



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8879th meeting

Thursday, 14 October 2021, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Kimani (Kenya)

Members:

China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mrs. Gasri
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
Tunisia	Mr. Ben Lagha
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

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/2021/824)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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/2021/824)

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. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort her to her seat at the Council table.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda, Coordinator of Butterflies with New Wings and representative of the Afro-Colombian women in the Special Forum on Gender; and Ms. Daniela Soto, Youth Leader, Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca.

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/2021/824, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to present the latest report of the Secretary-General on Colombia (S/2021/824) and to update the Security Council on recent developments in the country since the issuance of the report.

(spoke in Spanish)

It is a pleasure to be in the Chamber presenting the report in the company of Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. I am also very pleased to be with the indigenous leader Daniela Soto and the Afro-Colombian leader Bibiana Peñaranda — women whose voices tell the story of the challenges faced by ethnic groups in conflict-affected regions and their daily struggle to build peace.

We are approaching the fifth anniversary of the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the Colombian State and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). As the Secretary-General has said, this is an opportunity to reflect on how much we have achieved in this first third of the period foreseen for its implementation, as well as how much we have yet to achieve. It is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to persevering, every day, towards building peace.

Recent events have shown us the full potential of the implementation of an agreement that focuses on the victims. I am speaking, for example, about the establishment of seats in Congress that will allow Colombians from the regions hardest hit by the conflict to participate actively in the democratic debate, as well as the unquestionable progress made by the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, which continues to work to honour the rights of millions of victims and promote national reconciliation.

What we see today is the result of the commitment and cumulative efforts of the parties, civil society, various State entities, the international community — including the Security Council — who have insisted that what was agreed must be implemented. I would like to stress the word “cumulative” because it is precisely the steps that have been taken during these five years that allow us to continue, even amid enormous challenges, on the path of building peace.

Preserving what has been achieved, making progress on the pending tasks and overcoming the challenges of the implementation will depend, to a large extent, on the parties' abilities to implement all elements of the peace agreement. Their implementation in isolation would not be sufficient to eliminate the

factors that led to decades of armed conflict and to ensure the agreement's transformative potential.

(spoke in English)

A few weeks ago, I travelled to Meta, a department that the Council visited in 2017. Meta was an important FARC-EP stronghold, and today hosts more than one out of ten of its former members. Their experiences illustrate what has gone right, what needs improvement and the challenges facing the reintegration process and the implementation of the agreement more broadly.

I spoke there to former combatants who are growing coffee and had set up a bakery in one reintegration area. In another area, they had planted avocados. It became clear to me that collective efforts to boost reintegration in the early years of the process had been crucial to instilling hope among thousands of men and women who, until this day, continue to bet on peace. Their determination to advance their productive initiatives remains palpable, as is their desire to be active members of their communities and participate in local politics and decision-making, as envisioned clearly in the peace agreement.

Nevertheless, as one female leader of the former combatants in Meta put it:

“So many efforts and so many investments may now be in jeopardy. To protect hard-fought gains, decisive actions are required on matters such as land, housing, sustainable income generation and security.”

Otherwise, she fears, former combatants will continue to be forced to relocate in search for better opportunities and to preserve their lives. The leadership qualities displayed by women former combatants, as well as those of women social leaders like Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto, remind us that their full involvement and the implementation of the agreement's gender approach are a necessary condition for peacebuilding.

Five years into implementation, there is broad consensus on the essential role that land plays in anchoring the reintegration process, especially with regards to housing and productive initiatives. During my visit, I witnessed the challenges posed to projects that are heavily dependent on land, the anxiety of former combatants and their reluctance to invest additional resources due to uncertainty, as well as their frustration with cost overruns, since they operate on rented land. It is worthwhile intensifying the significant efforts

made by the Government to acquire land for former territorial areas for training and reintegration so that the endeavours of more former combatants across the country can literally take root.

As time passes, it is becoming increasingly evident that deeper transformations are required to consolidate the reintegration process and other elements that have been put in motion over these five years, including within the territorial development programmes and the programme for the substitution of illicit crops. However fruitful the early stages may have been, the long-term success of initial investments is contingent upon the agreement's promise of reshaping rural Colombia by establishing sustainable development opportunities and State services and institutions for communities whose expectations remain unfulfilled. To that end, furthering the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform and progress in addressing the problem of illicit drugs will be instrumental.

We continue to follow security issues in various regions with utmost concern. It is particularly challenging that the very areas prioritized for the agreement's implementation—from Meta to Antioquia, from the Pacific coast to Catatumbo—are the ones facing the most dire situations.

To date, 296 men and women who laid down their arms in good faith have lost their lives, primarily due to actions of illegal armed actors and criminal organizations. Conflict-affected communities, former combatants and social leaders still bear the brunt of the actions of illegal armed actors taking advantage of limited State presence, poverty and illicit economies. Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities are being disproportionately affected by all kinds of violence, from the killing of their leaders to displacements and confinements. This situation demands the urgent and simultaneous implementation of all provisions of the agreement pertaining to security guarantees.

In the light of the formidable threats that these regions face, the Government and State entities should make better use of the mechanisms created by the agreement itself, including the National Commission on Security Guarantees, to devise effective measures to curb the violence. The progress made by the National Protection Unit in the approval of hundreds of pending protection requests by former combatants is clearly a welcome development. The swift provision of the approved security measures is now crucial.

The end of the conflict with the FARC-EP led, in 2018, to the least violent and most participatory elections in Colombia in decades. That milestone is a testament to the undeniable relationship between strengthened democracy and lasting peace, and Colombians deserve to be able, once again, to massively and safely take part in the upcoming elections.

This time, thanks to the peace agreement, an important new opportunity presents itself in the 16 conflict-affected regions where local populations will have the chance to elect their candidates for the special transitional electoral districts for peace. This will require not only State-provided guarantees for equal political participation, but a genuine commitment by all actors to fostering a responsible and respectful electoral campaign, free of stigmatization.

Beyond the approaching elections, we should all remember that there remain many ways in which the peace process can continue to strengthen and deepen Colombian democracy, especially through the implementation of key pending provisions of the agreement's section on political participation.

(spoke in Spanish)

Even amid great challenges, the Colombian peace process continues to demonstrate, with eloquent examples, the benefits of ending the conflict through a negotiated agreement and of continuing to focus on victims' rights.

Last week, the parties convened an ethnic round table in the National Reintegration Council, which I am sure will be key to advancing the reintegration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian ex-combatants, in line with their specific needs.

Likewise, thanks to the final agreement, we continue to witness gestures of profound practical and symbolic significance that reflect the commitment of those who took up arms in the past. A few days ago, as a result of the collective effort of the Government and ex-combatants and the support of the international community, Humanicemos DH — the humanitarian demining organization comprised of former FARC-EP members — delivered its first mine-free area, in Caquetá, an important department of Colombia, which will now be returned to an indigenous community.

I am also pleased to report that the Constitutional Court extended the mandate of the Truth Commission. That decision recognizes the impact of the pandemic

on the Commission's work and the importance of its having the time and resources to continue to hear the voices of those who experienced the war most directly. I am confident that the broad support for this decision will help build consensus on the importance of the recommendations that the Commission will make in its report to ensure that the horrors of the past are never repeated.

Now that the 2022 budget is being discussed, the Government and Congress have in their hands the possibility of reaffirming their commitment to peace by guaranteeing that the Commission and the other components of the agreement have the necessary resources to continue and enhance their work.

In conclusion, from the ceasefire and the laying down of arms to the current work on the design of the mechanism to verify the sanctions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, I am proud of the work of every member of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to support the parties in fulfilling their commitments. During these five years, we have been constantly inspired by the tenacity of Colombian society in its transition to peace. Now, as we embark upon a key stage in the consolidation of the process, I thank the Council for its ongoing trust, which will undoubtedly remain an essential pillar of support for Colombia.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Peñaranda.

Ms. Peñaranda *(spoke in Spanish)*: I extend cordial greetings to every member of the Security Council. My name is Bibiana Peñaranda Sepúlveda, an anti-racist, black woman. I am the Coordinator of Butterflies with New Wings in the Buenaventura district, and I represent black, Afro-descendent, Raizal and Palenquera women in the Special Forum on Gender in order to ensure the implementation of a transversal gender approach with regard to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace — one that builds peace for all and protects human rights.

I warmly thank the Kenyan presidency of the Security Council for inviting me to participate at this important meeting. To the representatives of Colombia, I offer my greetings of solidarity for the situation we are living in our country. And I thank those who care about Colombian issues out of *Ubuntu*.

Council members have heard a lot about Colombia — the Peace Agreement, the social problems and the armed groups that have nested in our country, fed by a history of systematic violence that began with the colonial period and has persisted until today. Council members know that Colombia's public and private sectors are rife with corruption and drug trafficking, contributing thereby to bloodshed in the country, producing a war that has gone on for so many years that I do not remember a single day in which I was aware of not hearing news of war and death.

I want to make it clear that although violence regulates power relations in Colombia, the Peace Agreement is important for those of us in communities who are living with violence, abandonment or expulsion from territories. The main strength of this Peace Agreement is that it listened to the voices and the proposals of rural folk, women, ethnic peoples, young people and people of diverse gender and sexual orientations. Its worst weakness, however, is that we are a society whose Government is woefully absent, sectionalized and racist. It is a Government that simulates democracy and continues to believe that violence is the way to regulate power relations, as was demonstrated in this year's social unrest.

This Government has lacked the stature to fully comply with the demands of the Peace Agreement, despite the fact that the Agreement was the ultimate wish of the ethnic communities and peoples of Colombia. What is in the agreement is not what the now-defunct Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo asked of former President Santos Calderón, but what the people want: territory, land, housing, to eat well, live in peace, drink clean water, be educated, have access to health, raise animals and care for the land. Is that too much to ask for?

Despite the persistent resurgence of war and conflicts between armed groups, transnational interests in the territories and the weak or barebones response of an absent Government, the transformative capacity of those of us who want and support peace truly exists; not only is it contained in the agreement, but it is also what we are striving to build upon on a daily basis — behind the backs of a political class that looks only after its own interests, those of its families, its trade unions and its allies.

I wish to express concern about the lack of safety for peace signatories and leaders, as they

receive threatening messages every day, and the risks are mounting. In specific relation to gender, we are concerned that no progress has been made on the “ethnic chapter”, particularly issues relating to Colombia's indigenous black peoples. Although the Government has put forward processes for retitling land, it is made clear that these land adjudications in favour of indigenous and black peoples are part of previous agreements — not part of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The issues of eradication and Government's non-compliance are of concern.

We are also concerned that with regard to the “ethnic chapter”, the gender approach that is being applied is not an anti-racist. Indeed, we can say that the State is applying racist processes because it is unaware of the dispossession to which ethnic peoples have been subject. The real, felt needs of Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero, indigenous and gypsy black women are not being addressed anywhere. As black women, we bet on life, recognize ourselves as teachers of peace, dig our own trenches, march, define our agendas, we defend the territory. We make compassion true and affective through *comadreo* — female bonding — and we turn our pain into creativity.

We need the armed groups to leave our territory, and we need to recover solidarity in our neighbourhoods, strengthen the fraternal bonds that used to unite us or create new ones from the pieces that remain, and reinforce the circles of knowledge, healing spaces and ancestral wisdom. We need the policy of fighting armed groups to be developed and for the policy of reconciliation to become a reality in our country. We need the rights and territorial autonomy of the authorities of the black and indigenous peoples of Colombia to be recognized, and we need *comadreo* to be the symbol of compassion. We need a specific path for reincorporating former combatants and peace signatories from the black and indigenous peoples, and we need for the violence that is disproportionately affecting ethnic territories, their authorities, their leaders and their communities to stop.

We need the Security Council, as the highest representatives of the international community, to continue believing in us, in Colombia, to continue supporting us so that transformation, inclusion, equity and peace become a reality, and so that we — Afro-Colombian, indigenous, ethnic communities and peoples, and above all, women — can continue to work together with it to make progress on the “ethnic chapter” of the Peace Agreement and ensure

its comprehensive implementation from an anti-racist gender perspective. As Colombians we must continue to work to build a colour-blind, ethnicity-blind anti-racist peace that acknowledges indigenous black peoples in their territories, their authorities, their worldview and their view of life. Peace in Colombia will either be anti-racist or it will not be.

The President: I thank Ms. Peñaranda for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Soto.

Ms. Soto (*spoke in Spanish*): I send you my warmest greetings, Mr. President. My name is Daniela Soto Pinto. I am a woman from the Nasa, an indigenous people in the municipality of Caldon, in the Department of Cauca. I am part of the youth and women's leadership processes of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, and, since I was a teenager, I have been working for human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples to be vindicated.

Greetings to all present in the Security Council Chamber today. I offer particular thanks to the Kenyan ambassador for his invitation to join this meeting.

I would like to start by commenting that when the talks to reach a peace agreement between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the Colombian Government began, there was a sense of hope in the country. Sadly, that feeling lasted for only a few months after the signing of the agreement. In territories like mine, in the municipality of Caldon, which the Security Council visited in 2019, we were eagerly awaiting the laying down of arms and the longed-for peace. We had always experienced the onslaught of war directly in our territories, in our own homes and even in our own bodies.

The Peace Agreement gave us hope by proposing structural solutions to the problem of social inequality in Colombia and by addressing important issues for indigenous women, such as access to land. However, the current situation of the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia is worrying. Although we see the laying down of arms by the now-defunct FARC-EP armed group and the entrepreneurial initiatives for the reincorporation of members of that group as positive, compliance with the Peace Agreement has been minimal on such points as comprehensive rural reform, the substitution of illicitly used crops and the

full implementation of the “ethnic chapter” of the Peace Agreement and its gender focus. This non-compliance increases the conditions of inequality and violence in the territories, especially for women and young people.

It is women and young people whose rights are being violated the most. In Cauca, the non-compliance with the Peace Agreement on such issues as rural reform and the substitution of illicit crops, *inter alia*, has led to an increase in the cultivation of illicit crops there, and, in turn, an increase in the reconfiguration of armed groups, dissidents and others who are fighting for control of the territories and the drug trafficking business through war exercises that are bleeding our communities dry.

I remember as a child, in my territory, my grandmother always took me to pick coca leaves. As Council members know, for my people, coca is a sacred plant. Today I see with sadness and powerlessness how something so sacred has been misused so as to generate violence and conflict in the country.

The armed conflict continues to rage in many parts of Colombia. In our territories, boys and girls as young as 13 are being forcibly and ideologically recruited into the armed ranks of these groups. Likewise, young people and women are being recruited or co-opted across the entire chain of the drug-trafficking business. In some parts of Cauca, recruitment has exceeded 600 children and young people in the past two months, for example, in the municipality of Cantón. Many of those children and young people are female. Women are also co-opted into work preparing meals, but, above all, what is most degrading is that they are co-opted into sexual enslavement or prostitution.

In addition, the presence of armed groups in our territories represents a direct threat to indigenous women, owing to the many cases of harassment and sexual abuse that we have been victims of. Women who resist all of that must choose either to stay in the territory despite the threats or to be displaced from our territories to live in the cities, which may lead to experiencing other forms of violence and vulnerability. In this war, the women leaders who oppose the system continue to be killed. More than nine indigenous women leaders have been murdered this year defending their territory in Cauca department — a risk similar to that taken by women leaders in other territories.

Those murdered women were governors, indigenous guards, spokespersons, wives, mothers and

daughters. This morning another indigenous female colleague, named María Stefania Muñoz, and her niece were murdered in the municipality of Buenos Aires in Cauca — in addition to other colleagues who were killed in July. Such murders have many repercussions for the families, communities and organizations that the victims led. Above all, they also lead to instability and intimidation with regard to the processes that we as women have struggled to achieve despite the many constraints and threats.

Our participation as women in peacebuilding must enjoy the necessary security guarantees and conditions if we are to carry out our work with a differentiated approach. In exercising the right to social protest, I myself was almost killed on 9 May in an incident in which armed civilians shot at the demonstration in the presence of the members of public security forces in Cali. I was shot in the lower part of my abdomen. When I arrived at the hospital, I had no vital signs and was in shock. I was admitted to the emergency room with little chance, but I managed to survive.

However, what happened weakened the leadership process in my community, and the leadership process of indigenous women has been exposed to intimidation, as they are afraid of being threatened, persecuted or falling victim to the same ordeal I experienced. Despite the situation, in general, women, especially indigenous women, have been developing peacebuilding initiatives from the ground up in our territories. We have been working to raise awareness of the need to support the peaceful resolution of conflicts, in conjunction with institutions and the community as a whole, with a differentiated approach when it is imperative to support women, children, young people and other victims in the context of armed conflict or other forms of violence.

Similarly, we have also been strengthening our own mechanisms for self-protection and territorial control through such processes as the indigenous guards, of which more than 40 per cent of participants are women. That exercise has raised awareness about the need to care for the territory and search for peace through dialogue, while clearly rejecting armed groups and violence in general. We have been working with schools and colleges to train authoritative leaders and to inculcate a culture of peace in primary and secondary education. We have also made progress in building trust and understanding in our territories by promoting respect for diversity and differences and even establishing intercultural round tables for dialogue.

We continue to opt for peace in our territories and to demand that the national Government fully comply with the peace agreement. As a young indigenous woman, I believe that the Government must be able to guarantee the fundamental right to life of every woman and man. That is where the Security Council must focus its efforts. Likewise, we must also support and strengthen the initiatives that are already being implemented at the territorial level. Support must be given to forming indigenous and Afro-Colombian women leaders and encouraging constructive ventures and projects to address the economic inequality facing us. All of that is set out in the peace agreement. We hope that the international community and the Security Council will continue to support us —the indigenous communities, women and young people of Colombia — in this process.

We hope that the Council will continue to urge full compliance with the agreement, with particular focus on the ethnic dimension and the integral gender approach to the entire agreement so that we can finally have a better society in Colombia. As indigenous women, we have said that violence must be rejected wherever it may be, we must protect our territories, people can always count on us for peace, never for war, and we do not want to continue giving birth to children for war.

The President: I thank Ms. Soto for her briefing.

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): First, let me thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing today and the important work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I would also like to thank our two briefers, Ms. Daniela Soto and Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda, for their perspectives and the powerful testimony that they have given on the situation in Colombia. It is a pleasure to welcome Vice-President Ramírez to the Security Council once again. Her presence demonstrates the importance that her Government attaches to the Security Council's role in supporting Colombia on its journey towards lasting peace.

Next month, we will mark the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. This is a significant milestone. We know that more than half of all peace agreements fail within the first five years. It is therefore an important moment for the international

community to celebrate with Colombia the progress achieved to date and the way in which Colombia's peace process serves as an example to the world.

One such element is the novel transitional justice system created by the peace agreement, which puts victims at its heart. The United Kingdom commends the continued progress achieved in recent months by the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We reiterate our appreciation and support for the vital work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, and we welcome the extension of the Truth Commission's mandate. We encourage all actors to play their part in this process, acknowledging their crimes and injustices, fulfilling their responsibility to the victims of the conflict and paving the way towards reconciliation.

Another major achievement during the reporting period was the creation of 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. The United Kingdom supports this important initiative to facilitate the political participation of historically excluded groups.

While celebrating the achievement represented by the fifth anniversary of the peace agreement, it is also an important time to take stock of the challenges that remain to its comprehensive implementation and the commitment required to overcome them. The gains of the past five years cannot be taken for granted. Foremost among the challenges, as we have heard today, is the high number of killings and threats against former combatants, social environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Again, I recognize the testimony of Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto in this regard.

In order to end the ongoing violence, we urge the Colombian Government to further integrate its presence in conflict-affected areas and strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible. We note with concern that the National Commission on Security Guarantees did not meet fully during the reporting period. I call on the Government to make full use of that body, working with civil society, to develop a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups. We also call on all institutions to heed the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office to help prevent attacks from happening and to protect those at risk.

Finally, as the 2022 elections come into focus, we underline the importance of peaceful preparations and call on all parties to take steps to ensure safe and inclusive elections and to minimize the risk of pre-electoral and political violence.

The United Kingdom has been proud to accompany Colombia on its journey so far to implement the peace agreement. As we look ahead, we remain committed to supporting Colombia in consolidating the gains achieved and overcoming the challenges that remain.

In conclusion, I would like to add that we look forward to beginning work shortly with other Council members on the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*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 briefing and acknowledge the commendable work of his entire team. We also thank Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda and Ms. Daniela Soto for their courageous and thought-provoking presentations. We once again welcome the presence of Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mexico welcomes the progress made as we approach the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. This is an opportune moment to take stock of the gains made and to highlight outstanding tasks but, above all, for the Security Council to renew its commitment to the future of the peace agreement through to its full implementation.

The peace agreement has successfully led, inter alia, to development plans and alternatives to illicit economies, all with a gender perspective, while simultaneously allowing for progress in the area of transitional justice through the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. Those actions have meant a new beginning for the ex-combatants who chose to lay down their weapons of their own free will, as well as for Colombian society in general, as it has enabled it to strengthen its justice system.

The work carried out by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Case 03, on killings and forced disappearances, should be highlighted. The contribution of the Colombian security forces to the investigations has been notable.

The relevance of Case 07, on forced recruitment and the use of children in conflict, is also noteworthy.

We take note of the actions taken by the Verification Mission with a view to the sanctions soon to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and we acknowledge the actions taken by the Truth Commission. We await the Commission's final report, which we hope will be another key element in the reconciliation process. We commend the work of the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing in bringing certainty to thousands of victims' families.

We acknowledge the enactment of the legislative act creating the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace as part of efforts to involve the whole of Colombian society. So far, the signing of the peace agreement has benefited more than half of accredited ex-combatants with productive projects.

Nearly 60 per cent of female ex-combatants are part of that initiative, and all collective productive projects approved by the National Reincorporation Council have been designed with a gender perspective. The Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders should be a pillar of peacebuilding.

Nevertheless, as we have heard, it is imperative that all indigenous and Afro-descendant women have an opportunity to be present in all decision-making processes. It is they who continue to disproportionately suffer the impacts of violence and bear the greatest burden of the challenges to sustainable development.

The deterioration of security conditions in certain regions, particularly for those living in rural areas, is also a cause for concern. Equitable access to land and housing must be a fundamental component of rural reform and reconciliation.

Mexico condemns the acts of violence by illegal armed groups, which has led to the forced displacement of nearly 15,000 people so far in 2021. We also call for the trafficking of small arms and light weapons into the country to cease and for the consolidated integration of State institutions and services in order to continue to address the underlying causes of violence, namely, exclusion and inequality.

On the other hand, we commend the conducting of training activities for 7,000 members of 300 municipal councils to design peacebuilding initiatives, as well as the initiative of the so-called peace promoters for

their capacity to promote alternative conflict resolution mechanisms while respecting human rights and social coexistence without exclusion.

Five years ago, Colombia showed the world that there is no way out of armed conflict and that dialogue and mutual understanding could indeed prevail. The full implementation of the peace agreement is a common goal, and the priorities outlined by the Secretary-General serve as a road map to achieve it and avoid new cycles of violence.

The renewal of the Verification Mission's mandate must continue in order to support not only the Colombian Government but all other actors in building a stable and lasting peace.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): At the outset, let me join others in welcoming the participation of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Her Excellency Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, in the Security Council's meeting today. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda and Ms. Daniela Soto for their insightful briefings.

The progress made in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially in the past three months, is reassuring. The enactment of the law creating the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace has provided an opportunity for historically excluded populations to participate in the next elections.

Peace-related funding in the national budget for 2021 has been increased by nearly 4 per cent. There is renewed activism in the legislature, with ruling coalition members and the opposition presenting draft bills on issues related to the implementation of the peace agreement. The first indictments from the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, new convictions by the Special Investigations Unit and continuing protection measures by the National Protection Unit reflect the progress on transitional justice.

The political parties have begun preparing for the congressional and presidential elections due next year. On the socioeconomic side, we note that the Government's priorities for this last legislative period included a new tax reform, which was enacted in September, and changes to the National Police. The reintegration process has continued to move forward despite several challenges. Thus the implementation of

the peace agreement has overall maintained a positive trajectory. In that regard, we congratulate the President and his Government on the various positive steps taken in the implementation of the peace agreement. We appreciate the strong commitment and action in that direction.

There are still aspects of the peace agreement that face impediments in implementation. The disputes between illegal armed groups, including various Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo dissident groups, over territorial control and strategic illegal trafficking routes have intensified. Those disputes have aggravated the violence, particularly in areas affected by the conflict and prioritized for the implementation of the peace agreement. That cycle of violence, which has generated displacements and confinements and led to the killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders, including indigenous and other vulnerable sections of the population, needs to cease.

Threats, killings and the subsequent displacement of cooperative members is having disruptive effects on reintegration initiatives. We are confident that the Colombian authorities are taking suitable steps to implement the security, housing and land guarantees contained in the agreement. The gap in the integrated presence of the State between urban and rural areas, especially those affected by the conflict, needs continued attention. My delegation is fully cognizant of the difficulties faced by the Government, since those are complex challenges.

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement, one thing that stands out is the collective commitment and determination of the Colombian stakeholders to overcome the obstacles to its implementation. The peace agreement not only put an end to the conflict but also laid the foundations for lasting peace through a robust and interconnected set of programmes, norms and institutions. While the peace process continues to be a source of inspiration to the world, the international community needs to support unequivocally the Government and the people of Colombia in this journey to consolidate and sustain peace.

In conclusion, Colombia remains an important bilateral partner of India in Latin America. Despite the pandemic disruptions, our bilateral relations have been expanding, particularly in the economic and

commercial spheres. The visit of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Her Excellency Marta Lucía Ramírez, to India earlier this month, preceded by the visit of India's Minister of State for External Affairs to Colombia in September, have further contributed to the strengthening and diversification of India-Colombia bilateral ties. As a long-standing friend and partner of Colombia, India will continue to stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of Colombia.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

At the outset, we thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu; Ms. Daniela Soto, Youth Leader, Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca; and Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda, Coordinator of “Butterflies with New Wings”, for their presentations. We also welcome Her Excellency Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Colombians will celebrate in a few weeks the fifth anniversary of the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. That emblematic agreement — a testament to the Government and the people of Colombia's commitment to peace — remains an exemplar and inspiration for peace processes globally, as it epitomizes the centrality of dialogue to overcome conflicts, no matter how deeply entrenched.

Since the signing of the Final Agreement, we have witnessed progress and setbacks. We welcome the positive developments achieved over the years and encourage the parties to consolidate the gains made, and we further urge them to pursue with rigour this vital agreement. The A3+1 also offers the following observations.

First, the security situation remains of serious concern. We strongly condemn the incessant killings against the groups made most vulnerable, including former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo combatants, indigenous and afro-Colombians, women social leaders and human rights defenders. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/824) emphasized the deteriorating security situation in south-west Colombia, which we

believe requires greater attention in order to dismantle illegal armed groups.

We welcome the recommendations by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the progress underscored within the National Protection Unit. Enhancing security guarantees in marginalized and conflict areas, including strengthened protection and prevention measures, remains critical. We therefore call for the regular convocation of the National Commission on Security Guarantees.

Similarly, we urge the parties to settle differences on the content and legal status of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants, as well as to advance on the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and accelerate the implementation of the comprehensive programme for women social leaders and human rights defenders.

The A3+1 maintains that those policies, plans and programmes are pivotal to enabling a robust and integrated approach to addressing lingering security challenges.

Secondly, the security and socioeconomic challenges facing former combatants are closely interlinked. In that respect, we underscore the importance of protection measures to ensure the proper reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society and applaud the ongoing efforts to facilitate their reintegration, including through development programmes with a territorial focus and comprehensive rural reform programmes.

As we have repeatedly stated, the full and sustainable reintegration of former combatants is crucial. That leads to our call for the resolution of differences surrounding the allocation of lands and housing, including the challenges facing former combatants residing outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration. It is also reported that only two of approximately 320 former combatants living in urban areas have access to housing solutions. Advancing on a comprehensive strategy to guide the provision of housing to former combatants is therefore key.

Further, we note with satisfaction the joint work between the Government and the Comunes in the design of the National Reintegration System, and hope that it meets the year-end target.

We recognize the reported possible delays in the implementation of the ethnic approach of the Agency

for Reintegration and Normalization and fully endorse the call of the Inspector General for the Agency to update its registry and implement specific measures for the economic and social reintegration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian former combatants.

The A3+1 echoes the Secretary-General's call for both parties to ensure that women, youth, indigenous and afro-Colombian former combatants participate meaningfully in the decision-making process so that equal access to income-generating opportunities and protection measures are guaranteed.

Thirdly, the parties continue to make headway in the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We commend the developments on Case 03 and acknowledge the strategy presented by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace on Case 07 on forced recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict.

Accepting transgressions is essential for forgiveness and creates the platform for justice, reparation, reconciliation, non-repetition and the full integration of former combatants into society. It is also a fundamental aspect of peace processes, especially for countries that are emerging from deep-rooted conflicts. We therefore acknowledge the latest recognition of former combatants Rodrigo Londoño and Salvatore Mancuso before the Truth Commission.

After more than half a century of armed conflict, Colombians decided that peace was paramount and achievable through dialogue. Peace for Colombians remains peace for everyone, especially for the Latin American and the Caribbean region. We maintain that the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional should engage in dialogue to foster a more peaceful and harmonious society. We also renew our call for the parties to capitalize on the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement to settle differences.

Kenya, the Niger, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterate our full support for the Colombian peace process and the United Nations Verification Mission and call on all parties to the Final Agreement to ensure that it is implemented comprehensively.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I would like to thank all the briefers for their informative and valuable briefings today and express Estonia's strong support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We warmly welcome Her Excellency Ms. Marta Lucía

Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

The fifth anniversary of the signing of the Final Peace Agreement on 24 November gives us an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and identify areas that require more effort. We recognize the positive developments and efforts made towards sustainable peace during this period. The Peace Agreement has had a significant impact on the country's development. It has not only led to the end of the conflict but also formed the norms and institutions that are needed in order to reach lasting peace. It has also transformed the Government's public policy approach with respect to those local areas that are most affected by violence. The peace process has proved that peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts can mitigate local conflict dynamics.

However, challenges remain, and participation by all stakeholders throughout the process is required, including at the local level. The main challenges hindering the implementation of the Peace Agreement are linked to dynamics of violence. We are concerned about the increase of violence against social leaders, human rights defenders, former combatants and communities. In 2021, 158 killings have been reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Almost 300 former combatants have been killed since the signing of the Peace Agreement. Violence against these individuals is hindering the successful implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Fighting impunity is key to stopping violence. It is essential to bring perpetrators to justice. Security needs to be ensured for all parts of the country and vulnerable groups of society. As rural areas are disproportionately more affected, we call on the Government to increase its presence in those areas. Communities need protection from violence by illegal armed groups, and basic services need to be ensured.

We welcome the progress made during the last reporting period with regard to transitional justice, particularly the work made by the Truth Commission. Also, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has progressed with cases involving both the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the security forces, including cases of forced recruitment and use of children in conflict.

Victims need to stay at the centre of the process. It is important to improve victims' participation in the

peace process. The inclusion of different gender and ethnic groups is crucial. Furthermore, we reiterate the importance of guaranteeing the independent functioning of all institutions established under the Peace Agreement, including transitional justice mechanisms.

Finally, we encourage all parties to make good use of the tools available to pursue a genuine dialogue at both national and local levels. I would like to express Estonia's full support for the implementation of the Peace Agreement in its entirety.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Let me first warmly welcome Her Excellency Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia to our meeting today.

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu, Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda and Ms. Daniela Soto for their informative briefings.

Since the signing of the landmark Peace Agreement, Colombia has made important achievements. We commend the Government for its efforts in promoting socioeconomic development, including comprehensive rural reform. The reintegration process has also been expanded at all levels. However, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/824), various provisions of the Agreement have not been implemented successfully. As a result, the reintegration, like other processes, continues to be fragile, while reconciliation faces multiple challenges.

Against this background, we would like to stress the following. First, political will and determination of all relevant parties in conducting the next steps of the Final Peace Agreement are extremely important for the way forward for Colombia. We acknowledge the Government's commitments in the reintegration process, including the provision of protection and security for former combatants.

We call on all relevant parties to continue engaging in constructive dialogue at political and technical levels and to address various challenges and differences in the peace process, especially through the mechanisms devised by the Agreement, with a view to bringing about reconciliation, solidarity and progress for all. In this regard, it is also important to note that this process is a long-term one that requires patience as well as practical steps.

We welcome the creation of 16 special transitional electoral districts and commend the efforts made

by the political parties in reviewing their electoral campaign and strategy for the 2022 elections. This year will be decisive for Colombia, especially in terms of the preparations for the 2022 congressional and presidential elections. Every effort should therefore be made to create the most favourable conditions for the participation of all political parties in the elections. The measures should also be taken to ensure safe and inclusive elections, especially measures for the protection of women and children. The United Nations and the international community should support Colombia's efforts towards this end, while respecting the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Secondly, the report of the Secretary-General gave us worrying information on the unabated violence and attacks against Colombians, including former combatants, social leaders, conflict-affected communities and public security forces. We condemn all these attacks and urge all concerned groups to stop these appalling acts immediately. We reiterate that such violence is unacceptable and that the perpetrators must be brought to justice. In this regard, we urge the National Commission on Security Guarantees to take concrete actions to dismantle these organizations and strengthen investigations and the application of justice. It is also important to redouble efforts to ensure security and bring about development to conflict-affected communities through practical measures. It is through the well-being of these communities that the value of peace is upheld and maintained.

Thirdly, Colombia has achieved various degrees of progress in the socioeconomic and political fields. The process should continue to be implemented in a comprehensive manner that is politically and socioeconomically sustainable. We therefore encourage the introduction of further measures to promote, inter alia, economic and inclusive development, social cohesion, rural development, housing, education and job creation. The development plans of the country need to take into account the particular needs of its communities.

We expect to see a greater role played by the Government, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común and the National Reintegration Council, together with the United Nations and regional and international organizations, in developing a joint strategy for strengthened socioeconomic development

that lays out concrete measures to assist former combatants in attaining sustainable livelihoods.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our strong support for the process of peace, stability, security, national reconciliation, national unity and development in the country, as well as for the role and the renewal of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to that end.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/824) on the situation in the country. We also thank Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto for their briefings. We welcome the participation in person of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, in this briefing.

We agree with the conclusion of the report that there has been some progress in the Government's implementation of its commitments under the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. However, a great deal more needs to be done in order to achieve true and lasting peace. We are concerned by the fact that even Colombians themselves believe that the implementation of the agreement is being dragged out, and now it is expected to take 26 years instead of the 15 years stipulated in the agreement.

We also agree with the report's conclusion that the primary task is to ensure the security of the parties to the peace process and other representatives of civil society. The activity of criminal groups remains a scourge. Their operations have resulted in more than 15,000 additional internally displaced persons, whose total number has exceeded 57,000. More than 46,000 more have been cut off from the outside world in their settlements. The number of former combatants who laid down their arms and were killed since the signing of the Final Agreement is approaching 300, and the number of human rights defenders and activists killed since the beginning of this year exceeds 150.

Amid those sad statistics, the National Commission on Security Guarantees, which, according to the Final Agreement, is supposed to meet monthly, has not met once in the past six months, and neither has the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence.

The report rightly points out that the most problematic areas are those where the central Government is weak. That power and law and order vacuum is being filled by various illegal armed groups, which is resulting in increasing criminality and ongoing high levels of violence in the country. However, the local authorities are well aware of the situation. They are well aware of the areas in which they need to increase their presence and take steps to curb crime and drug trafficking.

It is time to finally recognize that the full implementation of the Final Agreement will not be possible without addressing the problem of drug trafficking, which is the main cause and source of violence in the country. In addition, States that receive Colombian cocaine must acknowledge their share of responsibility and take a more proactive approach to combating drug trafficking within Colombia and to reducing their own domestic consumption.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission have a key role to play in consolidating public accord around the Final Agreement. They must retain their full independence.

We believe that the entry into force of the decree establishing 16 special transitional electoral districts and the same number of seats in the lower house of Parliament was an important development, which should redress the situation regarding the historically underrepresented regions in the legislature. Another important development was the achievement of the 50 per cent benchmark in the number of registered participants in the peace process who enrolled in the Government's income-generating programmes.

At the same time, while progressing towards a settlement, it is important to bear in mind that sustainable reconciliation in Colombia cannot be achieved unless all actors, including the National Liberation Army, are engaged in the process. We understand that establishing a dialogue between the Government and that group is not an easy task, taking into account the previous history of mutual distrust and hostility. Nevertheless, we consider it extremely important to overcome the blockages on the path to resuming the dialogue suspended in 2019.

We are convinced that sustainable peace and stability in Colombia could be helped by establishing relations with neighbouring Venezuela. We welcome the efforts to reopen the border crossings. We hope that that will be followed by restoring dialogue between the law enforcement agencies of both countries. That is

urgently needed in order to combat the rampant crime in the border areas and could serve as a safeguard against possible misunderstandings or provocations with dangerous ramifications.

The date 24 November will mark five years since the signing of Colombia's historic agreement. That is a third of the 15 years that were set out for the agreement's implementation. It is time to take stock of the interim results. Much has certainly been accomplished, but even more remains to be done.

We are convinced that the Government's strict implementation of its commitments remains essential. Replacing the agreement by any unilateral programmes that have not been agreed to by all parties to the peace process is fraught with a backlash, with the most negative long-term consequences.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia will continue to support the Colombian peace process in order to make it sustainable and irreversible.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and for the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/824). We appreciate the vital role that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play in supporting peace in that country. I also thank Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto for their informative briefings. We offer a warm welcome to Vice-President and Foreign Minister Marta Lucía Ramírez to the Security Council today.

As we approach the five-year anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement, this is a moment to acknowledge both the enormous progress made and the significant challenges ahead. Thousands of former combatants laid down their weapons to take part in the democratic process. Colombians have faced far less violence since. The new transitional justice processes foster reconciliation, while also addressing the rights of victims, including historically excluded communities.

On that note, we are pleased to see that the Colombian Constitutional Court has extended the Truth Commission's mandate for seven months. The role of the Truth Commission is essential. Only by clarifying the past, elevating the voices and experiences of victims and addressing the root causes can the cycle of conflict and abuse be broken. Its efforts during this reporting period helped lead former leaders of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

(FARC) and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia to acknowledge their responsibilities. We commend the Truth Commission's interest in engaging all sectors of Colombian society, including opponents of the peace accord within the FARC.

By bridging social divisions, Colombia can overcome the drivers of violence and realize its enormous potential. We encourage all Colombia's institutions and social sectors, including political parties, security forces and private-sector entities, to accept the Commission's invitation to dialogue and to consider its recommendations with an open mind. We encourage the Commission to take full advantage of the extended mandate. That is an opportunity to engage victims of the conflict in Colombia's most remote and difficult-to-reach areas.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has also made significant progress. Despite great challenges, it has demonstrated its commitment to establishing the truth, providing justice and supporting long-term peace and stability in Colombia. We welcome the efforts of the Attorney General and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to increase collaboration.

Of course, the coronavirus disease pandemic makes carrying out the activities of the peace agreement more difficult. To that end, the United States has provided a total of 6 million vaccine doses to Colombia as part of our ongoing solidarity with the people of Colombia as they recover from this devastating pandemic. These donations have allowed the Government of Colombia to provide vaccines to some of the most remote and vulnerable communities in the country.

Despite the progress spurred by the peace agreement, we remain concerned about continued violence and human rights violations. As the Secretary-General's report confirms, killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders continue. This must end. The continued violence makes it harder for former combatants to successfully reintegrate into society. It threatens the peace process as a whole.

We hope the Government of Colombia continues to invest in peacebuilding in Colombia's 2022 national budget, including funding for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission. We also hope it prioritizes peace accord mechanisms. Regular meetings within these peace accord mechanisms ensure that all people affected by the conflict will have a voice and a role in the implementation of the accord.

We have seen encouraging steps for fostering fair and sustainable peace in Colombia over the past five years. While many challenges remain, the progress made to date and the work of the Verification Mission serve as a model for how to address long-standing conflicts. We commend the work of all parties over the past five years and know that the lives of Colombians have benefited from these efforts.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to start by warmly welcoming Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. It is good to have her with us today, and we welcome her to today's meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and for the continued work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which we appreciate. I also thank Ms. Soto and Ms. Peñaranda for their powerful briefings on the distinct experiences of indigenous and Afro-Colombian women. I truly appreciated hearing from them today.

Today, we are all reflecting on five years since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Five years of peace, reconciliation and progress have served as an example of what can be achieved when peace is prioritized and protected — in other words, when peace is given a chance. Ireland extends our warm congratulations to the people of Colombia on this anniversary. While it was the signatories who put pen to paper, this accord and its peace dividends belong to every Colombian. We welcome and encourage the continued commitment of the Government and signatories to its comprehensive implementation.

Today's milestone marks only one-third of the time frame projected to implement the accord. Much remains to be done. It is more important than ever that the international community support Colombia in fully realizing the promise of peace in the face of multifaceted challenges. Ireland will continue to keep faith and to stand by Colombia's side. In Ireland, we know that the delivery of the provisions of a negotiated agreement comes with challenges, but we also know that peace cannot be secured by turning back. All parties must remain committed and look ahead.

I wish to highlight three areas where sustained efforts are particularly necessary.

We warmly welcome the Government's enactment of the transitional electoral districts for peace. The inclusion of victims' voices from conflict-affected regions in Parliament is a powerful moment for political reintegration efforts. However, threats and intimidation of candidates across the political spectrum are worrying, and efforts must continue to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of women and youth in the political process.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued targeting of ex-combatants. We encourage the Government to reinforce protection guarantees for ex-combatants and to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to ensure the provision of equal and adequate protections to women, within the scheme. We are also concerned about reports of violence against human rights defenders, who deserve to work in all communities without fear.

I wish to reiterate again our concern about the heavy toll of violence, forced displacements and confinements on indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, as well as on other community and social leaders, particularly women and youth leaders. We encourage all efforts to support these communities, expand State presence in these municipalities, dismantle armed groups and bring perpetrators to justice.

Continued and committed dialogue in Colombia is essential. We welcome the engagement by all parties with the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, and we appreciate the Mission's work to help overcome difficulties and operationalize this valuable platform. As Colombia approaches elections, spaces for dialogue about implementing the Agreement are more important than ever and need to be preserved.

Truth and reconciliation processes have the power to unlock grievances and help put all citizens on a shared path to progress. Colombia's peace accord has been truly innovative, including in putting victims of the conflict at the centre. In that regard, Ireland welcomes the extension of the Truth Commission's mandate.

We also reiterate our support for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Its investigations of conflict-related sexual violence and the forced recruitment and use of children in conflict are particularly important. These heinous crimes have caused some of the deepest wounds. Justice for survivors, even after decades, will facilitate healing.

In conclusion, on this landmark anniversary, it is important to celebrate the progress we have made. At a time when so many conflicts around the world appear intractable, the Colombian accord stands as an example of what we can achieve. Like any peace process, it has required courage, patience and trust. There have been challenges and setbacks, and there is still a long path ahead.

But looking forward, today we should be emboldened by the gains of the process. All parties must redouble their efforts to protect this hard-won peace by ensuring full implementation of the Agreement. Ireland and the Council will continue to support Colombia and its people as they continue on this journey.

Ms. Juul (Norway): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. We also thank Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto for their powerful statements. We warmly welcome Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to our meeting today.

As so many speakers before me have noted, in just six weeks we will celebrate the five-year anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The accord put an end to 52 years of violent conflict with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo guerrilla group. This achievement was the result of strong commitment by the parties, with the robust support of Colombian civil society, and was wholeheartedly supported by the international community.

Indeed, its comprehensive, steady and successful implementation remains a priority for the Security Council today. Implementing a peace agreement takes time. Yet, much has been accomplished, including progress in the reintegration of former combatants. We are nevertheless troubled that the Office of the Comptroller General indicates that at this pace, it will take 26 years to fully implement the accord — not the 15 years agreed upon. We urge Colombia to accelerate implementation, while making sure it is done in a holistic manner.

The current high levels of violence — causing mass displacement — represent the greatest threat to the Agreement. Moreover, the number of human rights defenders, social leaders and former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia combatants killed

is staggering. That leads to insecurity, and undermines people's faith in the agreement. Additional efforts must be made to improve the security situation. And a particular focus must be given to the 25 municipalities where most of the violence occurs, especially indigenous communities.

A main objective of the accord is to replace violence with political participation. Colombia has taken significant steps in that direction. An important hurdle was passed when the law creating the 16 transitional electoral districts for peace was enacted. And as we approach the 2022 elections, considerable efforts must be made to avoid political violence, including against the candidates for the 16 special seats, who are at particular risk.

The implementation of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, as stipulated in the agreement, would be a significant step. We hope the political parties can, once again, rally around a platform of non-violence. People taking to the streets to peacefully protest is a legitimate expression of political participation and must be respected, not met with disproportionate use of force.

An inclusive political dialogue requires the participation of community leaders, civil society and human rights defenders. We know that women and peace and security is a high priority for Colombia. We acknowledge the work undertaken to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation, and encourage even more resources be allocated to strengthen security guarantees for women, human rights defenders, ex-combatants and social leaders.

Providing dignified living conditions for former combatants is imperative. Making sure that the signatories to the agreement are able to provide food and adequate housing for themselves and their families is of utmost importance. And we are pleased to learn that steps are being taken to overcome differences. We encourage both parties to make the best possible use of the various formal and informal spaces created by the agreement, not least the National Reintegration Council and the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. We are again pleased to highlight the progress made by the integrated system for transitional justice. The Truth Commission provides an invaluable space for truth telling and encounters between victims and perpetrators. Granting the Commission another

seven months of operations will provide valuable time to comply with its mandate. Hopefully, its report will serve to heal wounds and become a point of departure toward a peaceful future.

Finally, rest assured that Norway remains committed to accompanying Colombia in its efforts to ensure the peace agreement is comprehensively implemented.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, at today's meeting. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I have also listened carefully to the statements by the representatives of civil society.

In the past five years since it was signed, the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace has been steadily implemented, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Colombian Government and all parties. The peace process continues to be advanced and remarkable results have been achieved.

China welcomes the Colombian Government's creation of special transitional electoral districts for peace, which gives historically excluded populations in conflict-affected regions the opportunity to participate in national elections for the first time. That is an important step forward in the implementation of the peace agreement, and we commend the efforts made by all Colombian parties in that regard. I look forward to the successful holding of congressional and presidential elections next year, which will create an enabling environment for the follow-up implementation of the peace agreement.

The comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement is a complex and systematic undertaking. It requires the Colombian Government and all parties to make unremitting and sustained efforts to consolidate their hard-won achievements. We have noted that there is still a gap between the implementation of the peace agreement and the progress expected. Much more needs to be done in some parts of the country to improve the security situation, protect the safety and security of former combatants and allocate land to them. We hope that the Colombian Government and all parties will work together to maintain the current positive momentum, promote the implementation of the peace agreement in a balanced manner and boost the

confidence and support of all sectors of society for the peace process.

China supports Colombia in continuing its rural and land reforms and accelerating the reintegration of ex-combatants into society. Public services need to be further improved. The substitution of illicit crops, cultivation and other projects that benefit the people need to be fully implemented. All those efforts will create a solid economic and social foundation for the long-term peace and stability of Colombia.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has done a tremendous amount of work to support the implementation of the peace agreement. China commends the mission and supports the extension of its mandate. We hope that the mission will facilitate greater dialogue and consultation between the Colombian Government and former combatants to resolve differences and problems arising in the implementation of the peace agreement. At the same time, the mission should strengthen its coordination with the United Nations country team and play a positive role in the early achievement of lasting peace, stability and sustainable development in Colombia.

Mrs. Gasri (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and Ms. Peñaranda and Ms. Soto for their testimonies and their daily action in their communities. I also welcome the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Colombia is about to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. That is a historic agreement and much progress has been made, which we welcome. However, we must also draw clear-headed conclusions with regard to its implementation and continue efforts accordingly, because several challenges remain, as has been mentioned repeatedly before me.

I will touch upon four aspects.

First, France welcomes the creation of the 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. That will allow historically excluded populations in conflict-affected regions to participate fully in the political process. The election campaign is approaching and with it the risk of increased violence. The Colombian authorities must do everything possible to ensure that the elections are

held in good conditions. The security of the candidates is a priority.

Secondly, we welcome the continued progress of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. The extension of the mandate of the Truth Commission, will allow it to complete its essential work. The issuance of the first indictments in Case 03 is a positive development. We encourage all parties to the conflict to engage in that process.

Thirdly, the continued violence in Colombia is not acceptable. Each assassination undermines the implementation of the peace agreement. The solution is well known to Colombians. The State's presence must be strengthened in the most remote areas. The role of the National Commission on Security Guarantees must also be strengthened in order to implement the policy of dismantling armed groups.

Fourthly, in order to achieve peace, viable and fair socioeconomic opportunities must be provided for all. There have been welcome advances in rural reform, illicit crop substitution and access to land and housing. That progress must be accelerated and consolidated and, above all, accompanied by an appropriate budget. The chapters of the agreement that deal with ethnic and gender issues must be given special attention. The civil society representatives have provided us with an example of that.

Before I conclude, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's call in his report (S/2021/824) to make full use of the institutions provided for in the peace agreement. I am thinking in particular of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. Those institutions were built to promote dialogue and they need to meet more often.

In conclusion, France, as well as the European Union, will continue to support all those in Colombia who are working every day to achieve peace.^[E]_[SEP] **The President:** I now call on the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Lucía Ramírez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank all the members of the Security Council for their continued interest in the situation in Colombia. I especially thank Kenya for convening this meeting. I am very grateful for the briefings by two outstanding representatives of Colombia and Colombian women, Ms. Bibiana Peñaranda and Ms. Daniela Soto. I thank

them for their remarks. Among other things, we are very grateful for the fact that Bibiana was part of a process that led to her re-election and the overall process that the Government of Colombia, especially the Counsellor for Stabilization, Mr. Emilio Archila Peñalosa, organized. We are also very pleased to see in Ms. Soto a young woman with such authority on Cauca and the suffering there and how violence has taken root in Caldono, unfortunately, as a result of the growing presence of drug trafficking. I express my solidarity with both women. We stand ready to work with both of them with open arms, as we are perfectly aware that the voice and work of women and their ability to build bridges will enable us to move our country forward. I also thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his briefing, his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/824) and his continued work.

The report outlines the progress that almost all Council members have acknowledged. For that, we thank everyone on behalf of President Iván Duque Márquez and our entire Government. That progress is particularly important as we are on the eve of commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the implementation of which has been achieved, for all intents and purposes, over the past three years. More specifically, during the past three years of our term in Government, we have implemented the policy of peace with legality, which is non-exclusive and is the essence of what was needed in Colombia following the many years of conflict we unfortunately experienced.

The report also acknowledges the implementation of the agreement in its establishing space for communities to work with the Government in drafting development plans and alternatives to illicit economies, in which there has been an unprecedented gender approach, referred to for the fourth consecutive time in the report. The policy of peace with legality has embodied our vision to help Colombia overcome the challenges that it should have addressed decades ago and that led to the conflict lasting for so long.

The Constitutional Court has stated that the commitments provided for in the agreement should be worked on continually over a 15-year period — that is the time frame, not 26 years — and therefore our country will have to achieve its implementation in 15 years. That means that our Administration has to carry out 26 per cent of the implementation. As the

representative of Ireland noted, that constitutes one third of the time that has elapsed. Although much time remains, it is important not to backslide with regard to what has already been achieved in terms of the 26 per cent that our Government has to implement.

As is clear, a great deal of progress has been made, which would have been impossible to imagine two years, or even one year, ago. We are very proud of that. Every three months, we have shown how we have been able, first, to provide political and legal guarantees to the process; secondly, provide support for the victims; thirdly, reintegrate former combatants; fourthly, roll out crop substitution programmes; fifthly, develop the territorial areas for training and reintegration; sixthly, provide comprehensive rural development, which is increasingly comprehensive in terms of infrastructure, economic development, social investment and the environment and includes working with communities and providing education for children; and, lastly, the gender approach.

I agree with what our civil society representatives — Bibiana and Daniela — said earlier in their briefings, as the gender approach has been vital to the agreement. With that approach, the gender round table has demonstrated how all the indicators are reflective of the very obvious progress. Was there also a need for an ethnic approach? Well, therein the importance of a round table with an ethnic focus, which should also be included. Personally, it was my initial belief that the approach must include all ethnic groups, because we women have a range of ideas, needs and demands. But if such a round table contributes to better implementation, we welcome it. Counsellor Archila Peñalosa is working on that.

We have faced major challenges. We have addressed them because that is our commitment to Colombia as the Government of President Duque. Continuing to build peace every day entails enormous efforts by the Government, political will and budgetary resources, as the representative of France just mentioned. But how can it not be a challenge to implement a process in which 13,996 former combatants were demobilized, including their families? How can it not be a challenge when the development programmes with a territorial focus cover nearly 7 million inhabitants, which is comparable to the populations of Lebanon, Libya, El Salvador, Laos, Bulgaria or Hong Kong? I wonder what country in the world would be able, in three or five years, to resolve all of the problems of any of those countries.

Of course, we have great commitment in line with what the civil society briefers said, but also with what Melissa Herrera said, who spoke at the previous meeting on behalf of Latin American Foundation Viva la Vida (see S/PV.8818). I have written to her and told her what we are doing. We have invited her to actively participate in the transformation that the Government of President Duque is carrying out. That includes the major pact for youth initiative, which concluded a few days ago after holding 500 workshops made up of more than 15,000 young people representing every race, social background and region of the country. That was a very significant step that our country will have to follow up with a perspective on the mid- and long-term.

As all members know, the support for reintegration was conceived of in 2019, and it should therefore be coming to a conclusion now. However, our Government has decided to extend the time frame for as long as it takes — for those who have been reintegrated — as enshrined in our national development plan. Of course, the necessary resources have been allocated every year in the budget.

In line with the policy of peace with legality, we have established the National Reintegration Council, which has enabled us to develop robust planning that includes specific actions with time frames and indicating those responsible, according to the needs of former combatants. There has been very significant coordination in the reintegration process in which the former combatants have participated. As many said earlier, it is a historic processes, and, in the area of reintegration, the Government is going even further than what the agreement sets out.

In terms of economic guarantees, we have dispersed \$118 million to the benefit of 13,216 former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). As I mentioned previously, 13,996 former combatants have laid down their weapons. The territorial areas for training and reintegration were initially planned as temporary sites that should have been dissolved by now. However, our Government decided to transform them into a permanent fixture and include them in local territorial planning. We have maintained 24 areas and are preserving their current administration and providing resources totalling more than \$18 million dedicated to covering the costs of their maintenance, rent and administration to ensure that they can function properly. We have also provided food support, and the national Government has

provided such support with an investment of more than \$7 million dollars.

As members are well aware, the agreement did not provide land to former FARC combatants. However, given that some of the productive projects require land, the Government has begun acquiring plots so that former combatants' projects can be viable, profitable and lasting and overtime enable them to make an adequate income.

More than \$2.5 million has already been disbursed for the purchase of more than 570 hectares and, as I mentioned previously, 3,550 individual and collective productive projects have benefited from leased land, thanks to which 57 per cent of ex-combatants — representing 7,100 ex-combatants and their families — enjoy a stable income. Despite the fact that ex-combatant status was not foreseen as a criterion for receiving land, many of those ex-combatants received land for their productive projects.

We have seen outstanding results in those projects thanks to the dialogue to which several Council members referred, which is an ongoing process, on the President's instructions, being carried out by the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, Mr. Emilio Archila Peñalosa, who is here with me today. The analyses and discussions in the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and in the National Reintegration Council, as well as the multiple constructive meetings with ex-combatants convened by Mr. Archila Peñalosa and Director Stapper, have provided clarity within each of the steps that are being taken in that process jointly with the ex-combatants.

After having initially agreed on the first housing solutions in the former territorial training and reincorporation spaces, the former FARC component changed its mind about the construction system and rejected the national Government's offer of housing. We understand that to be a process issue that must be swiftly resolved. The guarantees in the reintegration process are available to all demobilized ex-combatants who are party to the agreed road map, regardless of whether or not they belong to the FARC or Comunes political parties. No matter whether an ex-combatant is a party member or not, they will face no discrimination whatsoever, provided that they are already fulfilling their obligations. Today there are 12,910 persons in the

reintegration process, over 10,400 of whom are outside the former territorial training and reincorporation spaces and 2,469 of whom remain within them.

As several members of the Council have said, we are currently on the verge of an electoral process that will be fundamental for the continuation of peacebuilding and stabilization in Colombia. We are convinced that its proper implementation will contribute to achieving a lasting peace if our country takes advantage of the opportunity to build on the gains that have already been made. It is also essential to protect the lives of those participating in the electoral process and that the next Government, whichever it may be, continues to build on what has been achieved thus far.

That is why the fact we have strengthened all our institutions for the implementation of the peace agreement is so important, as institutions constitute one of the assets of the main pillars of peacebuilding. That is precisely why we also welcome the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for one more year. The guarantees we made to the candidates of the Comunes political party regarding their participation in the recent elections achieved their purpose of protection from the risk of homicide and kidnapping, which have, unfortunately, in the past, led to several ex-combatant candidates losing their lives or being forced to withdraw. That has set a good precedent for the vital measures we are already preparing to take in order to guarantee even better security for the members of the Comunes party throughout the next electoral process.

In the same vein regarding political participation, and although it is not part Mission's mandate, we must highlight President Duque Márquez's announcement of the signing of the decree providing for 16 seats for victims' representation in Congress from 2022-2030. Victims are at the centre of that initiative, and therefore it is very important that the Mission be fully aware of the need to constantly support that effort for the benefit of the victims in those seats. I am very grateful to the representatives of Mexico, Viet Nam and India, among others, for their remarks in that regard. The commitment of President Duque Márquez and the Government to providing assistance, security and reparation for victims has been reflected in all aspects of our policy of peace with legality, in particular the results of the Victims and Land Restitution Units.

With regard to the second of the three aspects of the mandate, on security guarantees, we have set in motion the implementation of policies for our strategic security plan, which was developed by Counsellor Archila Peñalosa. For our Government, even a single death is unacceptable, and we grieve for every life lost. Again, that is totally unacceptable. Under that premise, we are working to reduce acts of violence and all homicides against the ex-combatant population. Homicides against persons in the reintegration process went from 74 in 2019 to 68 in 2020, which is 8.1 per cent lower, but I insist that there is no justification for the death of an ex-combatant. Likewise, between 1 January and 24 September 2021, that rate was 18.7 per cent lower than during the same period in 2020, but our goal is to reach zero homicides.

As several Council members have mentioned, including the representative of the United States, the investigation, indictment and conviction of those acts by the Prosecutor's Office must continue to be fulfilled in a prompt and effective manner. As of 1 October, investigative progress had been made in 182 of the 340 cases reported against persons in the reintegration process. The Prosecutor's Office reports that the majority of incidents — more than 70 per cent — occurred in drug trafficking corridors and in areas where there are disputes between groups of drug traffickers, including FARC dissidents. Many of them killed their former comrades-in-arms when the latter refused to return to coca cultivation. That is not true for all cases, but the figures from the Prosecutor's Office show that 70 per cent are closely related to those areas linked to drug trafficking activity.

Between January and August, we also saw a 29 per cent decrease in the number of murders of human rights leaders and defenders as compared to the same period in 2020. That is why the strategic security plan is so important. Despite the work of the Government and Colombian society as a whole, we cannot ignore the fact that drug trafficking poses a major challenge, and we hope that the former FARC will make far more progress in its commitments to fight that scourge. Above all, we hope that headway will also be made in terms of transitional justice by obtaining the truth about the effective identification of drug trafficking routes and allied cartels operating in other countries, including where they launder their money or keep their financial assets.

Let us remember that the peace agreement was signed knowing that the FARC was not, at that time, the sole generator of violence, which was fuelled for decades by drug trafficking in our country. The National Liberation Army, the Clan del Golfo, Los Pelusos, Los Caparros, Los Contadores and many others with different names already existed when the peace agreement was signed. Today they are still in the drug trafficking business, generating violence with the FARC dissidents who never entered the peace process.

Therefore, the implementation of the peace agreement alone was not enough to achieve the stable and lasting peace that we all yearn for. Those who divert attention from the real causes of the violence by trying to attribute it to alleged failures on the part of our Government are mistaken. Not only have we achieved in three years that which had not even begun in the first two, we have gone above and beyond our commitments on several fronts of the agreement and will continue to do so. We are doing everything in our power to achieve a true and lasting peace with legality alongside an economic development that generates quality jobs across all of Colombia, including in rural areas.

It must be acknowledged that those groups that persist in drug trafficking activities are hindering the implementation of the peace agreement. They have attacked civilians, assassinated social leaders and killed dissidents and persons participating in crop substitution efforts. That is why it is so important to insist, once again, before the Security Council, on the need for the entire international community to genuinely assume its shared responsibility in the fight against the infamous drug business that has fuelled the FARC, the National Liberation Army and the many other groups I mentioned in Colombia and in so many other places across the world.

Colombia reiterates its call for the shared undertaking of responsibility against drug trafficking because ours is a country that struggles every single day, with the tireless efforts and hard work of its 50 million inhabitants, to continue advancing and achieving peace. However, to be quite frank, I must inform the Council that our entire country is the primary victim of a vile business, which, today, already processes part of the coca in laboratories in the most developed countries. It feeds on social vices and the financial business of money-laundering, which few countries dare to acknowledge or address with the required severity.

In the fight against drug trafficking, our Government has invested \$280 million to assist families taking part in the national illicit crop substitution programme in 56 municipalities. Interventions have been carried out to assist 99,000 families that have found an option that guarantees development and social and economic progress, within the confines of the law, in the regions most affected by the scourge of drug trafficking.

Our Government has respected the autonomy and independence of the bodies that comprise the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. That point was underscored by the representatives of Estonia and Norway, and, for us, judicial autonomy is crucial.

The pandemic emerged and affected all Government entities. Funding allocated to the budget for the transitional justice system, the Truth Commission and the Search Unit for Missing Persons has been higher than that traditionally earmarked for the justice system. Funding allocated to those three entities totalled \$132 million in 2020 and \$151 million in 2021. That means that the Government of Iván Duque has allocated \$278 million to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. It is an unprecedented budget and level of investment that we must maintain.

I would like to make a few specific remarks about some issues that are not related to the three main aspects of the mandate outlined in the report (S/2021/824).

With respect to the Government's efforts every year to increase resources and funding allocated to peace, as I mentioned in my previous statement (see S/PV.8818), the total cost of that implementation is equivalent to almost two full years of Colombia's gross domestic product. That, undoubtedly, exceeds the budgetary capacity of our nation and, I would imagine, of any nation represented in the Chamber today. Which country could allocate two whole years of its gross domestic product to implementing an agreement that would assist a large segment — albeit barely 10 per cent — of the population?

Our Government will continue making the necessary investment, which, to date, amounts to \$8.413 billion over the past two years. It demonstrates our genuine commitment in that area. In spite of the pandemic, the Government allocated the largest budget in history for victim care, at \$263 million; the reintegration of former combatants — a much larger

amount — and for municipalities that are most affected by poverty and violence, with more than \$2.894 billion.

With regard to new reintegration areas, I underscore that such statistics do not exist and that it would not help to create them. We must strengthen what already exists, in particular elements that are already part of the agreement and the mandate. We must take all the necessary steps towards normalcy, including by accepting the territorial planning system already in place. As reintegration is guaranteed for all former combatants, we expect that when they move, they will relocate to areas where opportunities are accessible, regulated and operational and not to areas where they are more complicated. We request that the Mission support us in that objective.

With regard to ethnic affairs and in response to comments from the representatives of various members, such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, together with the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — I would like to inform the Council that, a week ago, in Cali, the capital of Valle del Cauca, the Government met with the agency tasked with reviewing ethnic issues pertaining to the implementation of the agreement and agreed on a work plan for next year. We have 97 ethnic indicators and 12 of them have been finalized. The remaining 85 have recorded progress and developed work plans for 2021 and 2022. Some 66 of the 97 ethnic commitments will be implemented in the period 2026-2031.

With respect to the gender approach, which several Council members have also mentioned, tomorrow marks the International Day for Rural Women. A total of 45 per cent of former women combatants already take part in productive projects that are scalable, profitable and sustainable. The Government provides technical assistance, as well as funding and support.

The Mission's verification work responds to a specific mandate from the Council. We note, for example, that the Government's presentation to Congress of the Escazú Agreement as key legislation for the implementation process is completely unnecessary and, above all, outside the mandate. The Government has made herculean efforts in that area. Nonetheless, challenges within the Congress remain. For that reason, I would like the progress made on implementation to be acknowledged, whether or not the agreement is approved.

I sincerely thank all representatives for their comments, in particular the remarks by the representative of Ireland about the courage, perseverance and trust required to remain committed to a process of this kind. That is also in line with the remarks made by the representative of the United Kingdom at the start of his statement. Several processes fail before reaching the five-year mark. It is, for all of us, an inspiration and a reason to celebrate, given that we know that, for the past five years, we have made steady progress in this process. Of course, we will continue our efforts every day to build peace in our country, with the support of the Verification Mission. Today, therefore, on behalf of President Iván Duque, we request that the mandate be extended for another year, from 31 October. I sincerely thank the United Kingdom, in its capacity as penholder, on this specific issue.

Colombians are returning to economic growth after a very hard blow dealt by the pandemic. Many lives have been lost; the same occurred in several countries represented here. We extend condolences for the many lives that have been lost in each one of the countries represented here. Regrettably, we have lost many people in our own country — approximately 130,000. We have also lost considerable wealth. We have lost jobs and small and medium-sized enterprises. We have lost hope; many families have lost their savings and their small businesses. We are now in a period of growth and recovery. We have just one goal — to create jobs. Those jobs will bridge gaps in Colombia. They will close regional gaps and enable us to achieve equality because peace must go hand in hand with equality.

Progress in implementing the policy of peace with legality is the result of our Government's political will and that of all parties that have supported the implementation process. It is also the result of the determination of the Colombian people who work every day in support of the rigorous implementation process, led by President Ivan Duque, while endorsing the progress already achieved. The entire country must continue to trust that the international community supports us, in particular with regard to the principle of shared responsibility required to combat drug trafficking, which continues to fuel violence throughout our country.

I sincerely thank all members for their support and remarks. I also thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his work in Colombia.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.