fifth point of the agreement, just as we recognize the merits of the Final Report of the

Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition.

The dissident groups that took up arms again represent a minuscule percentage of those of us who signed the agreement. They were reconstituted as a result of renewed recruitment efforts in rural areas, and their activities leave much to be desired both morally and politically. The State never fulfilled its commitment to occupy the regions abandoned by the former FARC after its members laid down their arms, thereby facilitating the strengthening of various criminal groups in those areas.

There is a blatant lack of protection for social leaders in our country, who are constantly being assassinated by those groups, just as we peace signatories are also falling victim — and that constitutes a flagrant violation of the guarantees for life and security envisioned in the third point of the agreement. The same is true of the forced displacements and constant threats that have led to the destruction of various spaces approved for reintegration efforts. More than 350 signatories to the peace agreement have been murdered with impunity since its signing. Putting an end to the paramilitary successor organizations remains merely an aspiration, despite what was agreed in Havana. Work is only just beginning on the development of the strategic security and protection plan approved in the agreement, as well as on the comprehensive programme of protection for individuals participating in the reintegration process referred to in its third point.

The situation of signatories is also critical in terms of land to work on and productive projects that guarantee their full reintegration into society, while basic needs such as housing and education are not being met even in the long term. These circumstances have resulted in the creation of a diaspora of signatories in various regions of the country, making it difficult for them to mobilize in favour of the agreement's implementation and reinforcing a sense of discouragement and undermining the credibility of the agreement itself and related mechanisms.

The previous Government earmarked a pitiful amount of resources for the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops provided for in the fourth point, as well as to the pillars of the solution to the issue of narcotics production and commercialization and the prevention of narcotics consumption and public health. That meant that the

agreed policy on eradicating illicit crops from the Colombian countryside — a cross-cutting aspect of the comprehensive rural reform in the first point of the peace agreement — was left unimplemented.

Fortunately for us and for the country, the pent-up discontent with the economic and social situation in Colombia — in addition to the clamour for the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement — was expressed en masse and with great force during the social uprisings in 2019 and 2021. That finally led to an electoral victory for progressive and peace-loving forces in the 2022 elections, in which Gustavo Petro Urrego was elected President. Mr. Petro Urrego came with a clear position in favour of political and social transformation, including a promise to fully implement the Final Agreement, as well as his policy of “total peace”, which is aimed at creating conditions conducive to full democracy and social justice in Colombia. The first step in that direction is the dialogue with the former guerrillas of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, the dissident groups of the Havana agreement and other armed groups. We support such an effort, although we believe that it must take into account the dialogue and the agreement with us more meaningfully. In our modest view, we would like to reaffirm that the agreement must form the foundation of all negotiations. The armed groups must acknowledge that the current Government is democratic and progressive and that their struggle against it is senseless. The ceasefire should therefore be initiated by them.

We are aware that the set of reforms required in our country, of which those included in the Final Peace Agreement constitute only one chapter, represent an enormous challenge, especially in view of the declared opposition of the interests and parties that supported the previous Government and are determined to prevent the minimum level of transition for the benefit of the majority. To a great extent, that explains the pace that President Petro Urrego is trying to set in implementing the Havana agreement. We have faith in his word, and we look forward to decisive and comprehensive action to that end. We have met on several occasions, and things are starting to happen.

We have acknowledged time and again that, if it had not been for the support of the international community, in particular the United Nations, the Security Council and United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which tirelessly pushed the Government of Iván Duque Márquez to take the peace agreement seriously and to

implement several of its provisions, the effort to reach a political solution to the confrontation with us might have failed. That is why we have come full of hope to this Security Council meeting today. We know that the Council's support for the current Government in its efforts to fully comply with the agreement will have multiplier effects far greater than in the recent past.

Petro Urrego has established the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and has defined the role of its bodies dedicated to ethnic and gender issues and committed to financing them. He has delivered more than 681,000 hectares of land and formalized many other such agreements. He meets with the President and the leadership of the Comunes party, and he visited the Mariana Páez territorial area for training and reintegration with a view to guaranteeing the security of its population. We hope that the National Commission on Security Guarantees will be effectively operationalized and that the 187 signatories who remain in prison — some of them abroad — will be released. He has also made resources available to ensure the implementation of the national development plan, which had been entirely neglected by the previous Government.

The fact that he had to withdraw his plan for political reform as a subject of debate in Congress, owing to opposition parties' distortion of its democratic intent, demonstrates the resistance that the implementation of the political participation foreseen in the agreement still encounters. With the support of the Council, the situation will be more bearable. President Petro Urrego has proposed the purchase of 3 million hectares from cattle ranchers for the Land Fund, which represents an astronomical sum of money. Perhaps the international community can do its part in bringing that to fruition. Reintegrated persons are in urgent need of land for sustainable and productive work and housing, in both rural and urban areas. But that is predicated on a basic condition, namely, that their lives, security and stability be guaranteed as promised by the State in chapters 2 and 3 of the agreement. For us, it is of the utmost importance that the Security Council exercise its influence to ensure the fulfilment of that condition through the mechanisms adopted at the negotiation table.

Today we are aware more than ever of the enormous difficulties involved in building peace. However, we are also convinced more than ever that the path of weapons and confrontation only leads to disaster. We

firmly believe — and that is why we support President Petro Urrego's policy of total peace — that the path of dialogue must never be abandoned. It is the only one that can lead us to becoming a civilized society. Of all the humankind's choices, the worst is war. Only peace and the path of dialogue will improve our lives.

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

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu, Mr. Šimonović and Mr. Londoño Echeverri, and I welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán to this meeting.

I would like to make three points.

First, I would like to recognize President Petro Urrego's restated commitment to putting the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement at the heart of his Government's approach to building sustainable peace. We welcome the strengthened peace architecture in Colombia, including the recent mandate extension of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

Secondly, violence and weak State presence in many areas of the country continue to have a serious impact on the daily lives of too many Colombians, particularly in rural, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities. It also frustrates the implementation of many aspects of the peace agreement, including the safety of former combatants. The Government's efforts to secure a reduction in violence across the country, including over the course of the upcoming round of talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, are therefore crucial. In that context, we thank Foreign Minister Leyva Durán for his recent letter (S/2023/112, annex) inviting the Security Council to consider an expanded role for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and we look forward to the Secretary-General's advice on possible outcomes. It is also clear that much of the ongoing violence is driven by criminality, in particular the drug trade. It is essential that we bear down together on those who are profiting from misery and destruction. We look forward to working with the Colombian authorities to tackle that shared problem with renewed vigour.

Thirdly, with regard to the issue of rural reform, we welcome the progress made on the restitution of land to indigenous communities and the Government's ambition to further expand access to land. We urge further momentum in its implementation, including through the agreement and delivery of the national development plan and the provision of support to former combatants living outside reintegration areas. We commend wider reintegration efforts, including to promote greater political participation.

Colombia remains an example to the world of the transformative power of peace, but realizing the full benefits of the peace agreement and securing sustainable peace across the country will require continued investment. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Colombia through that process.

Mr. Biang (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Mozambique, Ghana, and my own country, Gabon.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, and Mr. Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri for their enlightening briefings. We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mozambique, Ghana and Gabon recognize the determination and efforts undertaken by President Gustavo Petro Urrego, his Government and the Colombian people, in line with the 2016 Colombia Peace Accord, to build peace and stability in the country after decades of armed conflict. We reaffirm our full support for the national reconciliation process and the building of lasting peace in Colombia.

The information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/222) over the last three months is very encouraging and commendable, especially with regard to the Government's actions promoting inclusive dialogue through the involvement of the Colombian society, including communities affected by the conflict, women's organizations, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, and former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). In this regard, we welcome the introduction in Congress of the proposed National Development Plan for the period

2022–2026 as well as the budget of \$10.7 billion for its implementation, reflecting such priorities as human security, social justice, climate action, the fight against inequality and the total peace policy.

We also welcome the agreement reached between the Colombian Government and the former FARC-EP, to extend, for a period of four years, the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. The formal appointment of senior officials by the Government as its representatives before the Commission reflects the importance it attaches to this body in the search for lasting peace and stability.

The improvement of living conditions for former fighters and their families is a necessary component of a successful reintegration programme for these individuals. In this regard, we welcome the approval of 128 collective projects by the National Reintegration Council, of which 118 received financial support benefiting 3,898 former combatants, and the approval of 5,327 individual projects involving 6,419 former combatants.

We commend the actions undertaken by President Petro Urrego in his total peace policy, by engaging various armed groups in peace talks. We note with satisfaction the outcome of the second round of peace negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) on 10 March, in Mexico City. The A3 encourages the parties to maintain the same level of commitment with a view to holding the third round of negotiations, to take place this month in Cuba. We also support the Colombian Government's request to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission to include monitoring and verification of future agreements with other armed groups.

Despite the aforementioned efforts made by the Colombian Government, there remain challenges to the peace process. Mozambique, Ghana and Gabon regret and condemn the attack perpetrated by the ELN on 29 March 2023, which resulted in the death of nine Colombian soldiers. We strongly encourage all parties involved to give the negotiation process their full attention and refrain from taking any measures that could undermine efforts to maintain peace and stability. We encourage the Colombian Government to continue its efforts in search of a ceasefire and put an

end to hostilities through negotiation, for the benefit of the good people of Colombia.

The successful implementation of the ethnic chapter and the comprehensive rural reform are fundamental to consolidating peace and resolving issues of inequality and exclusion, which mainly affect indigenous Afro-descendent communities. On the ethnic chapter, the report indicates that the implementation rate of its provisions is 44 per cent compared to the average 60 per cent rate of the provisions of the Final Agreement overall. In this context, we encourage the continued work of the Office of Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez, Vice-President, together with the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement, aimed at improving the implementation of the ethnic chapter with a view to facilitating and improving the social integration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

The issue of rural reform is of utmost importance in building a sustainable peace and an egalitarian society. We therefore welcome the proposed National Development Plan, including the significant budget allocation thereto. We also welcome the legal actions undertaken for the restitution of more than 1 million hectares of land to the five prioritized territories included under the ethnic chapter in Chocó, Guaviare, Nariño and Córdoba.

Mozambique, Ghana and Gabon note with concern the persistent security challenges, especially in regions historically affected by limitations on the presence of the State, with a record of violence that mostly affects indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The presence of State institutions in these regions is critical to the effectiveness and success of ongoing attempts to dismantle criminal organizations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our full support for the Government of Colombia in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We also call on the international community, the United Nations and their partners to sustain their political and financial backing of the Colombian Government as it strives to bring about peace and stability across the country.

We extend our support for the Verification Mission and the Special Representative in their task of monitoring the fulfilment of the commitments of the Peace Agreement, through their engagement with various actors in Colombian society.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Mr. Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri for their briefings, as well as Ambassador Šimonović, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his valuable briefing. I also extend a warm welcome to the Colombian Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán.

The peace process in Colombia demonstrates once again that it is vital to have ownership and commitment by all stakeholders. Japan commends the focused implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace as well as active dialogues with non-signatory groups in the context of the total peace policy. In particular, Japan welcomes the ongoing discussion in the peace talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, including commitments for the next round of ceasefire negotiations. We encourage all parties to constructively engage in the peace process through dialogue, without violence. I agree that only peace will improve people's lives.

Japan appreciates the good offices and work of Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in supporting Colombia's efforts. It is important to strengthen coordination among stakeholders and cooperation between the United Nations agencies involved and other relevant actors. Japan takes note of the Colombian Foreign Minister's request to the Council regarding the possible expansion of the Mission's mandate to support efforts in the context of the "total peace" policy. We look forward to receiving recommendations and options from the Secretary-General on the possible role that the United Nations could play in that regard and to engaging constructively with our fellow Council members on the best way forward.

As was highlighted by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, comprehensive rural reform and the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially based on inclusivity and the principle of human security, are vital to the consolidation of peace. Japan encourages the Mission to accelerate its support with its expanded mandate.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made, Japan remains concerned about the level of violence in Colombia. In order to curb the incidence of violence, it

will be essential to establish and implement appropriate security and justice mechanisms. In that regard, we encourage the Colombian Government, with support from the Verification Mission, to increase its efforts to enhance coordination on security guarantees and the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Japan stresses the importance of ensuring that those efforts have the interests of all Colombians, including Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, social leaders and former combatants who have joined the peace process, at their centre. A people-centred, inclusive and cooperative approach, with the engagement of women, young people and people in vulnerable situations, is fundamental to long-lasting peace and a resilient society.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting the peace process and peacebuilding efforts in Colombia.

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, for his informative briefing and the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the Verification Mission (S/2023/222), which includes elements on the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter. We welcome the presence here today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán.

We listened attentively to the briefers today and are also grateful for the participation of Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, in today's meeting. His presence is of particular importance as Chair of the advisory body to the Council tasked with supporting countries in situations of conflict, or, like Colombia, in the process of transitioning to peace. Ecuador supports the peacebuilding efforts in Colombia and considers most timely the renewed commitment of the Government to attacking the root causes of the conflict and addressing the problems of inequality, exclusion and marginalization that undermine the social fabric and fuel spirals of violence. Ecuador supports all actions that contribute to the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. In that regard, I would like to bring up three important points.

First, Ecuador recognizes the relevance of the national development plan presented by the Colombian Government, which positions rural reform as a priority. Enabling more equitable and broader access to land

for the population affected by the conflict is vital to continuing to lay a path to peace.

Secondly, the successful reintegration of ex-combatants is an essential part of a stable and lasting peace. In that connection, I welcome the approval of new collective projects aimed at their socioeconomic reintegration. We call for all such efforts to include greater access to the benefits of reintegration for women ex-combatants and their active participation in decision-making as a priority on the agenda.

Thirdly, my delegation underlines the importance of the Colombian State's commitment to the transitional justice process. Actions that promote better coordination between the Government and the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition are essential to eliminating impunity and fostering confidence in justice, especially for all victims of the conflict, as well as the implementation of restorative sentences.

Ecuador believes firmly that a comprehensive and lasting peace will be possible only through dialogue. For that reason, recent acts of violence by groups with whom dialogue is precisely what is being sought are a cause for concern. That is why international support for peace in Colombia through the Security Council must be based on a greater and more focused effort to establish full control over its territory and curb illegal forces fuelled by acts outside the law and the agreements in place. They not only affect the country's internal circumstances but are also having an increasingly negative impact on its neighbours, placing the peace of inhabitants near the borders at risk.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Colombian Government in its dialogues with other armed groups and support the decision to suspend bilateral ceasefire declarations where necessary. I want to reiterate the need for ceasefire agreements and negotiations to be conducted in good faith, as it must be ensured that no actors view them as a consent that weakens the presence of the State to the detriment of the population's well-being and risks contributing to the proliferation of illicit activities. Ecuador takes note of Mr. Leyva Durán's request of 14 February in which he asks that consideration be given to expanding the role of the Mission, with the objective of accompanying the dialogue and ceasefire processes with other groups. For my delegation, the process of establishing the recommendations and options for the possible wider

role of the United Nations Verification Mission, as well as the implications for its configuration, should be carried out with the broad and inclusive participation of stakeholders and taking into account the principles of the Final Agreement.

In conclusion, I want to once again express Ecuador's full support for the peace process in Colombia and for the full implementation of the Final Agreement. Here I would like to echo the words of the Secretary-General in his report in recognizing the leading role of Colombian women as peacebuilders and agents of justice and reconciliation.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing today and the crucial work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I also thank Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Mr. Londoño Echeverri for their briefings, and I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia to this meeting.

Since our previous meeting in January (see S/PV.9240), Colombia has continued to demonstrate steadfast determination on its journey to sustainable peace. The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/222) highlights the Colombian Government's continuing commitment to the implementation of its "total peace" policy. Malta commends the steps taken by the Government in that regard and underscores that the focused implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace across all its sections must remain at the core of its efforts for peace. We welcome the Colombian Government's commitment to dialogue and ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation. We were pleased to see the progress made on key topics at the recent peace talks held in Mexico and hope that the momentum can continue at the next round of negotiations.

Despite the positive steps, it is regrettable that Colombia continues to suffer from high levels of violence. Malta strongly condemns the attacks that killed 10 Government soldiers and left several injured in the state of Norte de Santander on 29 March. Violent attacks against, and killings and abductions of, social leaders and human rights defenders also remain a major concern. The increase in violence against women leaders is unacceptable, and more must be done to prioritize the protection of civilians. Any violence directed against former combatants who remain committed

to transitioning to civilian life is also unacceptable. Resources must be made available to provide for the security and support that they require.

Malta is seriously concerned about the increased protection risks faced by Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people, who continue to be disproportionately affected by humanitarian emergencies involving mass displacement and confinement. More than 25,000 people from those communities have been recently displaced or forcibly confined, owing to violence in the first three months of 2023 alone. The several reports of child recruitment by illegal armed groups, especially among Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children, is utterly reprehensible. Malta encourages the Government to continue strengthening its efforts for the protection of children in the implementation of its "total peace" policy. Malta is also deeply concerned about all the forcibly missing and disappeared persons in Colombia, whose number is estimated at more than 100,000. Their families deserve answers on the fate of their loved ones. Attention must continue to be paid to that crucial topic, and resources must be made available to strengthen the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, including by guaranteeing its access to the information that is essential for its work.

Malta commends the Government's actions to implement comprehensive rural reform and the steps taken to advance the implementation of the ethnic chapter across the Final Agreement. We strongly support Colombia's transitional justice system and welcome the progress being made to provide truth, justice and reparations to victims on all sides of the armed conflict, with a view to guaranteeing non-repetition. All actors must meaningfully contribute to the effort to address the needs of victims. Malta is also pleased to note the progress made in the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, with the issuance of restorative sentences expected in the coming months. We support the call of women's and LGBTI organizations to open Case 11, on sexual and gender-based violence.

Malta believes that 2023 has the potential to be a defining year for Colombia's journey towards achieving sustainable peace. We are confident that, with the continued commitment of the Colombian people and the Government, the international community and the Council, we can be optimistic for Colombia's bright future.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and the President of the Comunes party for their first-hand accounts. I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, to this meeting.

The search for peace must involve dialogue. That is why we welcome the conclusion of the second round of negotiations held in Mexico City with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We hope that the negotiations will lead to a lasting ceasefire. France also welcomes the efforts made by the Colombian authorities to consolidate the ceasefires under way with several armed groups. We hope that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will be able to play a timely role in monitoring the implementation of the various commitments in order to reduce the violence. Indeed, France remains extremely concerned about the current level of violence affecting certain regions of Colombia. We strongly condemn the recent attacks on Colombian law enforcement. We recall that the security guarantees remain insufficient for former combatants, human rights defenders and civil society representatives.

France welcomes the Government's commitment to land access and rural reform. The presentation of the national development plan to the Congress presents an opportunity to move forward on the issue by allocating the required funding. France also welcomes the Government's prioritization of the implementation of the ethnic chapters of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We encourage the Government to pursue that path in order to offer new viable socioeconomic opportunities to the populations that have suffered from the conflict. Finally, France welcomes the steady progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The start of the trial phase, which opens the way for restorative sentencing and a new chapter for reconciliation, must also be commended.

Colombia is an example for the international community. The Final Agreement is a historic achievement, and the four-year extension of the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement is an extremely important step. We support the Colombian authorities in their efforts

to fully implement the Final Agreement and in the discussions opened within the framework of the policy of "total peace". Of course, there is still a long way to go, as well as many challenges. But Colombia is on the right track, and France stands ready to provide it with its full support.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Leyva Durán. His presence attests to the continued cooperation between Colombia and the Security Council. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu and the Permanent Representative of Croatia, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. My thanks also go to Mr. Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri for his statement.

For more than 20 years, Switzerland has actively supported efforts to achieve lasting peace in Colombia, including through citizen participation and dealing with the past. We are aware that building lasting peace is rarely a linear process, and we therefore welcome the renewed commitment of the parties to advance the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. As a partner State in the peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, we commend the progress made in the second round of negotiations and highlight the Colombian Government's efforts to pursue dialogue with all major actors and armed groups. Following the recent violence, we call on all armed actors to keep the channels of dialogue open and step up efforts to reach ceasefire agreements and end hostilities.

Switzerland underscores the outstanding work and adaptability of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in carrying out its mandate, as well as its close cooperation with all stakeholders. For the first time since the expansion of the Mission's mandate, the Security Council has received a comprehensive progress report (S/2023/222), including with regard to the implementation of the rural reform and the ethnic chapters of the Final Agreement. I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, violence directed against social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants remains alarming. The conflict-related violence and the resulting displacement and confinement of civilians, most of

whom are of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous origin, require humanitarian and rapid de-escalation measures. Switzerland supports the Secretary-General's call for increased State presence in conflict-affected regions to combat violence. Furthermore, the widespread use of explosive devices by non-State armed groups and their humanitarian consequences remain a cause for concern. Switzerland condemns the use of anti-personnel mines, which disproportionately affect civilians. As part of our comprehensive mine action programme, we support Humanicemos Desminado Humanitario, an organization founded by former combatants, which exemplifies the reintegration and confidence-building efforts achieved through the implementation of the Final Agreement.

Secondly, Switzerland welcomes the commencement by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace of the eleventh and final case on sexual and gender-based violence, thanks in part to the continued advocacy of civil society. The participatory development of recommendations on reparations underscores the victim-centred approach in the transitional justice process in Colombia. In preparation for the first reparations awards by the Special Jurisdiction, it is essential that their future implementation be ensured so as to respect the rights of the victims. In this regard, Switzerland calls for the optimization of institutional coordination and the allocation of funds across the system as a whole, in order to ensure adequate capacity for implementation, particularly of the Truth Commission's recommendations. Improving information-sharing to advance the search for missing persons is also necessary.

Finally, Switzerland hopes that the Security Council can once again show unity by responding to Colombia's call to expand the Verification Mission's mandate to include ceasefire monitoring. Should that be the case, Switzerland stands ready, based on its long-standing experience, to support such efforts. We reiterate our full support for the full implementation of the Peace Agreement and remain ready to assist efforts in favour of dialogue towards a lasting peace.

I wish to conclude with words from the National Centre of Historical Memory in Bogota:

(spoke in Spanish)

“Recognizing, making visible, dignifying and humanizing the victims are commitments inherent

in the right to truth and reparation, and in the State's duty to remember them.”

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Special Representative, Mr. Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing and for his efforts and those of his team in supporting peace in Colombia. I also thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for his briefing. We also listened carefully to Mr. Londoño Echeverri's briefing. We welcome the participation today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Leyva Durán, and commend the Government's continued efforts aimed at implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, including rural reforms and the ethnic chapter, as well as devising innovative and holistic approaches to ensure that the perspectives of various stakeholders in Colombia are taken into account.

We also welcome continued progress in the preparation of the National Development Plan, in particular its focus on climate action and tackling social inequality. However, we remain concerned over the persistent violence and threats against civilians, including former combatants and community leaders. In this regard, it is important to note that implementing the security guarantees of the Final Agreement is one of the key tools to providing the necessary protection for Colombians. We are all aware that the full implementation of the Final Agreement along with the adoption of measures to stop violence in the country are two necessary objectives for achieving sustained peace and security in Colombia. Each objective reinforces the other in efforts to achieve the desired peace.

In that context, we believe that the progress made in the dialogue and the various peace processes is encouraging. But for those efforts to be successful, we reiterate that it is essential that all hostilities cease. We therefore look forward to the next round of peace talks in Cuba, as they have the potential to contribute to further consolidating peace in Colombia. The Secretary-General's recommendations on any potential role of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will also be helpful in supporting such efforts.

We stress that strengthening reconciliation among communities in Colombia requires continued focus on local initiatives for reintegration and other locally led initiatives, and that the perspectives of those

directly affected by violence in Colombia are taken into consideration.

It is also important to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and the inclusion of youth in such initiatives as their role is fundamental in the peacebuilding process, conflict resolution and reintegration. The nearly 15 per cent increase in participation of female former combatants in productive projects in a year, as reported by the Secretary-General (S/2023/222), is a step in the right direction. Undoubtedly, the progress made across the different components of the comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition continues to lay the necessary groundwork for holistic reconciliation and effective accountability in Colombia, including in the cases being considered under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates underscores its full support for the Government and the people of Colombia in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace, as well as for the important role of the United Nations Verification Mission in making that objective a reality.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his continued work and for his update on the developments in the country. I thank Ambassador Šimonović for his thoughts and recommendations as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. I also thank Mr. Londoño Echeverri for his insights. His participation is beyond symbolic, as it represents the true nature and the depth of the commitment to peace in Colombia.

There is no denying that Colombia and its people have faced colossal challenges on their path to peace. Yet despite the immense difficulties, peace has prevailed. Colombia has shown convincingly that where there is a will, there is a way. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the positive developments during the last seven years are the result of the unwavering efforts of various stakeholders, the Government and former combatants, and represent the very peace dividend the Colombian people deserve. These years of building peace have shown that while conflict hits the most vulnerable hardest, peace, in contrast, benefits all. Therefore, making everyone a direct beneficiary of the

peace process is the best guarantee for a long-lasting and irreversible peace for the future.

We commend the Colombian Government for — and the presence of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán in the Council Chamber today is further testimony of — its strong anchoring in the agenda for total peace of its commitment to the agenda's full implementation, leading to reconciliation, which is the right way — the only way — to ensure lasting peace in Colombia. The four-year extension of the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement is another testament to this commitment.

Constructive dialogue continues to be paramount in advancing the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The ongoing negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and other armed groups are very encouraging signs of progress. The establishment of ceasefires is of great importance, and, if properly implemented, as we hope and urge for, that will not only reduce violence, but also contribute to, establish and consolidate trust, which is the first and most important element in reaching agreement on sustainable peace.

As we all know, peace is never an easy or a straight path, and challenges can always rise on the way forward. There is still much work to be done, particularly in improving security in conflict-affected areas through dialogue with justice, by advancing forward-looking strategies and through concrete life-changing actions to protect vulnerable communities and populations. All efforts must be made to prevent violence from standing in the way of peace. In this respect, Albania supports the proposed National Development Plan and the prioritization being given to comprehensive rural reform, a key component in this process. The steps taken so far in comprehensive rural reform and the progress made in the ethnic chapter demonstrate a true commitment to peace, and they deserve praise and support.

We commend the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia with respect to rural reform as part of its expanded mandate, and we will support any proposal for expansion of its mandate to include a ceasefire verification role.

Transitional justice plays a vital role in achieving peace, and we support the efforts of the Special

Jurisdiction for Peace to address the conditions faced by individuals within its purview, including their security. All actors involved must play their part in this process in order to ensure accountability for crimes and justice for victims; it is the only secure path towards reconciliation.

Colombia and Colombians have been through too much violence for too long. The dialogue and peace process have opened a new chapter, making the country a success story, thanks to its sustainable investment in a decent life with rights and dignity for all.

(spoke in Spanish)

In conclusion, Albania remains steadfast in its support for Colombia and the Colombian people in their efforts to build “total peace” and a shared future.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil) *(spoke in Spanish)*: It is an honour for me and 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. I thank the briefers for their presentations and welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán to the Council.

Colombia has demonstrated exceptional commitment and determination in its quest for reconciliation and its efforts to build a lasting peace. Brazil firmly believes in the country’s capacity and political will to overcome the challenges to the full implementation of the peace agreement and consolidate peace across its territory. We are pleased to note the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreement, especially with regard to rural reform, the political participation of ex-combatants and attention to the victims of the conflict. The expansion in January of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, including as regards monitoring the rural reform and ethnic chapter elements of the agreement, represents an important step towards strengthening the peace process in the country.

Brazil congratulates Mr. Petro Urrego’s Government on its efforts to seek “total peace” throughout its territory. As noted by the Secretary-General in his most recent report to the Council (S/2023/222), the additional dialogue efforts under way are both welcome and essential to extending the benefits of peace in Colombia. The consolidation of peace depends on the full implementation of the Final Agreement and also on the capacity of the authorities to curb the violence

that continues to be perpetrated by other armed groups and that disproportionately affects Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples, women and the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In the context of efforts seeking to build an inclusive and sustainable peace, as a guarantor country Brazil reaffirms its commitment to supporting the dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We welcome the results of the second round of negotiations and the prospects for progress towards an agreement achieved in Mexico. It is with deep regret, however, that we deplore the persistent trends resulting in new tragedies. We recall, with deep respect and solidarity, Colombia’s national day of remembrance and solidarity with victims of the conflict, marked on 9 April. We hope that the common goal of the parties at the negotiating table is putting a definitive end to the creation of new victims and achieving peace in Colombia. We therefore reiterate the importance of a constructive dialogue between the parties to create conditions of mutual trust and to encourage the belief — in Colombia and the international community — that the ceasefire, an end to the hostilities and the transformation of the country can become a reality with society’s full participation.

As we have emphasized, the comprehensive deployment of State capacities in every corner of the country’s territory, especially areas affected by conflict or historically neglected, is essential to the consolidation of peace. Progress on agrarian reform will contribute decisively to that end, as will the Colombian Congress’s approval of the national development plan, which incorporates key priorities for the implementation of the peace process. Despite the important challenges already overcome, we recognize those that lie ahead in the implementation of the peace process in Colombia. The security situation of ex-combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders continues to be a worry and efforts to guarantee their protection and prevent violence must be intensified. The full reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life depends on their access to land, housing and productive projects. We also call attention to the need to strengthen policies to address the serious problem of gender-based violence.

As we have emphasized many times, we must not forget that the Security Council’s work in Colombia is based on the expectations and requirements expressed by the Colombian Government. In that regard, Brazil is ready to study in detail the Secretary-General’s

recommendations in order to analyse how the Verification Mission can collaborate on the ceasefire agreements with various armed groups in Colombia, as the Colombian Government has requested.

Brazil reaffirms its commitment to cooperate with the Government of Colombia so that the peace achieved through its people's hard work can be consolidated and spread throughout its territory.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): Let me start by underscoring our appreciation for the vital role that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play in supporting peace in Colombia. Let me also welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán once again to the Council Chamber.

The United States remains committed to supporting Colombia as it seeks to deepen its implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The expansion of the United Nations Verification Mission's mandate to include the ethnic chapter helped to achieve that goal. As the first international accompanier of the ethnic chapter of the 2016 peace accord, the United States seeks to help Colombia promote diversity, equity and inclusion by addressing inequality and political and socioeconomic exclusion, issues that have disproportionately affected indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The presentation of President Petro Urrego's national development plan to Colombia's Congress is an important step as Colombia's leaders consider the best methods to tackle inequality. We are encouraged that the Verification Mission has already taken important steps to address the ethnic chapter and rural reform by engaging with the Ministry of Agriculture and civil-society organizations.

We take note of the Colombian Government's efforts to expand its "total peace" plan through negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, dissident groups of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and other armed groups that did not sign the peace accord in 2016. The efforts to expand peace in Colombia are laudable, but also require time and a demonstrated commitment by terrorist and illegal armed groups to abiding by any future negotiated terms. Those efforts should also recognize the importance of combating illicit drug production and avoiding impunity for acts committed by terrorist and illegal armed groups. We are encouraged that the Verification Mission reported a

reduction in killings in many rural regions of Colombia, but we note that high levels of conflict-related violence continue. Violence against indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, environmental and human rights defenders, labour leaders and women remains a concern, with the Verification Mission reporting that in some areas of the country the level of violence has increased as compared to one year ago. The United States remains supportive of efforts to help Colombia achieve a real and lasting peace. We hope that those efforts lead to a demonstrable reduction in violence from illegal armed groups.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to begin by welcoming Mr. Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu and the Permanent Representative of Croatia, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings, and I listened closely to the statement made by Mr. Londoño Echeverri, President of the Comunes party.

Since the beginning of the year, the Colombian parties have continued to work tirelessly to achieve "total peace". The Colombian Government, under the leadership of President Petro Urrego, has been fully implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and is committed to curbing violence and achieving a broader, sustainable peace through dialogue and negotiation. We appreciate all such efforts, and we support and expect all parties in Colombia to work together and make progress on the long-term stability, peace and development of the country.

China welcomes the progress made in the ceasefire negotiations among the Colombian Government, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and other armed groups. We hope that the new round of negotiations, to be held in Cuba in May, will achieve positive results and lead to the agreement of a permanent ceasefire and a political solution. Colombia cannot consolidate and build peace without the support and assistance of the international community. We hope that the countries of the region, the guarantor States and the accompanying States will continue to play an active role in promoting peace talks. The full implementation of the Final Agreement remains key to achieving peace and development, which will require sustained investment in the national development plan of the Colombian Government over the next four years. The implementation of the Final

Agreement is a key cross-cutting element. We appreciate the Colombian Government's development-for-peace approach to governance and support the increased investment of financial resources in areas such as rural reform, the reintegration of former combatants and the substitution of illicit crops.

We hope that those efforts will contribute to addressing long-term issues, such as poverty, uneven development and social injustice, and to eliminating the root causes of conflict. The United Nations country team, the Peacebuilding Commission, other entities and international partners should provide more support to that end. In his report (S/2023/222), the Secretary-General expresses concern about the grave security situation and the frequent incidents of violence in several areas of Colombia. China supports the Colombian Government in increasing the deployment of security forces to former conflict-affected areas that lack effective control, deterring violence, adopting targeted initiatives to ensure the security of former combatants and strengthening the protection of women, children and ethnic minorities.

Under the leadership of Mr. Massieu, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has done much to support the implementation of the Final Agreement. We appreciate its important contribution and support its important role in helping the Colombian Government to advance the vision of total peace and progress towards achieving lasting peace through dialogue and negotiation. China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community to continue to support the Colombian-led and Colombian-owned peace process. We look forward to even greater achievements being made by the Colombian people on their path to establishing comprehensive stability, peace and development.

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

We welcome the participation in today's discussion of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán. We are grateful for the views expressed by the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and by the Permanent Representative of Croatia, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We are sure that it was also useful for all the members of the Security Council

to hear, for the first time in this Chamber, the views of a key participant in the peace process, a representative of the former leadership of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and President of the Comunes party, Mr. Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri.

The peacebuilding process in Colombia is dynamic. We see Bogotá's efforts to comprehensively implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We see progress on rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement, which the United Nations Verification Mission was recently mandated to supervise, as well as on the reintegration of former combatants. At the same time, the key problem of guaranteeing the security of former combatants remains. The implementation of the peace agreements will undoubtedly be facilitated by the current extension of the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, as well as the first sentences handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the implementation of which will also be monitored by the United Nations.

Despite the peaceful aspirations of the Colombian authorities and all of Colombian society, the country has not seen a decrease in the level of violence. The violence has shifted from a confrontation between the State and illegal armed groups to confrontations among armed groups fighting for control of territory and drug-trafficking channels. In addition to the implementation of the Final Agreement, the Colombian Government and the international community are now focused on dialogue with the remaining armed groups, especially the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We expect that agreements between the authorities and the rebels will soon be reached, including on a ceasefire, during the next round of talks, to be held in Cuba. We understand Bogotá's desire to consolidate the gains made in dialogue with the armed groups through the verification of possible agreements by the Mission. We trust that the Secretary-General will provide the Security Council with detailed proposals on the possibility of involving the United Nations to that end. All Colombian stakeholders should be able to participate in discussions on that initiative, given the difficult peacebuilding situation.

The eventual expansion of the Mission's mandate will create many additional risks and threats that must be addressed. For example, it is important not only to

verify the bilateral ceasefire agreements between the Government forces and the illegal armed groups but also to separate the competing groups on the ground and prevent them from clashing with one another, especially in territories in which the State is either entirely absent or is unable to exercise effective control. That calls for a clear acknowledgement by the militias involved in the bilateral ceasefires of the Mission's authority and requiring them not to fire on one another.

We are convinced that the question of contacts between the United Nations and the recognized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking requires separate and serious analysis, including in consideration of the possible consequences for the Mission's credibility. We emphasize that the current multi-vector dialogue must be built on the basis of the 2016 Final Agreement and must not in any way undermine its implementation. Only the full implementation of the Final Agreement can build trust among new participants in the peace process. The series of incidents that occurred during the past month, including the suspension of the ceasefire with the Clan del Golfo and the killing of nine Colombian soldiers by ELN, demonstrate that comprehensive reconciliation will not be achieved overnight. It is encouraging that the current Colombian authorities are aware of the complexity of the task at hand and are willing to continue the painstaking work despite all the current problems. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia will continue to provide all assistance to the Colombian peace process and to the United Nations Verification Mission, led by Carlos Ruiz Massieu.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Leyva Durán (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am going to be brief because members of the Security Council have all spoken for me. It is impressive. I hear China, and it is Colombia speaking. The same thing happened to me when I heard the United States, Albania and Mozambique. This is a miracle that needs to be shared across the planet. I met Mr. Rodrigo Londoño more than 30 years ago, when he was a combatant. Today he spoke not as a member of a party, but on behalf of a contracting party to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting

Peace, an agreement that Council members may think is only 10 or 15 pages long; it is more than 300.

I had the honour — I do not know why — of participating in the negotiation and drafting of the Agreement. I was one of the six who designed the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. What I mean to say is that I am willing to sign off on every one of the paragraphs in the report of the Secretary-General that Mr. Ruiz Massieu introduced earlier (S/2023/222), which gives me great satisfaction. What, then, is the role of the Minister for Foreign Affairs? My duty is not to oversee, but rather to follow up on, the implementation of the Agreement, so that total peace is indeed achieved.

But let us return to formality. It is an honour for me to be present once again in this Chamber, even more so for me in my role as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, at a time when the world is in danger and humanity is perplexed by daily events. It is good for my homeland to be a model in such a historic moment, since what brings us together once again is the concrete proof from my homeland and from this very Chamber that dialogue and peace win, not war.

After a few years of witnessing attempts to stop the national reconciliation agreements signed between the Colombian State and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), not to say efforts to tear them up, as if they were an expression of harmful Security Council intentions, we all now know and can attest to the fact that the phoenix exists.

Blessed are those who ran the United Nations at the time when the first light of peace was born for Colombia. They wisely endorsed those agreements, and then-President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, today a Nobel Peace Prize winner, after having made a State declaration, built an impregnable wall of defence around them. This is how the international community has understood it. This is what makes this magnificent Organization a wondrous mechanism that cannot be tampered with.

Peace is the word — peace — peace underpinned by the United Nations Charter in the application of international law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law — all of which proceeds from the *jus gentium* arising from natural law, as expounded by Francisco Suárez and Hugo Grotius centuries ago, and proposed by Friedrich Fromhold

Martens, the Russian representative to the 1899 Hague Peace Conferences, when he declared:

“Until a more complete code of the laws of war is issued, the High Contracting Parties think it right to declare that in cases not included in the Regulations adopted by them, populations and belligerents remain under the protection and empire of the principles of international law, as they result from the usages established between civilized nations, from the laws of humanity and the requirements of the public conscience.”

Thus was *jus cogens* born. This notion was echoed by the International Law Commission in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. This is something I will repeat whenever and wherever I get the chance: dialogue and peace win, not war.

All of this has captured the attention of President Petro Urrego, who, though an armed combatant many years ago, as was Rodrigo Londoño, swore to uphold the Constitution of 1991 and all of Colombia’s laws and regulations after he was popularly elected President of the Republic. But having known war and achieved peace, the fact of being elected transcends the peace that we are trying to implement in this regard, reaching towards the need for and the achievement of total peace.

Council members may ask with whom this total peace is made. Total peace is made with those who want to make peace. Naturally there is a great deal of disorder and violence in Colombia, and total peace has led to engaging with groups that are not political in nature. There is talk of submitting to justice, which is something else altogether. These are negotiations under very clear conditions, within the ordinary justice system, involving groups that have no natural political inclinations. For this reason, I must highlight a part of the letter that I sent a few weeks ago seeking the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which reads as follows:

“We trust that the Security Council will give favourable consideration to the possible expansion of the role of the verification mission in Colombia” (S/2023/112).

The Security Council had already done so once before, when hostilities were ceased five years ago, for the dialogues with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional that took place in the Republic of Ecuador. The Council was asked to provide monitoring, and it did so. Basically,

something similar is being requested now, but with a fundamental difference: the understanding that there is a legal distinction between political negotiations and proceedings that might be brought within the ordinary justice system for groups that are willing to accept the legal framework applicable to such cases.

The achievement of total peace is within the Government’s purview; obviously, the Security Council is not going to be asked to provide it. We must be careful: there can be no confusion as to what falls within our ordinary justice system. However, it is also true that I am often asked to play a role that is not always the most pleasant one.

I reiterate that I am in a position to sign on to every single one of the paragraphs of the report that is before the Council for its consideration today. However, I must sound the alert on those that should be of concern, in particular paragraph 15 of section II, which states that:

“The Special Jurisdiction for Peace filed a criminal complaint against former members of the Office of the Attorney General for alleged obstruction of justice, fraud against a court order and concealment of evidence in 2018, during the process of no-extradition guarantee of former FARC-EP leader Seuxis Paucias Hernández Solarte, also known as Jesús Santrich, who returned to arms.”

Some of us believed that this was an attempt to entrap the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. I therefore feel it is my obligation to remind the Security Council that we do indeed have enemies of the peace process. Therefore, after reflecting on it, we will have to see whether it would be appropriate to create an international commission of inquiry of the United Nations. Within the context of the United Nations, commissions of investigation and fact-finding missions have been established in order to investigate allegations of violations of international law. Furthermore, I would highlight the following: as a result of the growing need to take measures to avoid further impacts on the peace process caused by obstacles imposed by external forces, which have given rise to dissent and weakened the agreement, it is necessary to establish an international commission of inquiry or an independent group of experts with the support of the Secretary-General. We are considering how to fully engage our reason in further support of the commendable work that the Security Council is promoting.

In addition, President Petro has completed the implementation, because this concerns total peace not only within our country, but beyond our borders as well. We have restored diplomatic relations with Venezuela. On 25 April, in our capital city, Bogotá, a conference will be held with the countries of Latin America — and including the United States, Canada and European countries — to see how to resume the political dialogues on which we had made progress in Mexico, of course, with the opposition parties and with President Maduro. This is a gesture of total peace, and I would add that one of the mandates of the peace agreement is to convene, under its chapter four, on illicit crops, an international conference on the topic of drug trafficking. The Secretary-General is already aware of this initiative, and of course it extends beyond this specific issue arising from the peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. That conference will take place in the second half of this year, in Bogotá, and of course

we will invite all interested nations in order to find a definitive solution to the topic of drug trafficking.

That is what I wanted to share with the Council, in terms of expressing the faith that we have in this institution, which was created precisely to prevent conflicts. What better example for the world than Colombia — an example of what can be possible thanks to joint efforts with the Security Council. I would reiterate: dialogue and peace are indeed victory. So I would invite those present to continue to work hard on this wonderful project for humankind, and to make of peace a total victory.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of this subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.