



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8880th meeting

Friday, 15 October 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Kimani/Mr. Kiboino/Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya)

Members:

China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mrs. Gasri
India	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Norway	Ms. Syed
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
Tunisia	Mr. Ben Lagha
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Farrey
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2021/861)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

21-29123 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2021/861)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/861, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: I am pleased to be here in the Council today and to brief it on essential developments in Kosovo since our last meeting, in April (see S/2021/370).

Following the end of the official reporting period detailed in the Secretary-General's report, we have experienced developments that remind us — beyond recent events in Kosovo — that a lack of political understanding and communication is a vector for the escalation of tensions, especially in fragile security environments characterized by mistrust.

On the morning of 20 September, Pristina launched a police operation in northern Kosovo to enforce a new licence-plate validity regime. Given the history of

sensitive and long-standing discussions on freedom of movement conducted over years through the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue, it would have been natural to expect early and clear communication with those affected. However, little or no such communication was attempted by the authorities. The international community on the ground, including the Kosovo Force (KFOR), with its responsibility for maintaining a safe and secure environment, was not given prior notification.

As a result, a stand-off developed as protesters in the north blockaded traffic at the northern gates along the Administrative Boundary Line. Special units of the Kosovo police force, armed with long weapons, deployed to the northern crossing points in armoured vehicles. Those units in one instance utilized tear gas and percussion grenades in an attempt to disperse the protesters. Over the ensuing several days, the number of both protesters and special police units increased. On 26 September, an as-yet-unexplained fire was set at the vehicle registration centre in Zubin Potok, while overnight on 25 September undetonated ordnance was discovered in another public office in the north. For its part, the Serbian army deployed a platoon-strength reaction force in the vicinity, north of the Administrative Boundary Line, and conducted several military overflights in the same area.

International officials such as myself with long experience on the ground could hardly be surprised by the reaction to this strong-armed effort to implement a change of policy, given the history of mistrust and the sensitivity of community relations in the north. The fact that that effort was not discussed through established channels — in the first place, the EU-facilitated dialogue on freedom of movement — resulted in an avoidable yet potentially dangerous escalation of tensions lasting for 10 days. Through the good offices of European Union High Representative Borrell, supported also by United States diplomacy, an agreement was achieved to de-escalate that hazardous situation. It provided for the withdrawal of Kosovo special police units from the north and an increased KFOR presence to establish a safe and secure environment. An interim solution was agreed on licence-plate validity, with discussions to continue during the following six months.

What we witnessed in the north could be called a bruising episode, but it could far too easily have turned into a real haemorrhage. The volatility of the situation can also be understood by the direct personal

interventions with the Pristina and Belgrade leaders by NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg and President of the European Commission von der Leyen, among others. While closely monitoring the situation, my Mission also played a tempering role on the ground, making use of our experienced presence in the north, in order to encourage calm and reduce the likelihood of an accidental or uncontrolled confrontation between special police and the public. I also raised my voice against unilateral actions, calling for responsible leadership and for the taking of immediate steps to reduce tensions and continue the political dialogue.

Then, just this past Wednesday, Kosovo police special units were once again deployed into the north, as part of what has been described as an anti-smuggling operation conducted in several locations in Kosovo. It is questionable whether KFOR was properly informed in advance of the deployment of special police units. Over the course of the day, that operation provoked further protests and clashes that resulted in a significant number of injuries among protesters, police and uninvolved civilians, including, in one case, a life-threatening wound caused by police gunfire, in circumstances still to be clarified.

Civilians in North Mitrovica reported injuries in their homes from tear gas and percussion grenades, which were in use by police over a period of several hours. Protestors threw stones, and, according to the Kosovo police, some suspects used firearms to engage the police. As EU High Representative Borrell observed afterward,

“Unilateral and uncoordinated actions that endanger stability are unacceptable ... [I]ssues must be addressed through the EU-facilitated dialogue.”

Accounting for context and exercising responsible forethought are essential to avoiding unintended consequences and strategically risky escalation. The latest actions deepened the mistrust felt among the Serb population in the north and led to strong reactions in Belgrade, making a responsible recommitment to dialogue all the more imperative now.

I have spoken in detail about the events of 20 to 30 September and other issues with both Prime Minister Kurti and President Vučić. I have also been engaged in conversations with the diplomatic actors involved, especially those representing the United States, the Russian Federation and China, as well as the KFOR Commander and EU officials.

There are several important lessons — or perhaps better, reminders — that emerge when it comes to Belgrade-Pristina relations, regional stability and the indispensability of the dialogue process. Dialogue can and should be the mechanism used to avoid the dangers that are less often visible but are just as real as they have been during these past 20 years. History in the region has tragically and repeatedly shown that ostensibly small incidents, the misreading of intentions and outright mistakes can trigger an unstable security escalation that puts lives at risk and benefits no one.

International actors, including my team and Security Council members, welcomed the recent encounter between President Vučić and Prime Minister Kurti on 6 October during the EU-Western Balkans summit, in the presence of French President Macron and German Chancellor Merkel. Still, it would be premature and overly optimistic to say that we can see a resumption of real commitment to the dialogue, which remains the only forum in which responsible and result-oriented discussions can continue.

I raised the importance of continuity in the dialogue with both President Vučić and Prime Minister Kurti during my talks with them. This is also a daunting challenge for the EU institutions, which are charged with leading this process in a meaningful way. What I noticed and heard in my meetings with representatives of the international Powers represented in the Security Council is that, despite differences on other matters, they do clearly share an understanding that there is no reasonable alternative to sustained engagement in dialogue. It is a minimum — to help avert the retrograde potential exhibited these past weeks. Further, it is important to support all initiatives that may help to promote responsible relations among all neighbours in the Western Balkans.

From my point of view, trust continues to be the element in shortest supply: trust in good faith negotiations, trust between representatives and their constituencies, and trust in the institutions that have been established to deliver both. Observing the many cycles of the dialogue over more than six years, I maintain the strong personal conviction that if the vast majority of people from the various communities, including women and young people, do not feel themselves to be a part of, or to have a stake in, the processes of political discussion and negotiation, if there is no mobilization of society, and if they are not, at the very least, even aware of what is being discussed, then all efforts to change

relations and resolve long-term tensions are destined to remain elusive. A facilitated agreement on paper is a vital objective but having a paper in hand does not equate to having a solution in hand. Those who could exert more influence on negotiating parties to succeed are mostly worn out by tired arguments and nationalist political sloganeering. This is true in Kosovo, it is true in Serbia, and it is true across the entire region.

As Kosovo is approaching another local election in two days' time, the focus at the central and municipal levels should now be trained upon delivering on people's high expectations for change. Why was turnout so high in the past general election? In fact, what the people called for is more responsive and responsible government, including tangible follow-through on the reform agenda promised during the campaign period. Even more, voters clearly want public institutions to work in favour of the welfare of people, in contrast to the past. They want greater equality of economic and social opportunity, fairness, accountability and reliable recourse to the rule of law. Accordingly, Prime Minister Kurti, who on at least two occasions has shared with me the major priorities of his Government, assured me of his focus on this reform agenda, calling it his top priority. I urge the Government today publicly, as I have done privately, to focus on rebuilding the bonds of trust so long broken between all the communities in Kosovo and the political leadership.

Rebuilding trust demands a sincere approach to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue process, as well as building an encouraging atmosphere among the different communities within Kosovo. Dealing maturely and responsibly with the past is a precondition for stability, which includes avoiding the instrumentalization of divisive ethno-nationalist themes for political advantage.

I have had many conversations with leaders of countries of the region during the past year, including with President Vučić and Prime Minister Rama of Albania, and I want to stress that practical regional approaches have begun to evolve, utilizing the commonality of interest in increased prosperity as an engine to bring about a more stable region. Like the Berlin process, upon which it was partly modelled, the "Open Balkan" initiative promoted by President Vučić, Prime Minister Rama and Prime Minister Zhev of North Macedonia, is in my view a promising step exactly in this direction, despite differences over its details and form.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to present an unprecedented challenge to Kosovo and the region. Curtailing its spread and mitigating its socioeconomic consequences are another matter that behove cooperation across borders, boundaries and ethnicity. Through the donations on the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, the United Nations has helped Kosovo's vaccination programme, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Kosovo team have been working closely with the authorities to encourage and promote the acceptance of vaccinations and preventive measures. I am proud that UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team contributed to increasing the COVID-19 testing and vaccination capacity in Kosovo and provided humanitarian assistance and equipment to the most vulnerable. They have also focused on objectively monitoring human rights protections in relation to the pandemic. With strong support from Headquarters, we successfully completed a vaccination campaign for all United Nations staff and dependents, international and local, not only in UNMIK but also in all other United Nations entities on the ground.

In accordance with our mandate, the Mission continues to widely engage on the ground across multiple sectors and areas of work, anchored by an agenda dedicated to promoting and supporting trust-building among Kosovo's diverse communities.

I have spoken already of trust as a major preoccupation of my time and vision for our Mission, a strategy that we have forged and refined through experience. Such work is indispensable, and must continue, for the reasons that I stressed earlier. We have used the important instrument of our programmatic funds to set the tone and to seed the realization of nearly all the objectives laid out during the United Nations trust-building forum that I hosted in 2018 through the combined efforts of UNMIK, the United Nations Kosovo team and our many international partners working hand in hand with members of different communities who believe in a peaceful future together.

From our work promoting the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas to supporting multilingual education, funding and cosponsoring debate on television and new-media platforms and providing legal assistance and education for access to justice, we have helped to model the people-centred approach and society-level engagement

articulated in the Secretary-General's reform programme and *Our Common Agenda*.

That is a catalyst role, to which our Mission remains dedicated, engaging with and empowering voices for change, while applying our creativity, understanding and analysis of the real circumstances to promote long-term and sustainable benefits for all. In my view, such work is the bedrock of a sustainable agreement, without which the vicious cycles of public mistrust and the use of divisive rhetoric for short-term political gain will simply repeat themselves. The events of the past weeks, with their propensity to unravel the steady but fragile progress made in rebuilding trust among communities, are of deep concern to me and should be a warning to all members of the Security Council.

I thank the members of the Council most sincerely for their attention and for their continuing support throughout all these years to myself and UNMIK.

The President: I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Mr. Selaković (Serbia): I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres and his Special Representative and Head of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Tanin, for the report (S/2018/861) submitted and for their efforts made towards the implementation of the UNMIK mandate. I would also like to thank the members of the Security Council for the continued attention that they have devoted to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. The Republic of Serbia highly values the activities of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and Metohija and supports it in carrying out its work as efficiently as possible, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), and undiminished in scope, aiming to build and preserve lasting peace, stability and security in the province. I ask Mr. Tanin to kindly accept the expressions of our gratitude for his engagement and the cooperation that we achieved during his term of office.

Deep regret and concerns are raised by the fact that the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija in the past period was marked by an increasing number of various ethnically motivated attacks and incidents targeting Serbs, which was also stated in the report. They are also raised by the fact that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Pristina continue to take unilateral steps and refuse to implement the agreements

reached in the Brussels dialogue and that institutional discrimination against Serbs, attacks on the sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the undermining of the economic sustainability of Serb communities in the province have continued.

We are witnessing that dangerous provocations by Pristina are taking place every day, at an accelerated pace, thereby seriously threatening the safety of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and directly violating the agreements and arrangements reached within the Brussels dialogue.

The latest violent incursion of the so-called Kosovo Police Special Regional Operations Units into the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, on 13 October, is the ninth incursion of its kind. Tear gas, shock bombs and unbridled violence are becoming a matter of everyday life for Serbs in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, and they must therefore be stopped immediately.

In the most recent attack with firearms and chemicals by the Pristina special forces, 71-year-old Verica Djelic died as a result of chemicals used in the intervention. Ten unarmed civilians were wounded, one of whom, 36-year-old Srecko Sofronijevic, shot in the back with an automatic rifle, was critically injured. A three-month-old baby, who miraculously remained unharmed, was also the target of the shooting. The false excuse for the latest unilateral action, as the High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. Josep Borrell, called it, was the fight against organized crime and smuggling.

Serbia is strongly against organized crime and smuggling, but the members of the Security Council should know that such an important and general global goal, which we all share, was cynically used for an armed attack on unarmed civilians, which began with an automatic rifle raid on pharmacies at which patients of Serbian and other nationalities are supplied with vitally important medicines. Four days before the local elections in Kosovo and Metohija, in order to gain votes in an irresponsible and inhumane way, fully motivated by separatist goals, the current PISG regime used medicines on which people's lives depend to prove its position on the status, contrary to resolution 1244 (1999).

Only a few days earlier, another provocation on the part of Pristina led to a dangerous crisis, when personnel of the so-called Kosovo Police Special Regional Operations Unit, armed with long firearms

and reinforced with armoured vehicles, were deployed to administrative crossings between central Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija — Brnjak and Jarinje — in order to remove Serbian licence plates and replace them with temporary ones, thereby violently preventing the free movement of citizens.

Those events do not fall within the reporting period covered by the latest report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK, but it is incumbent upon us to address them on this occasion in order to have everyone understand the gravity of the situation on the ground and how serious the consequences of Pristina's unilateral actions can be.

The incursions of heavily armed Pristina police formations, composed exclusively of Albanians, into the north of Kosovo and Metohija with the use of excessive force, under various pretexts and motives, are extremely dangerous provocations that have the potential to destabilize the already sensitive security situation on the ground. The goal of the latest incursions of Pristina's special force personnel into the north of the province was to provoke the Serbs and further intimidate them with a show of force, as well as to provoke a hasty reaction from Belgrade.

It is obvious that with such moves Pristina aims to erase 10 years of dialogue, which is the only way to resolve open issues. Those provocations once again demonstrate that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina not only do not intend to implement everything agreed in the Brussels dialogue, but also aim to completely reject dialogue as a means of resolving problems. Calling on both sides for restraint and to be constructive, which has long been the public messaging of some important actors in the international community, is not an effective response to Pristina's lack of credibility and dangerous playing with fire, which could have unforeseeable consequences. There is only one source of destabilization; it has a name — the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina. After the events of 13 October, it is clear that it can and needs to be stopped through the urgent and decisive action of the international community. It is now quite obvious that these are no longer sporadic and isolated provocations by Pristina, but rather an organized campaign of ethnically motivated violence and discrimination against Serbs.

We also express our concern over the latest imposition of tariffs by Pristina on certain products

originating from central Serbia, which was made public on 8 October. We remind the Security Council that the unilateral decision of Pristina in November 2018 to impose duties on products from central Serbia resulted in a de facto complete trade blockade and a long-term stalemate in dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In contrast to Pristina, which persistently seeks to raise barriers towards central Serbia through unilateral actions, Belgrade persistently and consistently works to liberalize the flow of people, goods, services and capital, which is the basic goal of our "Open Balkan" initiative. North Macedonia and Albania joined the initiative, but Pristina did not.

In the period from March to September 2021, which is covered in the latest report, close to 100 ethnically motivated attacks were carried out against Serbs, their private property and their religious and cultural heritage sites. The increase in the frequency of attacks was accompanied by intensified ethnically motivated violence, which increasingly targets children, the elderly, women, the few returnees present there, as well as churches and other property of the Serbian Orthodox Church. That systematically intensifies the ubiquitous sense of insecurity among the remaining Serbs and also deters potential returnees, who are in fact being told that local Albanian communities can attack them with impunity and prevent them from returning to live in their own homes.

The most striking example of the position of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija is the case of Ms. Dragica Gašić, a displaced person who moved into her apartment in the municipality of Đakovica again in early June. In that town, which local Albanians proudly refer to as a place forbidden to Serbs, Ms. Gašić, on her return, first faced physical and verbal attacks by citizens of Albanian nationality living there. Instead of being provided protection, Ms. Gašić, who is quite ill, became a victim of institutional persecution unleashed by the local self-Government bodies and the police. Since she is the first and only Serb returnee to Đakovica in more than 20 years, it was to be expected that, at that moment, at least civil society organizations would attempt to protect her rights. However, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Đakovica soon joined the activities aimed at expelling Ms. Gašić, including NGOs receiving funding from international donors for projects related to strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

I must also mention the latest attack on the house of the only remaining Serbian woman in the centre

of the city of Peć, retired teacher Rumena Ljubić, whose windows were stoned twice in only 24 hours on 13 October.

The plight of Ms. Gašić and Ms. Ljubić is a frightening reflection of the real situation of human rights that almost every one of more than 200,000 displaced Serbs and non-Albanians would face in Kosovo and Metohija — provided that they gather the courage to return to their homes in the province after more than 20 years. I would like to remind the Council once again that since 1999 only around 1.9 per cent of internally displaced Serbs and other non-Albanians have achieved a sustainable return to Kosovo and Metohija, as mandated by resolution 1244 (1999).

I therefore believe that those examples will encourage the members of the Security Council and the international presence on the ground to devote priority attention in future to the issue of the return of displaced persons, which is an important part of the UNMIK mandate under resolution 1244 (1999).

I therefore thank the Secretary-General in particular for continuing to focus on this extremely important issue and for calling once again, in the conclusions of his report, for the creation of conditions for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons and the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

Serbian medieval monuments in Kosovo and Metohija, including priceless monuments that are inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger, are constantly being subject to threats and are still among the most endangered cultural heritage sites in Europe. I wish to recall that there are over 1,300 Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija. Attacks on Serbian cultural and religious heritage are at the same time attacks on the identity of Serbs in the province and directly affect their sense of safety.

A striking example of disrespect for Serbian cultural and religious monuments in the province is the case of the Visoki Dečani monastery, which is under threat and has been the target of attacks and shelling several times since 2000, and it is therefore still being protected by the Kosovo Force (KFOR). The monastery was the target of a series of hostile actions, and the perpetrators are not deterred by the fact that it is a World Heritage site. Despite frequent declaratory statements to the contrary, including the decision five years ago of the so-called “constitutional court” of Pristina confirming

the monastery’s ownership of over 24 hectares, is not being respected. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General’s assessment in his report in that regard.

The Republic of Serbia remains committed to finding a compromise political solution, as prescribed under resolution 1244 (1999), which will ensure lasting peace and stability. We firmly believe that dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached are the only right way to resolve all open issues.

As a State committed to respect for international law and a Member of the United Nations, Serbia opposes any attempt to establish an artificial balance between the parties in the dialogue, as well as the relativization of responsibility for unilateral acts. We note with concern that, not even eight years after reaching the Brussels Agreement, the establishment of the community of Serb municipalities has not been initiated, even though Belgrade has fulfilled all its obligations under the Agreement.

There are also numerous and repeated examples of Pristina violating or obstructing agreements reached in dialogue in the areas of energy, justice, the freedom of movement and the visits of officials. One such example is the verdict sentencing Ivan Todosijević to two years in prison, which is also pointed out in the Secretary-General’s report. The Brussels Agreement was directly breached, which was also stated by the representatives of the European Union. With its conduct, Pristina caused immeasurable damage to the reconciliation process in Kosovo and Metohija. Despite the interpretation by the European Commission that this is a violation of the Brussels Agreement, because Todosijević had to be sentenced by a panel in which the majority of the judges were of Serbian ethnicity, Pristina still has not taken any action in that regard. Pristina also continued with the practice of banning Serbian officials from entering the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.

We believe that it is important that the international community, and especially the European Union, as a guarantor of the Agreement, firmly insist that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina start implementing all the agreements reached.

As before, the Republic of Serbia remains fully committed to resolving the issue of missing persons, as also demonstrated through full cooperation with relevant international mechanisms, as well as participation in the work of the Working Group on

Missing Persons. We expect that the representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina will fulfil their obligations.

Bearing in mind everything I stated in my address at this meeting today, we hold the position that the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), is still necessary. In addition to UNMIK, the presence of KFOR, as the main guarantor of security, and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, due to its engagement in the field of the rule of law, are also important.

I would like to emphasize once again that Serbia fully supports respect for international law, the comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the activities of UNMIK in an undiminished scope and with adequate financial resources, so that the mission fulfils the mandate entrusted to it under the resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Osmani-Sadriu.

Ms. Osmani-Sadriu: It is an honour to be here with the Security Council today as the President of the Republic of Kosovo.

Just 22 years ago, I was listening to the United Nations meetings on the fate of our people and our nation, while I was seeking refuge in the mountains to avoid the shelling and the grenades of the Serbian army against all our people. Today, 22 years later, as the newly elected President of the Republic of Kosovo, I have the privilege of representing my people, all the people of Kosovo.

The truth is that I am only able to sit among Council members today because of the determination, the perseverance and the liberation struggle of the people of Kosovo to see our country free from oppression and from genocidal rule, to see our country independent and sovereign.

That was made possible only with the help of our allies, the ones that believed in our right to self-determination and our right to statehood, the ones that stood by us in the darkest days and in the brightest. To all of those who believed in us back then and continue to walk with us side by side as we open new chapters of progress, I want to take a moment to say a heartfelt “thank you”. I thank them on behalf of all the people of the Republic of Kosovo.

We have come a long way since then. Our story is far from over, and much of our potential is yet to be fulfilled. But our future is bright, and I am confident that one day we will join Council members at this table, part of the family of nations that today make up the United Nations.

We have been through too much, and our sacrifice has been too great, to take steps backwards. That is why we look to the future with strength, courage and confidence in ourselves and in the potential that our young Republic holds.

As someone described it recently, Kosovo is a beacon of hope in the region. The people of Kosovo stand for freedom, human rights, the rule of law and democracy. They stand for the values that make this world a better place and values that this Organization works hard to promote. But hope thrives only when there is trust.

Our citizens believe in a future with greater employment opportunities and a strengthened rule of law. Today they believe in a Kosovo where equality, inclusiveness and respect for all prevail — and we are working hard to turn their expectations into reality. The truth of the matter is that the trust of the people in their institutions has never been higher.

From a war-torn country to a country hit hard by the pandemic, I can proudly say that Kosovo has emerged as one of the most vibrant democracies in the region. This year we are even facing the prospect of double-digit growth in the gross domestic product.

What a potential foreign investor would find in Kosovo today is a country with a truly talented, highly skilled, tech-savvy and multilingual youth, where 70 per cent of the population is under the age of 35; a country with a system of low and extremely competitive taxes, as well as a completely new legal infrastructure that is compatible with European Union (EU) legislation; a country with a 90 per cent Internet penetration rate that has enabled us to become a tech hub in our region.

It is also worth noting that, as a historical net importer, Kosovo’s products are becoming household names in markets such as those of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, the United States, the United Kingdom and many more. Our products are even making their way to countries such as Ukraine, India and China. And we hope that political relations will soon reflect the existing economic ties. In other words, Kosovo is proving to the

world its transformative spirit across many areas of the economy and other sectors.

Despite being the last country in Europe to start administering vaccines, Kosovo today is not only vaccinating the fastest, but it has also surpassed the region and some EU member States in the percentage of the population that has been inoculated against the coronavirus disease.

But above all, Kosovo is thriving in an era of unprecedented institutional stability and trust. Our reforms to strengthen the rule of law are being conducted at a record level, and we hope to become an example of effective and meritocratic governance not just for the region, but also beyond.

I can give Council members endless statistics about our successes, but the story of Kosovo is, and has always been, a story of its people. Today that is the story of three women who are now Olympic gold medallists — Majlinda, Nora and Distria — who have turned our young Republic, a two-time Olympic runner, into a threefold Olympic gold medal winner.

Or indeed it is the inspiring story of Fahrije Hoti and the women of Krusha, who are perfectly portrayed in the film *Hive* — which I invite members to watch — Kosovo's triple-award winner at the Sundance Film Festival, and hopefully soon to be an Oscar winner. The film is the strongest testament to the consequences of the war and the perfect embodiment of resilience, survival and triumph.

Kosovo's story is also the story of an almost 14-year-old independent country where one of the highest voted members of Parliament is Vafije Krasniqi, a brave and outspoken survivor of rape during the war; where Saranda Bogujevci, a survivor of a massacre against her entire family, is now the Vice-President of the Parliament; where the votes of the citizens in the last elections produced a Parliament composed of more women members of parliament than the EU average, and where the country is led by a woman for the second time. As well as endless successes at home, our incredibly engaged and successful diaspora all over the world continues to make us want to burst with pride. From Dua Lipa and Rita Ora to world-renowned football players, academics and scientists, we thank them all for being our greatest ambassadors and showing the world the best of Kosovo.

Today our country is a genuine representation of a peace-loving and peace-exporting nation. Our soldiers serve alongside United States troops in peacekeeping missions, and they continue to display unmatched professionalism. In the midst of one of the biggest crises in recent history, our people and our institutions opened their hearts and minds to the citizens of Afghanistan seeking refuge. That is not only a reflection of who we are as a people, but it is also a confirmation of our readiness to stand by our allies and actively contribute to the international community. As former refugees ourselves, no one better understands their suffering than the people of Kosovo.

There is too much to share here, but for now I ask that everyone keep their hearts and minds open to the people of Kosovo. We will do the rest. Rest assured that the youngest country in Europe will not only exceed expectations and continue to strengthen its statehood, but it will also keep making our allies proud.

As we discuss the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), I want to take a moment to address the members of the Security Council. UNMIK was established 22 years ago under extremely different circumstances. Following the NATO intervention to put a halt to Serb war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the people of Kosovo, the Council authorized the establishment of an international civilian presence to provide an interim — I repeat, interim — administration.

The International Court of Justice, a United Nations organ, has confirmed that the legal regime of resolution 1244 (1999) was supposed to work only until the final status of Kosovo was determined. That status was determined, once and for all, on 17 February 2008, when Kosovo's declaration of independence was, according to the International Court of Justice, in full compliance with international law as it was made pursuant to the proposal of the United Nations Special Envoy, Mr. Ahtisaari.

Upon Serbia's request, the General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice to rule on Kosovo's declaration of independence. That ruling was unequivocal: no provision of international law was violated. Therefore, we call on Serbia to respect international law, as we likewise call upon those members that are still in doubt with respect to Kosovo's independence.

The Republic of Kosovo today is a free, sovereign, independent and increasingly prosperous country. That should serve as sufficient evidence to make it clear to everyone that UNMIK has not only overstayed its mandate but is also there in contradiction to the interpretation of the International Court of Justice. While we thank it for its work, we urge the members of the Security Council to put its budget to better use. While they are using that budget, I invite them to be impartial and not send an entirely distorted message of what happened in the north of Kosovo, thereby showing unprecedented bias and only contributing to tensions in our region.

The painful irony that Kosovo is still not a State Member of the United Nations is that it is one of the biggest champions of peace and security in the world. Every single citizen of our young republic understands the devastation of war, which is something we desperately want to avoid anywhere in the world. The people of Kosovo are true internationalists at heart. They want to see the world, nurture existing relations and create new ones with people of the countries in every corner of the world. We are passionate pro-Europeans. We are passionately pro-NATO. We believe in a united Europe as a political and a values-based project. We believe in the peace and stability that NATO provides.

Equally so, we profoundly believe in a world led by the values embodied by the United Nations. As long as Kosovo is left out of United Nations bodies and other international organizations, the collective effort of this family of nations will always be one step away from fully delivering on its mission. The common projects of preventing future pandemics, fighting climate change, meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and combating international crime will be at least one step away from being fully complete.

In that connection, I say today that is it long overdue for Kosovo to have the support of all and to become a member of international organizations such as the World Health Organization, UNESCO and INTERPOL, as well as to be given its deserved seat at the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be able to discuss alongside all other members the common fate of humankind.

Ultimately, we see membership of the United Nations, its agencies and other international organization as a coronation of our historical efforts

to promote well-being, peace and security at home and abroad. That is why those memberships are so important to us, and why they form a key pillar of our foreign policy efforts.

Kosovo also understands all too well that regional cooperation is at the heart of our ambition to join the EU, and that all such initiatives must be based on the rules of the EU. That is why we are proud to participate in the Western Balkans Berlin process, the only initiative that aims to have our region join the European Union.

Let me make one thing clear, in case anyone has any doubt. Kosovo has always been the peaceful neighbour: a neighbour that does not use its institutions to interfere in the internal affairs of others or to create destabilization; a neighbour that cherishes and takes pride in the successes of others. It is precisely in that spirit that we see regional cooperation today.

Our region is small, but friends of Kosovo within it are in great numbers. Those friends recognize our struggle and our reality. They walked side by side with us towards building on our joint achievements, and they share our common challenges. Unfortunately, we cannot say that is the case with Serbia, but what I can say today is that we, as Kosovo, are committed to making that the case with Serbia as well.

The dialogue between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia is designed to lead us towards meeting that goal. Kosovo has, is and will continue to not only sit at the table but to also actively engage in the dialogue, where the final goal is mutual recognition. What the dialogue is not about, though, is saving the personal career of any politician in Serbia involved in the process. It is not about coming up with dangerous adventures that belong to the nineteenth century. Despite what our counterparts may hope, it is not, and never will be, about the status of Kosovo, which was resolved once and for all in 2008 with the support of most members of the Council. The dialogue is between two equal parties, and the parties should be treated as such.

Above all, that dialogue is about the end beneficiaries, namely, the citizens and the peoples of both countries, improving their lives and building a more prosperous and secure future for them. Despite having been the victim of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, Kosovo continues to be a strong advocate for peace and for engaging in the dialogue with Serbia in good faith. That has been particularly clear in recent months, as Kosovo continues to bring ideas to the table

while Serbia rejects everything without engaging with the content. Serbia must be encouraged to come to the table with an open mind and with ideas that will move the region forward. Most important, Serbia needs to understand that the reality of an independent Kosovo will never change.

Our patience will not wear thin. We will continue to be a positive force and a constructive party to the dialogue, presenting the interests of our country in the best way by seeking justice for the forcibly disappeared during the war and looking for ways to instil sustainable peace.

If we want to be successful in that endeavour, we need our counterpart to start implementing. Kosovo has implemented the vast majority of the agreements — over 90 per cent, according to Brussels. With regard to the creation of a mono-ethnic association, as specified in the agreement signed in Brussels, that was submitted for the seal of approval from our Constitutional Court. However, it is that very court that ruled that the agreement is in clear violation of our Constitution, because any court that interprets our Constitution — a Constitution that is founded on the idea of promoting and embracing multi-ethnicity — cannot stand behind an agreement that would end up doing the exact opposite.

By significant contrast, according to the European Union itself — the guarantor and mediator of that dialogue — Serbia has not implemented two thirds — I repeat, two thirds — of the agreements signed. I therefore ask Mr. Selaković not to lecture us about non-implementation. That would not be the first time that Serbia has ignored its legal obligations, but how do we expect this to be a credible process if Serbia signs agreements but never implements them?

Despite an agreement being reached in 2013, to which Mr. Selaković referred a couple of times, the Government in Belgrade has not yet dissolved the illegal criminal structures that exist in northern Kosovo. They continue to incite terror and intimidate the Kosovo Serbs living in the north, and do not allow them to integrate into the society of which they are part. They also engage in challenging our institutions working to establish the rule of law in that part of our country. Let me be clear on this — the fight against organized crime, whether in the north or the south, is non-negotiable and must be uncompromising. To negotiate and compromise with crime is to become a part of it.

This Wednesday's rule-of-law efforts by Kosovo's multi-ethnic police institutions can under no circumstances be labelled as action in the north, because it was action in all parts of Kosovo, against persons of various ethnicities, who had one thing in common — they were directly engaged in smuggling and organized crime. Let me inform the Council of the reality of that effort under the rule of law.

The prosecutor and the judge who carried out the investigation into organized crime were both Serbs, and so are most of the police officers in the north. While eight Kosovo citizens were arrested, out of them six were Kosovo Albanians, one was Bosnian and only one was Serb. Both the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the United States and other Quint Embassies have been clear that that was a rule-of-law-action against organized crime all over Kosovo. Since we were quoting, let me clarify the real public position of KFOR.

According to KFOR,

“the operation took place in several municipalities, including those in the north. In terms of approvals, the Kosovo police has full authority and responsibility for exercising rule-of-law actions. When executing them, it does not need additional permission”.

Let me also quote the United States. According to the United States, it is concerned about

“the response against the police action, which was in favour of the rule of law all over Kosovo. The violence directed towards the police, [the] media and citizens is unacceptable and needs to be addressed”.

According to the United Kingdom,

“acting against organized crime is in the interests of all citizens of Kosovo. We support the Kosovo Government in upholding the rule of law throughout the country. Efforts to obstruct that action with violence, as well as the inflammatory rhetoric, only serves to aid those seeking to create divisions between communities in Kosovo”.

According to Germany — obviously after the statements of the Serbs:

“stop [comparing] today's police action with Kristallnacht; it is unacceptable. Such comparisons contribute to narratives of Holocaust distortion and denial. Protect the facts.

That is exactly what I am doing here — protecting the facts. I also invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to include those quotes in his next report.

There is a crucial difference between what used to obtain in the past and what is happening now in our rule-of-law efforts. This type of crime has always been multi-ethnic. Crime, especially organized crime, has no ethnicity. However, what is different now is that the fight against such crime is multi-ethnic. Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb police officers, alongside one another, are fighting organized crime. Serb judges, Albanian judges, Serb prosecutors and Albanian prosecutors are fighting organized crime alongside one another. That is the difference — the fight against organized crime is multi-ethnic, and that is why it will be successful.

However, there is more to it. We witness threats from Serbia's illegal structures in the north and their violence regularly in the everyday lives of Kosovo Serbs. Perhaps the most concerning is that we have witnessed and evidenced during the past few elections, also detailed in the reports of the European Union, as well as those of the United States Department of State. When it comes to the agreement on licence plates, unfortunately, throughout the past decade, Serbia never upheld its end of the bargain. It instead forced citizens of the Republic of Kosovo to remove their licence plates in a derogatory and dehumanizing way every single time they crossed the border.

When that agreement expired, Kosovo introduced the principle of reciprocity, as provided in the agreement itself. In return, Serbia used its illegal structures to incite violence and commit acts of terrorism as its citizens burned down public property and attacked with explosives. Meanwhile, they approached military vehicles and Russian combat aircraft a mere one kilometre away from our border. In an unprecedented, unnecessary and hostile act, the Russian Ambassador to Belgrade, alongside his military attaché, nonetheless showed up to give Serbian troops words of encouragement. In the twenty-first century, what so-called peace-loving nation threatens stability in such a flagrant manner?

Our history does not begin at the negotiation table in Brussels. We are all old enough to remember the sheer destruction and devastation that took place during the 1990s in the Western Balkans. It is no coincidence

that Serbia's efforts to bring about instability occur simultaneously throughout Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. That plan has an author, and its name is the Serbian Government. That should raise alarm bells around the world, in particular for allies who worked with us to bring peace to our region.

Vučić talks in plain and clear language when he expresses his ambitious and dangerous ideals. He makes no attempt to hide his admiration for his former boss, the Butcher of the Balkans, Slobodan Milošević. According to him,

“Milošević was a great Serbian leader whose intentions were certainly for the best, but the results were poor”.

Let me talk about the results of that regime. Approximately 140,000 innocent people lost their lives during the Milošević genocidal wars in the former Yugoslavia. In Kosovo, more than 13,000 people brutally murdered, 20,000 women were raped, and more than 1,600 people were forcibly disappeared and are still missing to this day. They are in mass graves in Serbia. We have the highest number of children lost per capita, if we compare the statistics to those of any other war in the former Yugoslavia. More than 1 million Albanians were ethnically cleansed from their homes in Kosovo.

What happened in Kosovo and in our region happened in front of the eyes of the Council and the eyes of the world. No single attempt by Serbia to deny those crimes or revise history will ever be successful so long as we have a voice. However, the words “never forget” should not be just a slogan. We should never forget the true face and real aims of the Serbian regime. Unfortunately, Milošević's ministers are ruling the country today. Their strategy might have changed, but their goals remain the same, aided by pure propaganda similar to that heard today.

When Vučić talks about “the ability to shoot targets from a distance of nine kilometres, deep within enemy territory”, he does not mean just Kosovo. Within that perimeter there are eight countries of the region, six of them NATO members. When he talks about creating a Serbian world, he means Greater Serbia — words that members all heard during the 1990s.

It is not enough to profess a belief in European ideals, but mass produce ethnic division and hatred across the Balkans.

It is not enough to profess a belief in human rights while systematically abusing the rights of minorities through passivation in Presevo Valley and other areas of majority Albanian population. Passivation is ethnic cleansing through administrative means. It is not enough to profess belief in the rule of law but show no signs of fighting crime and corruption. It is not enough to preach freedom of expression but strongly exercise media control.

We have a cancer at the heart of Europe, fuelled by a fascist desire to create a Serbian world, aided by their ally, Russia. Unless we all wake up to that fact urgently, I fear that we will witness a resurgence of Serbia's aggression. Kosovo's independence is permanent and irreversible, and the sooner everyone comes to terms with that reality, the better it will be for peace and stability, not only in our region, not only in Europe, but for the world as well. The Republic of Kosovo's right to exist cannot be denied; it cannot be stopped; and, most importantly, it cannot be ignored. The majority of the world has recognized our young republic; the time has come for the rest of it to do so.

In the words of Judge Trindade of Brazil, a judge at the international Court of Justice (ICJ) when it decided on our declaration of independence and who commented on Serbia's crimes in Kosovo:

“States exist for human beings and not vice versa. Serbia cannot invoke territorial integrity to commit grave breaches of international humanitarian law and then try to use this as a shield or shelter to escape from the reach of law and to enjoy impunity after shocking the conscience of humankind”.

He continued:

“An international organization like the United Nations, created on behalf of the peoples of the world, is fully entitled to help the people of Kosovo in becoming masters of their own destiny, since in this way the United Nations would be acting in pursuance of its own Charter”.

It has been more than a decade since Judge Trindade, as part of the ICJ, ruled on Kosovo's declaration of independence and its compliance with international law. Since then, the people of Kosovo truly have been the masters of their own destiny. So I urge my dear friends to come and talk to us, to hear our side of the story, to see the truth and nothing but the truth, to visit the independent Republic of Kosovo and to see for

yourself the progress that we have made and witness first-hand the warmth of the people of Kosovo.

The Republic of Kosovo is here to commit to joining all present in facing and addressing the new challenges that lie ahead and to jointly celebrate new successes as they come our way as part of the United Nations family.

The President: I thank Ms. Osmani-Sadriu for her briefing.

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

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I thank his Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković for his statement and Mr. Zahir Tanin and Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu for their briefings.

My delegation welcomes the positive political dynamic prompted by the legislative elections of 14 February as well as the general policy statement of the new Kosovo Government, which prioritizes the management of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the tackling of socioeconomic challenges. The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina requires the constructive engagement of the parties in the process of dialogue. In order to achieve a positive outcome, the parties must show political will and resolve to make mutual concessions.

My delegation expresses its deep-rooted concern at the resurgence of tensions and incidents affecting religious and cultural sites. Hostility towards the return of displaced persons also represents an aspect that should be granted particular attention. To that end, we encourage the implementation of specific measures to protect religious sites and call for respect for the protection of the rights of displaced and repatriated persons, as well as for their social reintegration in the safest and most dignified conditions possible.

Consideration of the women and peace and security dimension is a key factor in the success of a peace process. That is why we call on the Kosovo authorities to guarantee the full and effective participation of women in political processes and in all aspects of socio-political life.

To conclude, my delegation encourages the adoption of measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law, human rights and social inclusion in the implementation of the Government's reform programme. We call on Belgrade and Pristina to step up their efforts to

prevent any stalling of the dialogue. We commend the commitment of regional and international actors to support both parties on the path towards a peaceful and lasting settlement.

Mrs. Gasri (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also welcome the participation of the President of Kosovo and of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

The resolution of the dispute between Belgrade and Pristina is a European security issue; recent tensions in north Kosovo are a reminder of that. In that regard, we welcome the interim arrangement arrived at in Brussels on 30 September under the auspices of the Special Representative of the European Union, Miroslav Lajčák, and we urge both parties to arrive at a lasting solution to this issue.

The crisis is a further illustration of the fact that there is no path for either Serbia or Kosovo other than reaching a comprehensive, definitive and legally binding agreement to lastingly resolve the dispute between the two countries.

We call on Belgrade and Pristina to pursue, in a constructive manner and in a spirit of compromise, the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. It is important to refrain from any unilateral action that could undermine that dialogue.

The agreements arrived in the framework of dialogue since 2011 have provided tangible benefits for the population, and they remain fully relevant and binding. We urge both parties to respect and implement all their obligations in the context of dialogue without further delay. The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, is fully committed to that end in support of the facilitation efforts of the Special Representative of the European Union.

We also voice our support for the reform efforts undertaken by the Government of Kosovo, specifically as concerns the fight against corruption; the rule of law; and economic and social development. We commend the adoption of the strategy for strengthening the rule of law for the period 2021-2026. Those efforts are vital for European rapprochement, as is mobilization for the participation of women on an equal footing in political and social life for respect for human rights. We call for continued efforts to combat impunity and for continued

cooperation with the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office.

We thank Mr. Tanin for his efforts at the helm of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) over the past six years, in coordination with other regional and international stakeholders, specifically the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. UNMIK continues to advance security, stability, the strengthening of the rule of law and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region.

France is firmly of the view that Serbia and Kosovo have a shared European future. The European Union is the leading commercial trade partner, the leading investor and the leading donor to both countries. It has demonstrated its mobilization specifically in the fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic. The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is vital for the lasting stabilization of the Western Balkans and to the European rapprochement of both countries. France will remain committed to this issue, in support of both parties and the mediation of the European Union.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I would like to join colleagues in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I welcome His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Let me begin by reiterating India's principled position of supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. We believe that all outstanding issues need to be resolved through peaceful negotiations. In this regard, we take note of the meetings held in recent months between Serbia and authorities in Pristina under the auspices of the European Union. However, there was no outcome from these meetings.

It is important that meetings are held without any preconditions. Both sides need to resume the dialogue in good faith. Both sides need to implement already-signed agreements, including on the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, and find common ground to overcome unresolved political, ethnic and other issues.

We are concerned about the recent developments, and it is important to de-escalate tensions through

engagement and dialogue. The issue of missing persons is an important humanitarian aspect, and we hope that, with the support of UNMIK, the authorities will be able to determine the fate of persons who are still missing. The voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons from other countries in the region is also essential as a confidence-building measure. UNMIK should continue to work with other international presences to encourage the Pristina authorities to address the concerns of all communities.

We have taken note of the activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) during the reporting period as a further part of an international cooperation effort. We have also noted that Kosovo Force troops from 20 NATO and 8 non-NATO troop-contributing countries have continued to effectively fulfil their mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). Their close tactical cooperation with police authorities in Pristina and EULEX has contributed to overall safety and security.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation that UNMIK has continued to implement its mandate of promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in the region. We call on all parties to fully cooperate with UNMIK and facilitate its work.

Ms. Farrey (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing and for his service to the international community and the people of Kosovo over the past six years. We also welcome the participation of Her Excellency the President of Kosovo and His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Serbia, which signals the importance both attach to a stable, secure and prosperous future for the region and all of its people.

While there have been recent challenges to intercommunity relations in Kosovo, we note the overall positive trajectory of the situation in Kosovo set out in Mr. Tanin's briefing and in the Secretary General's most recent report (S/2021/861). At the last meeting of the Security Council on this topic, we welcomed the handling of parliamentary elections by the Kosovo authorities and the successful formation of a new Government (see S/2021/370). Today's meeting takes place just ahead of local elections, which begin on 17 October, after preparations that have been managed effectively.

As we did in April, we wish to register our concern at reports of intimidation of Kosovo Serb voters.

Everyone in Kosovo has the right to participate in free and fair elections without fear of intimidation. Similarly, we also wish to express concern at the intimidation of Kosovar Serb non-governmental organizations that work with Kosovo institutions and of individuals who seek to join Kosovo's multi-ethnic institutions.

We welcome the steps taken by the Kosovo authorities on a number of issues in the reporting period. In line with its priorities, the Kosovo Government has made progress in strengthening the rule of law, particularly through the endorsement of a regional anti-corruption and illicit finance road map and the signing off on the "Functional Review of the Rule of Law" strategy. The Government has also made strong progress towards its target of vaccinating 60 per cent of the population against the coronavirus disease virus. Finally, we wish to highlight and welcome the significant contribution made by Kosovo to NATO's evacuation efforts in Afghanistan. There is of course always more to be done, and we urge the Kosovo authorities working with all of Kosovo's communities to redouble their efforts on this path.

We welcome the support provided by the United Nations over the past six months, in particular the Mission's work on returns of displaced persons and tackling gender-based violence. We should also highlight the news of the first successful conflict-related sexual violence prosecution in July, which is a big step forward for both survivors and for the domestic prosecution of war crimes.

The Mission, together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Kosovo Force, play a valuable role in documenting inter-ethnic incidents and attacks on cultural heritage in Kosovo. The United Kingdom condemns all ethnically motivated violence. Likewise, we condemn all attacks on religious sites, including churches and mosques. We welcome the reduction in such incidents as reported by the OSCE and hope soon to see an end to all such incidents.

We emphasize our continued strong support for the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) between Serbia and Kosovo under EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák, working towards a comprehensive and sustainable normalization agreement that will benefit the people of both countries. We encourage both parties to honour their dialogue commitments, engage in the dialogue in good faith and in the interests of all

communities, and avoid actions and rhetoric that could escalate tensions and lead to unintended consequences, including violence. We welcome the recent agreement brokered in Brussels by EU Special Representative Lajčák, look forward to the start of talks in Brussels next week and urge commitment from both sides to find a resolution that ensures freedom of movement.

Over the years, UNMIK has done vital work in helping Kosovo develop into a stable and inclusive democracy. Kosovo has made huge progress since 1999, when resolution 1244 (1999) was agreed, and conditions on the ground are now very different. It is right for there to be a review of the role and responsibilities of UNMIK, which will help it operate more effectively and better address contemporary challenges.

Ms. DeShong (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks Special Representative Tanin for his detailed briefing. We commend him and the entire United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) team for the support provided to the people of Kosovo in stabilizing the situation in the region, mitigating the challenges related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and addressing the socioeconomic needs within the country for communities made most vulnerable.

We also express appreciation for UNMIK and the United Nations team in their constructive engagement with women and youth in Kosovo, particularly through trust-building initiatives and those aimed at promoting the fight against gender-based violence. We take note of the meetings held in Brussels between the European Union (EU) High Representative, Mr. Josep Borrell, the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák, the Prime Minister of Kosovo and the Serbian President.

My delegation welcomes the resumption of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina after a prolonged suspension. The normalization of relations between the parties is crucial to the stability of the region, and we encourage the sides to continue their engagement constructively in good faith and build on the progress towards a peaceful solution achieved so far.

We regret recent tensions stemming from issues surrounding license plates, and we condemn the incidents of vandalization of religious and cultural sites, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary General (S/2021/861). We call for unified actions to address

the issues. Further, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines encourages the Government of Serbia and the authorities in Kosovo to maintain the principles of the rule of law and good governance, uphold fundamental freedoms and promote protection and respect for human rights.

At the same time, we take this opportunity to reiterate the significance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the political and peace processes and the COVID-19 response. We encourage greater participation by women and youth in those processes.

We conclude by reaffirming our support for the critical work that UNMIK continues to do to fully implement its mandate in Kosovo to promote security, stability and respect for human rights.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I want to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing and all his team for their valuable work. I would like to underline at the outset Ireland's strong support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also want to thank President Osmani-Sadriu and Minister Selaković for being here today.

As we know from experience, building peace takes time and ongoing and open channels of communication. Ireland supports the Secretary-General's call on both sides to engage constructively in the renewed dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. That European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue, mandated by the United Nations, is the channel through which issues and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia can, and should, be resolved. We continue to see the value of dialogue, including at the end of September when an arrangement was reached to resolve the tensions in the north of Kosovo. We urge both sides to commit to a concerted and sincere effort to progress the EU-facilitated dialogue. We call on leaders in both Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from further divisive rhetoric and actions.

All agreements reached under the dialogue since its beginning 10 years ago need to be implemented without delay. There have been concrete gains that have improved the daily lives of people in Kosovo, and those must not be squandered; there cannot be a reset. Both sides have a responsibility to respect and implement the obligations that they have assumed under the dialogue. A comprehensive, final and legally binding normalization agreement is essential to the European

perspective of both Serbia and Kosovo and for wider stability in the Western Balkans region.

Kosovo, like many others, continues to be impacted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We greatly appreciate UNMIK's role in supporting Kosovo's COVID-19 response, particularly through the assistance that the Mission gives to the most vulnerable in Kosovo.

We value UNMIK's work on the promotion of gender equality, including by progressing the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas. UNMIK's work on gender-based violence within all communities is especially significant. Gender-based violence in Kosovo has risen year on year since 2016. Although steps have been taken to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, more must be done.

Ireland welcomes the record intake of women members elected to Parliament earlier this year and the level of women's representation in the Government overall. However, the gains made by women at the national level have yet to trickle down to the local level. Less than 8 per cent of candidates running for mayoral posts in the upcoming municipal elections are women. Women do not yet have the support of, or access to, the resources that they need to run for office at the local level. The barriers preventing their participation in political life and in the vital work of building peace must be dismantled without delay.

The people of Kosovo voted for change earlier this year and for an agenda of rule-of-law and anti-corruption reforms, which the new Government has set about tackling. We hope that the coming months will see a reinvigoration of, and delivery on, the EU reform agenda, particularly rule-of-law reforms.

In that context, I also wish to underline Ireland's support for the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. It is Ireland's view that countering impunity for past crimes is essential in preventing future violations. It is vital that the authorities in Kosovo adhere to their commitments to the Specialist Chambers.

UNMIK continues to play an important role through its trust-building projects, bringing together members of different communities, in particular young people. UNMIK supports the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Kosovo. Of particular note is UNMIK's work on missing persons. Progress on the issue can provide much-needed comfort and

solace to families of the missing and is an indispensable step in the process of reconciliation in Kosovo. It is important to building confidence between Kosovo and Serbia. We greatly value that and other aspects of UNMIK's work. We wish Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin and his team all the best in the next phase of their mission.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I would also like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing and for leading the work of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as well as President Osmani-Sadriu and Foreign Minister Selaković for their statements.

With the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic still heavily affecting Kosovo, we appreciate UNMIK's support for Kosovo's local authorities and communities in alleviating the challenges caused by the pandemic, including the delivery of COVID-19-related humanitarian assistance and medical equipment to meet the needs of persons in vulnerable situations. We also commend UNMIK for its continued support to strengthening Kosovo's rule of law and democratic institutions.

We welcome Kosovo's continued strategic commitment to its European path and encourage further progress. That includes taking forward reforms, particularly in the area of the rule of law, and the fight against corruption and organized crime, as well as promoting further socioeconomic development. We support the work of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Full cooperation with those institutions remains essential as an important demonstration of Kosovo's commitment to the rule of law. In that regard, we would like to emphasize that the European Union (EU) Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo should continue its monitoring and advisory role to the relevant rule-of-law institutions in Kosovo.

We welcome the agreement reached by the parties on 30 September, under the facilitation of EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák and following the active engagement by the EU High Representative Josep Borrell and the United States special envoy Gabriel Escobar, to de-escalate the situation in the north of Kosovo. Any further provocations or tensions that endanger stability are unacceptable and must be avoided. The EU-facilitated dialogue is the only way forward for Kosovo and Serbia to address and resolve

all open issues. In order to make good progress on the normalization of relations, it is crucial that both countries fully respect and implement all previous agreements reached in the dialogue.

With regard to the municipal elections on 17 October in Kosovo, we trust that the process will be inclusive, credible and transparent and, as a result, will help to take forward further necessary future electoral reform efforts.

Finally, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's words on the International Day of Peace:

“[M]istrust and division are driving people apart at a time when solidarity and collaboration are needed more than ever ... We must choose peace ... It is ... the only pathway to a better future.”

We therefore call on Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from any unilateral action or divisive rhetoric that could raise tensions and to engage in good faith, in a spirit of compromise, and work on reaching a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations. Such an agreement would contribute to the stability of the whole region and allow people to work together in order to advance their common regional goals.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. We appreciate his leadership and dedicated support for the Republic of Kosovo, including for addressing the continued challenges caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic. I also want to thank President Osmani-Sadriu and Foreign Minister Selaković for participating in today's meeting.

I want to begin by welcoming the 30 September agreement over license plate issues between Kosovo and Serbia, as brokered by European Union (EU) Special Representative Lajčák. The agreement is a step forward for Kosovo, Serbia and stability in the Western Balkans. It is evidence that, when leaders engage openly and seriously, they can find common ground, benefiting all of their citizens. We encourage Kosovo and Serbia to continue building on that progress by implementing the agreement, honouring prior agreements, refraining from provocations and recommitting to finding solutions to other issues through the EU-facilitated dialogue. The dialogue remains the best platform to resolve outstanding issues and normalize relations, eventually reaching agreement on mutual recognition.

We note that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) did not play a critical role in resolving recent tensions between Kosovo and Serbia over the license plate issue. The de-escalation of this issue, with temporary support provided by the Kosovo Force, shows that other organizations can serve that role to better effect. Recent events again demonstrated that UNMIK has fulfilled its purpose, as outlined in the original mandate. We should acknowledge that reality and move towards its closure.

The Security Council has a responsibility to redirect its attention and resources to areas and issues where they are needed most. The United Nations can still play an important role in furthering of the development of democratic norms and institutions in the region. But that role does not require sustaining a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. The United States expressed disappointment that prior calls from Council members to review and take steps to end the Mission have gone unheeded. We again call for the development of such a plan so that the Council can sunset UNMIK and help transition to a more effective United Nations presence that helps Kosovo and the rest of the Western Balkans realize their full potential.

We echo the Secretary-General's call for the full and equal participation of women in political processes in Kosovo and encourage the Government to continue to invest in women's advancement within civil society.

In conclusion, the United States remains fully committed to preserving stability in the Western Balkans. We will work closely with our European partners to foster peaceful, prosperous, multi-ethnic societies that respect the rule of law across the Western Balkans.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the situation in the province and for his views in that regard. On the whole, we agree with the assessments of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/861).

We welcome the participation in this meeting by Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. Today we once again listened to a propaganda pamphlet from Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu about a peaceful, multi-ethnic Kosovo that has achieved extraordinary success on the road to democracy and prosperity. This fairy tale is at odds with reality. Ms. Osmani-Sadriu relayed her version of what has

transpired in Kosovo over the past month. We are not persuaded by her account; she is misleading the Security Council and the entire international community. Her fiery rhetoric will not change the evident facts.

The situation in the northern regions of the Serb Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija is of great concern, as it has worsened considerably over the past month.

In late September, the Kosovo authorities artificially inflamed tensions in the north of the province, leading to the blocking of traffic across the administrative border. Kosovo Albanian special forces, armoured vehicles and heavy weaponry were deployed in the Serb-populated area. There were civilian casualties as a result. Thanks to the mediation of the European Union (EU), the matter appeared settled. However, no sooner had the ink dried on the agreements reached, than new egregious incidents took place on 13 October, when Kosovo special police forces carried out violent raids on shops and drug stores in Kosovska Mitrovica and Zvečan, firing guns, tear gas and stun grenades at civilians. Dozens of people were wounded as a result.

We view such actions by Pristina as a manifestation of a deliberate policy of escalation aimed at intimidating and pressuring native Serbs in order to drive them out of Kosovo. It is also clear that such sabre-rattling also has a domestic political dimension. National radicalism sells well ahead of the municipal elections of 17 October. The number of attacks on native Serbs and other non-Albanians, as well as attacks on their property, are also on the rise — nearly double the amount reported in 2020.

We welcome Belgrade's responsible stance in responding to Kosovo Albanian outrage. Belgrade has continued to comply with all its obligations under resolution 1244 (1999) and the Kumanovo Military Technical Agreement, and it has embraced good-faith dialogue in order to resolve the dispute under the auspices of the EU.

Regrettably, our Western colleagues are shying away from giving fair public assessments to the current developments. They continue to call for restraint on both sides, even though it is specifically the Kosovar leaders who are issuing ultimatums for Belgrade to recognize Kosovo's independence and pay reparations of sorts. Western countries have also failed to condemn the "Great Albanian" campaign in Tirana and Pristina. The support of some countries for measures to create a

Kosovo army is a serious problem. Such ideas should be definitively quashed, and the unacceptable rhetoric in that regard should be clearly qualified as such.

The incoherent response of Western colleagues mentoring and practically indulging Pristina gives the latter a feeling of impunity and will inevitably spiral towards open confrontation. In that connection, we wish to recall that responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in the province lies with NATO's Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

We believe that recent developments in Kosovo, as well as Pristina's overt policy of refusing to prioritize a negotiated solution, is a very dangerous trend. In recent months Pristina twice — on 15 June and 19 July — derailed the European Union-facilitated high-level dialogue with Belgrade. There is no doubt that this new tactic — armed provocations — is also aimed at undermining the negotiation process, especially since the next round is to be dedicated to the establishment of the community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo — a commitment that Pristina has failed to honour since 2013.

We wish to recall the unique responsibility of the European Union, which the General Assembly vested with mediator functions in 2010. Brussels must therefore conduct the dialogue impartially and ensure that the parties unconditionally comply with the obligations that it helped to formulate. Brussels' credibility as a mediator is at stake. Our American colleagues also have an important role to play, insofar as they have unique influence to bear on Pristina. We hope that they will help Pristina understand that there is only one way to resolve the Kosovo problem: through negotiations.

The Russian Federation firmly supports the achievement of a viable and mutually acceptable solution between Belgrade and Priština on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999). Such a solution, first and foremost, must be in line with international law and have the approval of the Security Council, as it is a matter of international peace and security.

For the same reason, we object to the admittance of Kosovo in international organizations. The right to represent the province belongs exclusively to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We support the continuation of the steady progress of the Specialist Court in The Hague in investigating

the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Twenty-two years since the outbreak of armed conflict, it is past time for justice to be done for the countless innocent victims of Kosovo Albanian extremists.

Unfortunately, justice has still not prevailed in the case of the attack, on 28 May 2019, by Kosovo Albanian police officers against Russian UNMIK officer Mr. Krasnoshchekov. Against the backdrop of the constant prioritizing of the absolute safety of United Nations staff members by the Security Council and the Secretariat, the delays in that case are all the more egregious.

Unfortunately, the judicial system in Kosovo itself continues to malfunction. That is evident in the unlawful rulings of the Court of Appeals vis-à-vis one of the leaders of the Kosovo Serbs, Ivan Todosijević, head of the Zvečan municipality, which upheld his conviction in violation of the Brussels Agreement.

The situation of the Serb minority in Kosovo remains alarming. As a consequence, there is a low rate of return of refugees and internally displaced persons to the province. There is an urgent need to address the problem of Pristina's certification of Serbian companies that will supply and distribute electricity in northern Kosovo. As the cold weather sets in, that is an issue of vital importance to the Serbs in the province.

We note the relentless attacks on centuries-old Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo. In that connection, we welcome the decision taken by UNESCO specialized agencies to preserve the Serbian Orthodox Church sites on the list of endangered sites.

Under these unfortunate circumstances, the work of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo remains urgently needed. We support the maintenance of agreed-upon budgetary and staffing capacity for UNMIK and the agreed frequency and format of open briefings in the Security Council on the issue of Kosovo. We also hope that all of the challenges facing the Mission will be reflected in the next report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing and welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Selaković. I also listened to the statement by Ms. Osmani-Sadriu.

China's position on the Kosovo issue has been consistent. I would like to reiterate that we respect

Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, understand Serbia's legitimate concerns on the issue of Kosovo and commend it for its efforts to find a political solution to the Kosovo issue. We support both parties in working within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) to find a solution acceptable to both parties through genuine dialogue and consultation.

For some time, Kosovo's continued unilateral actions have led to an escalation in tensions. China is concerned about that. Dialogue and consultation are the only solution for the Kosovo issue. Unilateral actions are not conducive to peace and stability in Kosovo and the region, and neither are they in the interests of any side. That is the common consensus in the international community. China hopes the parties concerned will avoid taking such actions and make efforts to prevent similar incidents from happening in future.

Since June, Serbia and Kosovo have conducted two rounds of high-level talks, facilitated by the European Union, which China welcomes. At the same time, we regret the fact that the high-level talks did not yield any results. China would like to encourage both sides to continue the dialogue. We commend Serbia's willingness to actively engage in dialogue and hope the international community can create a favourable environment.

Resolution 1244 (1999) provides the political and legal basis for solving the Kosovo issue. Any actions or rhetoric that go beyond resolution 1244 (1999) might lead the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo off the right track and delay a final solution to the Kosovo issue.

The effective implementation of existing agreements can help the parties to build mutual trust and inject momentum into solving pending issues. Kosovo should uphold the Brussels Agreement and effectively promote the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities at an early date.

Inclusive reconciliation and harmonious coexistence among all ethnic groups in Kosovo is in the fundamental interests of all ethnicities and would meet their development needs as well. Since the beginning of this year, incidents of discrimination, attacks and harassment targeting ethnic minorities in Kosovo have been on the rise, and there is an increase in tension among ethnic groups. China hopes that relevant parties will take active and effective measures to protect the safety, legitimate rights and interests of Kosovo Serbs,

promote national unity and lay a solid foundation for a final solution to the Kosovo issue.

Recent developments in this situation show that the Kosovo issue remains a potential security risk in the Balkans and South-East Europe. The Security Council should maintain its attention on the Kosovo issue. The role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) remains very important.

China commends the work of UNMIK, under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin, and supports UNMIK in playing a major role, in accordance with its mandate, in maintaining Kosovo's peace and stability, responding to the coronavirus disease pandemic, promoting national reconciliation and facilitating the return of displaced persons. We support the provision of adequate resources to UNMIK for the implementation of its mandate.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his informative briefing. I would like to welcome Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to this meeting and thank him for his statement. I also take note of the statement by Ms. Osmani-Sadriu.

Viet Nam welcomes the resumption of the high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina under the facilitation of the European Union (EU), after a nine-month hiatus, and the readiness by the two parties to continue discussions at the technical level to explore opportunities for further high-level talks. At the same time, it is regrettable that no significant progress has been made owing to divergent views on both sides.

On the overall situation, we underscore the importance of peaceful dialogue and reaching a durable solution between Belgrade and Pristina, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999), for the peace, stability and long-term development of Belgrade and Pristina, the Balkans and Europe. We therefore urge the parties to build on recent commitments, resume high-level talks under the EU-facilitated dialogue and implement already signed agreements, including the Brussels Agreement.

Having closely followed the situation on the ground, we are also concerned by the escalation of border tensions over the issue of license plates in late

September and take note of the subsequent agreement on temporary measures. While being beyond the reporting period, those developments are worth mentioning because of their underlying causes and the way the two sides deal with their differences. We hope that Belgrade and Pristina will respect the agreement reached and work together to find a permanent solution to the issue.

Finally, we commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for the important role it continues to play in the promotion of security and stability in the area and trust and confidence-building measures between communities, as well as its engagement with Belgrade and Pristina.

As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/861), UNMIK's work in cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and international partners is crucial to supporting communities in Kosovo in responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including the delivery of humanitarian assistance and medical equipment to persons in vulnerable situations and the distribution of COVID-19 testing materials, as well as infection detection, training and control. We encourage the international community to continue to support those efforts, as well as UNMIK's objectives and mandates in the promotion of security and stability in Kosovo.

Ms. Syed (Norway): Let me first thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/861).

The report describes progress in some areas, but a slow pace in fighting political instability. In that regard, combating corruption and ensuring the independence of the judiciary should be central. While we commend the increased efforts towards ensuring accountability and note with appreciation that the working group tasked with drafting a strategy for transitional justices has begun, we remain concerned about de facto impunity for perpetrators of violence. We urge Kosovo's leaders to capitalize on the momentum from this year's election and to consolidate the rule of law, combat corruption and protect human rights.

All actors need to engage fully in important high-level political processes such as the European Union-facilitated dialogue with Serbia. We encourage the parties to strengthen dialogue and to engage constructively based on the Brussels Agreement while exercising pragmatism in finding mutually acceptable

compromises and respecting the commitments they have already undertaken. A permanent solution to the vehicle plate issue would be a step in the right direction. An agreement between Kosovo and Serbia on the full normalization of relations is key to avoiding a frozen conflict and to achieving economic development. That is paramount to the future development of Kosovo and the region.

The negative socioeconomic and political impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Kosovo have been significant. We see worrisome trends of growing unemployment, continued loss of income, setbacks within the health and education sectors and an increase in domestic violence. Therefore, democratization, the protection of human rights, the strengthening of the rule of law and the freedom of expression and the fight against domestic and gender-based violence are fundamental to social transformation.

We echo the Secretary-General's concerns about the incidents of gender-based and domestic violence in Kosovo and welcome the ongoing efforts of Government institutions, civil society and international organizations to address those issues, including those jointly implemented by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and other United Nations entities. Further progress to fight gender-based violence, ensure property rights and ease the impact of the pandemic on women and girls is essential for Kosovo's development into a democratic, multi-ethnic and prosperous society.

We know women are key to peace. We call on parties to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of dialogue and peacebuilding. The increased representation of women in Parliament and in the current Government should serve as inspiration for the full inclusion of women in the peace dialogue.

The question of a review of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has been raised. In our opinion, although the Mission has adapted well in meeting new challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, we would support looking at possible efficiency improvements.

Let me conclude by reiterating that there is no alternative to the European Union (EU)-led process. It needs our full support. Norway will continue to work closely with EU institutions, key EU member States and the United States. We call on the parties to comply with

their commitments in order to consolidate the gains made and to engage constructively towards resolving the conflict.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation appreciates the report of the Secretary-General presented by Special Representative Tanin (S/2021/861). At the same time, we welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu.

Mexico has followed with great concern the events of recent weeks in the northern part of the Kosovo region, on which the Special Representative briefed us this morning. In that regard, we recognize the important work being carried out on the ground by Kosovo Force components to ensure a safe environment and freedom of movement for all communities living in the Kosovo region. We welcome the fact that some temporary measures have been agreed in order to reduce tensions on the ground, as well as the establishment of a working group to seek a permanent solution to the issue of vehicle registration.

However, the situation is symptomatic of broader challenges, solutions to which will be achieved only through dialogue between the parties. Progress made at meetings in recent months, within the framework of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, has been, to say the least, minimal. We urge the parties to engage constructively in order to reach permanent solutions — in particular on the final status of the Kosovo region — while fully respecting the relevant Security Council resolutions, which constitute the sole framework for reaching a settlement of the conflict.

We concur with the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues in his call for the parties to implement all past agreements reached, without exception, at least until the outstanding issues of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between the parties are resolved. In that regard, we will closely follow the outcome of the meeting of chief negotiators scheduled in the coming weeks.

With reference to the mention in the report of the Secretary-General of Gjakovë/Đakovica, Mexico reiterates, as Special Representative Tanin has done, the importance of protecting the rights of all those wishing to return to their places of origin. We urge the authorities in the Kosovo region to work with civil

society organizations and local communities to create an environment conducive to the safe, dignified and sustainable return of all those who wish to do so and to promote reintegration and reconciliation processes.

We note the observation in the report on incidents of gender-based violence and the levels of domestic violence. We call on authorities in Kosovo, civil society and international organizations to continue to promote legal action frameworks and public policies to address that challenge and ensure their full and effective implementation.

Mexico underscores that the full involvement of women in political processes as well as in all areas of political and social life is key to mending the social fabric.

I conclude by reiterating my country's support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo as it works to achieve stability and enhance the rule of law and security in the region, in cooperation with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Ben Lagha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin for his valuable briefing. We again express our appreciation and support for his efforts at the helm of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. I also welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu.

The regrettable developments in northern Kosovo over the past weeks — accompanied by escalating tensions, renewed acts of violence and clashes in Mitrovica and the northern territory — can serve only to further complicate the situation. It is yet another challenge to security and stability in the region.

In that context, my country's delegation calls on both parties to calm tensions, decrease escalation and refrain from any unilateral or uncoordinated actions and to resume dialogue under international auspices. In that vein, we value the European Union's swift response to help calm the situation and establish a working group to find a lasting solution.

My delegation welcomes the resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. We reiterate our call on both sides to continue to engage constructively in dialogue, fulfil their obligations, implement agreements to ensure

security and stability and contribute to a comprehensive political settlement.

In that regard, my country expresses its support for the efforts of the European Union Special Representative for Kosovo, while hoping that the next round of talks will bring about tangible progress on several important issues, such as the implementation of outstanding agreements, economic cooperation, the return of displaced minorities and the fate of the remaining missing persons.

Promoting trust and peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups is the only way to achieve peace and stability in Kosovo. Diversity cannot impede integration and unity if primacy is given to peaceful dialogue, consensus and reconciliation.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Tunisia's support for the various regional and international efforts to find a lasting and comprehensive solution in Kosovo, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999), in order to achieve peace and meet the aspirations of the peoples of the region towards realizing security, stability and sustainable development.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing and service.

Kenya commends the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for its efforts to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region, in line with its mandate. We note in that regard that UNMIK has had constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade, all communities in Kosovo and regional and international actors.

Kenya welcomes the meetings held over the summer between Belgrade and Pristina, including the 15 June high-level talks between Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. That is important because it is only through sustained dialogue that the normalization of relations between the two parties can be achieved.

As we all know, social media and mainstream media are increasingly important means of communication across the demographic spectrum, especially among

youth engaging in politics. Unfortunately, its use in the spread of incitement and hate speech is well documented and has been reflected in some of the reports submitted to the Security Council.

Kenya welcomes the pilot initiative by UNMIK to monitor incitement to hatred and hate speech on social and online media. Such an initiative, if objectively driven, has the potential to help develop strategies to effectively counter those corrosive forms of speech.

On Tuesday, 12 October, one of Kenya's signature events, which was presided over by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta (see S/PV.8877), focused on the issues of diversity, State-building and the search for peace. At that event, President Kenyatta noted that the poor management of diversity is leading to grave new threats to international peace and security. I would like to add that, in addition to creating new threats, it risks reigniting conflicts we thought were in the past.

We are particularly focused not only on what leaders say to one another but what their followers say to one another. To that end, we will hold an Arria Formula meeting later this month on addressing and countering hate speech and preventing incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence on social media. The objective will be for the Security Council to have a keen appreciation of the ways that hate speech and incitement are spread through social media. We will hear from leading figures in the private sector.

The reason I focus on speech, hatred and incitement is because the comment by Special Representative Tanin on the lack of trust between the parties is reflected not only between the parties but sometimes between segments of the population. On Tuesday, 12 October, President Kenyatta observed that that mistrust leads to the deterioration of trust in State institutions and that, in turn, leads to a weakening of the State's legitimacy. When that happens, it makes the State unable to prevent, mitigate or resolve conflicts it is experiencing. With that in mind, Kenya recommends that the parties recommit to inserting their appreciation and embrace for diversity into all their policies — and not only into their policies but also into the growth and development of their political culture.

I would like to commend the participation of women and young people who seek to have their voice heard, particularly if it is a voice that brings the parties back together and highlights the points of convergence and common interests that we are sure still exist.

I echo the call in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/861) for the provision of an enabling environment for the safe, dignified and sustainable return and reintegration of all internally displaced persons and returnees to Kosovo society. Behind every displaced person is a tragedy, a lost opportunity, loneliness and mental suffering.

I conclude by reiterating the need for the parties to be consistent in their implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and to constructively engage in dialogue in order to make swift progress on a comprehensive normalization of their relations at the highest levels but also between the peoples.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Selaković (Serbia): We have been listening to the citizen of the Republic of Serbia Ms. Osmani-Sadriu pretending to be the so-called President of our southern autonomous province. We have listened to stories that cynically ignore the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/861) and the briefing by Mr. Tanin, as well as all the casualties of their recent actions. She is being silent about the fact that the fake State is based on war crimes and that their founding fathers are in prison. She is being silent about Serbian casualties and the ethnic cleansing, as evidenced by the fact that more than 200,000 internally displaced persons have been waiting for over 22 years to return to their homes, while at the same time she is bragging that they have received refugees from far-distant countries.

The citizen of the Republic of Serbia Ms. Osmani-Sadriu has been telling fairy tales describing a fake State as "one of the biggest champions of peace and stability in the world". Does what happened to 36-year-old Srečko Sofronijević, critically injured only two days ago, reflect the actions of a champion of peace and stability in the world? We have heard fairy tales about the struggle against smuggling and illegal trade. Her main arguments are lies and that is normal, because she can lie; she is allowed to lie because she does not represent anyone but herself. Here I represent an internationally recognized independent State Member of the United Nations; I cannot lie but must be devoted to the truth.

The truth is that Pristina's unilateralism is destroying all efforts to reach a sustainable compromise solution through dialogue. The truth is that we have implemented our obligations from the Brussels Agreement and that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government are loudly and actively refusing to implement the obligations that they have undertaken. That was stated by Mr. Kurti during the first round of the dialogue held in Brussels in June, and also on 12 September by Ms. Osmani-Sadriu in an interview given to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, in which she stated that they were not going to allow the formation of the community of Serbian municipalities. Here is the statement given; I can give it to all representatives of the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council.

Ms. Osmani-Sadriu must stand up when she mentions His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, because he is also her President. She must pay respect to her President. The butchers of the Balkans — Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli and the others who have been kidnapping innocent civilians and trading in human organs — are in prison facing an ongoing criminal process.

She must stop lying about the 20,000 casualties of sexual violence during the war, because, according to the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo dated 5 April 2021 (S/2021/332), the number of cases of sexual violence has been confirmed to be not 20,000 but 912.

The cancer at the heart of Europe is represented by the people sitting to my right, who have cherished their fascist traditions since early 1941 through the well-known genocidal acts of Balli Kombëtar and the unique SS Skanderbeg division.

Finally, I protest the fact that representatives of the cancerous creature at the heart of Europe were allowed to enter the Chamber wearing masks with symbols of a fake State.

The President: Ms. Osmani-Sadriu has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Osmani-Sadriu: Let me start by thanking those members of the Security Council that have recognized and fully supported the decisive rule-of-law efforts of the institutions of Kosovo, which are to the benefit of

all citizens in Kosovo, no matter their ethnicity. Let me also thank all those who have emphasized the important role of women in society. We want to work hand in hand with each and every one of them to expand the role of women in our society, in politics and elsewhere, and we are doing exactly that nowadays.

Perhaps now I shall move on to the latest piece of pure propaganda by Mr. Selaković. I am a proud citizen of the independent and sovereign Republic of Kosovo. The independent Republic of Kosovo is not going anywhere. It is better that he faces that reality, and it will be better for all the citizens of Serbia as well, so that they can see a future forward, a future of peace and stability in which their leaders no longer wage war or create destabilization. They have also suffered from you enough; it is not just us. I agree that there is a tragedy behind every refugee and every internally displaced person. I have been one myself. And not only I but more than 80 per cent of the people of my country were forced to flee the Milošević genocidal regime, which is now being glorified every single day. War criminals are not just being glorified; they are being rehabilitated by the current Serb institutions.

Mr. Selaković speaks of the death of an old woman in recent days in Kosovo. While I would like to express my condolences in that respect as the President of all the institutions and the President of all the people of Kosovo, no matter their ethnicity, I want to speak the truth here in front of all present today. There is absolutely no report from any local or international institution — and we have such a high international presence in Kosovo that it would be able to speak about this — that that woman died as a result of the rule-of-law efforts of the institutions of Kosovo. Not even an autopsy has been done; so Mr. Selaković comes here today and gives distorted information with respect to what happened on Wednesday in Kosovo. He speaks of 100 ethnically motivated crimes, but, in fact, he mentions the same crime numerous times to get to that number of 100. The truth of the matter is, according to international reports, that from 2017 to 2020 the percentage of ethnically motivated crimes was 0.03 per cent. It is not 3 per cent or 0.3 per cent; it is 0.03 per cent in Kosovo. And we are committed to bringing that down to zero, because the Serbs in Kosovo are not afraid of me. Rather, the Serbs in Kosovo are afraid of the parallel illegal criminal structures, aided and abetted, financed and supported and turned into gangs by President Vučić himself and no one else, and

they are the ones, as mentioned by the representative of the United Kingdom and representatives of some other States in this Chamber, who are violating all of these basic rights, including the right to free elections, and they are the ones intimidating Serbs from participating freely in elections. As the President of all the people of Kosovo, in front of all members of Security Council, I want to commit once again to doing everything in our power to protect the Serbs of Kosovo from these attacks from illegal and criminal structures.

Mr. Selaković has also mentioned the case of Ivan Todosijević. In that case, the person before the courts of Kosovo was indicted for denying war crimes, in full compliance with the prohibition by the European Court of Human Rights of genocide denial. War crimes cannot be denied because doing so contributes to hate speech, impunity and further tensions. But the agreement to which Mr. Selaković referred earlier provided that the special panels would only be for the Serb-majority areas, and Pristina is not a Serb-majority area. It is the capital of Kosovo, and it does not fall within the agreement that would provide for Serb-majority panels in the court. We have therefore fully respected the agreement signed in Brussels.

Let me speak for a moment about the so-called attacks on churches. Let me cite NATO again. Through its representatives in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo, NATO publicly recently stated that, in the past 10 years, there has been no serious incident against the Visoki Dečani monastery or other churches in Kosovo. This is the truth. And in fact, it is Kosovo police, the multi-ethnic Kosovo police of the independent Kosovo, that is securing most of these churches except for the Dečani monastery, where KFOR is involved. Again, KFOR has confirmed that no serious incident has happened there in the past decade or so. Serbia should therefore start countering impunity and stop glorifying war criminals and rehabilitating them.

Yes, Kosovo has fully supported the establishment of the Specialist Chambers. No other country in the history of the world has shown such a commitment to international justice. All of the leaders of Kosovo have voluntarily cooperated with this tribunal. Do Council members know why? It is because we have nothing to hide. We have nothing to hide. The truth has happened before the world's eyes, and the truth is that members of NATO — democratic countries around the world — intervened to stop the Serb genocide. That is a truth that cannot be revised through Serbia's and its

allies' revisionist history projects. The truth is that is we have been the victims, and Serbs were the aggressors.

We never play the game of collective blame, which is why Kosovo is committed to the dialogue. I want to reassure the Council of that. We are committed not just to sitting at the table, but to actively engaging, putting forward proposals that would bring more peace and stability to the region. But since Mr. Selaković is abusing the time to speak in this Chamber today to defile the names of Serbs, the citizens that I proudly represent — the Serbs of Kosovo, the Albanians of Kosovo, the Turks of Kosovo, the Roma of Kosovo, the Ashkali of Kosovo, the Egyptians of Kosovo, the Gorani of Kosovo and everyone else, who are welcome and living peacefully in Kosovo — perhaps I could mention some names too.

Let me start with Liria Muccioli, six months old — the name "Liria" means freedom — who, together with 53 members of her family, most of whom were small children under the age of seven, but also their mothers and their grandmothers, was not allowed by the military and the police to flee her house and the Milošević regime during the war. At that time, we were taking orders from the Minister of Interior — now the Speaker of the Serbian parliament — and from the Minister of Propaganda — now the President of Serbia — and many others. The family was returned to a little room in their house where they were all executed: 54 people, most of them little children. If that was not enough, the military and the police burned the house down. Indeed, some of the children, several as young as two, were still alive — injured, but still alive — and they were burned alive in their house. And if that was not enough, the military and the police returned to the house to burn it down a second time. In fact, they set the entire house on fire three times.

If Mr. Selaković went to that house today — and, as the President of the Republic of Kosovo, I invite him to do so — I would invite him to kneel on the ground there, because, in the words of Willy Brandt, that is what a human being does when words can do no justice. One kneels at a grave. Some 54 people, most of them small children, including six-month old Liria Muccioli, were burned three times. What was their crime? Did Serbia ever apologize?

Let me give Council members a couple of other names — Dragan Obradović and Srećko Sofronijević — who, according to the Humanitarian

Law Centre in Belgrade, are the two people who ordered the crimes. Of course, they are in Serbia. Of course, they have been rehabilitated. Of course, they were given excellent jobs by the new regime in Serbia. And of course, impunity continues.

I can go on and on with names of people and families whose wounds are still open because Serbia continues to sleep on mass graves. I can show you the map, Mr. President. This is the map of the mass graves found in Serbia so far. According to former President Boris Tadić, who was killed in Serbia, there are many other mass graves in the country.

I urge Serbia to open these mass graves. We want our loved ones back. We want them home. We want the return of the bodies to their grieving mothers. Back home, we want the mothers to have a place where they can lay a flower on the empty graves of more than 1,600 people. I urge Council members never to forget, so that the slogan “Never forget” is no longer needed.

Never forget what the true face of the Serbian regime is. Perhaps for Mr. Selaković, I would conclude with the words of John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States:

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

Serbia cannot intimidate us. Freedom is in our DNA.

The President: The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. As the Council is running behind schedule, I would request that this further statement be limited to three minutes and that it be the final statement of the meeting.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Mr. Selaković (Serbia): I am really concerned about the mind of Ms. Osmani-Sadriu. She said plenty of lies. I say to Ms. Osmani-Sadriu that this is Srećko Sofronijević. This is the guy that her criminals shot in the back only two days ago. He is not in Belgrade. He is not ordering anything. He is an ordinary citizen. This is Srećko Sofronijević. I ask her to please stop lying. Boris Tadić is the former President of the Republic of Serbia. Thank God, he is in good condition. He

lives in Belgrade. He was not killed, as Ms. Osmani-Sadriu stated.

What was she saying? What was she saying about the so-called attacks on Serbian churches? Fifteen churches were robbed and attacked in the past nine months — 15 churches. Kosovo has destroyed more than 19 graveyards and cemeteries — Serbian Christian Orthodox cemeteries. They were guilty of something. Ms. Osmani-Sadriu spoke about Kosovo’s casualties. I am sorry about that. But what about the Sutaković family — mother, father and three children? Their remains were recently found in the Djakovica industrial zone. There are no other members. All the family members were killed. She was not high in the mountains 22 years ago, because she was only a refugee. She was there because she was with the terrorists. According to the Central Intelligence Agency terrorist list from 1997, the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army was declared a terrorist organization. I ask her not to speak to us about revisionist history projects. We know very well that she cannot hide the SS Skanderbeg division and the traditions of the Bali Kombatari, who were some of the most famous people working for the Nazis during the Second World War. I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to say these words.

The President: Ms. Osmani-Sadriu has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I ask her to keep her statement to three minutes, and it will be the final statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Osmani-Sadriu: I will try to be brief. Of course, Mr. Selaković cannot understand what victims of the war go through. After being forced to flee my home by the Serbian regime, alongside hundreds of thousands of other Kosovars, I hid in the mountains for months. Only in May 1999 were my family and I able to leave for Montenegro, where I stayed as a refugee for a short time. I therefore know what it means to be both an internally displaced person, because of Serbia’s terror and genocide, as well as a refugee. That is why we have opened our hearts and minds to the people of Afghanistan.

I was of course thinking about Mr. Djindjić, not Mr. Tadić, but the truth remains that the late President of Serbia, who was killed in Serbia, actually spoke of those mass graves. His closest collaborators now confirm that. The current Speaker of the Parliament in Serbia publicly threatens Serbian citizens who are cooperating with the international community in

speaking about the whereabouts of those mass graves. He publicly threatened them on national television, saying that Serbs who spoke about the mass graves and their whereabouts would be spoken of as traitors to the nation. That kind of impunity does not happen anywhere in the world. Mr. Selaković can of course continue with his propaganda and try to insult us. But, as I mentioned at the very beginning, the truth cannot be changed, because it happened in front of his eyes. I, of course, did not mention Srečko Sofronijević as a member of those that were involved back in 1999. I mentioned Mr. Selaković to demonstrate Mr. Selaković's propaganda because there is in fact absolutely no proof that he was shot by the Kosovo police. There is absolutely no proof.

The embassies of the countries that are present in the Republic of Kosovo know the facts. They have

been open about the facts. They have shown their full support for Kosovo's rule-of-law efforts on the ground. I invite all those who are in doubt to recognize our young republic, the suffering of the people of Kosovo and the reality of an independent sovereign country, which will never change. I invite them to come to our country and see it for themselves — see what is going on on the ground, the suffering and the deep wounds that are still open because there has been no justice for the Serb perpetrators and, at the same time, see the great and outstanding potential of the young people of Kosovo and what we can do. Let us join Member States around the table as a sovereign nation that can give so much to the world.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.