



Security Council

Seventieth year

7563rd meeting

Thursday, 19 November 2015, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

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/2015/833)

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15-37732 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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/2015/833)

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. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic 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. Vlora Çitaku 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/2015/833, 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: This is my first time briefing the Council since I was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would like to begin by stressing that the Council's continuing support to the Mission remains crucial as we focus on promoting stability, political progress and respect for human rights in Kosovo and, indeed, in the region. The report before the Council (S/2015/833) details developments from mid-July to mid-October, but today I would like to draw attention to a few key trends and concerns that I have observed since taking up my post in early October.

I arrived amid renewed political turbulence in Kosovo, and developments during the past week have produced additional potential setbacks to the implementation of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue led by the European Union (EU). I have met with the top leadership in both Pristina and Belgrade, as well as with our international partners and with political, community and religious leaders on the ground. It is clear to me that we require strong leadership from both Pristina and Belgrade, as well as equally cohesive actions among the international presences, if progress is to be sustained.

Genuine progress was achieved at the EU-facilitated meeting in Brussels on 25 August, leading to a package of agreements, including on the general principles and main elements of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. Leaders in Pristina and Belgrade continue to demonstrate a far-sighted commitment to putting the people's interests first. Regardless of shorter-term political posturing and problems, I perceive an underlying resolve on both sides to use the dialogue to overcome some of the most difficult issues affecting mutual relations. The gains, however, face continued challenges that are affecting the full and timely implementation of the agreements, as we have seen in the past few days.

Implementation of the terms agreed on between the parties on 25 August in Brussels began during this period. On 17 October, work commenced on the revitalization on the Mitrovica bridge as part of this implementation. On 30 October, Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga submitted the agreement for review by the Constitutional Court. The Court issued a temporary suspension of implementation, pending issuance of its opinion within 60 days, raising concerns about the possibility of delays. I join in urging all stakeholders involved to ensure that the commitments agreed to are reviewed in short order and fulfilled on schedule.

For Kosovo, a major step forward was taken on 27 October, when Prime Minister Isa Mustafa and Minister of European Integration and Chief Negotiator Bekim Çollaku, together with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement. I wish to congratulate the leadership in Pristina on this achievement. The

Agreement not only expresses the commitment of Kosovo to its European path, but equally the European commitment to Kosovo. Just as importantly, it should open the door to increased trade and investment, as well as improved prospects for the economic growth and employment opportunities so sorely needed in Kosovo, in particular for its young population. The ratification of the Agreement by the Assembly of Kosovo demonstrated the ability of the institutions to recognize and capitalize on long-term strategic interests.

As I stressed at the outset, however, the current political challenges are also very serious. On several occasions during this period, violent tactics and disruptive behaviour impeded the proceedings of the Assembly of Kosovo, the institution at the core of the democratic process. Members of the political opposition used tear gas and other objects in the Assembly chamber, including just two days ago when the use of pepper spray and tear gas once again forced the Assembly to relocate its session. Clashes between opposition supporters and Kosovo police have also resulted in injuries to police officers and damage to public and private property. The opposition parties have expressed their intention to continue trying to block sessions of the Assembly.

I have strongly deplored these violent and unacceptable actions. Argument and debate belong in Kosovo's democratically elected Assembly; force and intimidation do not. I commend the restraint demonstrated by the Kosovo institutions in the face of serious provocations, and I urge all parties to participate in dialogue and allow a constructive political discourse, which is vital to progress in Kosovo. The rule of law must be applied equally; any persons who resort to violence must be held to account.

Political progress or its absence directly affects the circumstances and atmosphere on the ground in Kosovo. Despite progress in many areas, there remain signs of deep public frustration, along with unfortunate political tendencies to lapse into divisive rhetoric. Our mission and our international partners continue to work with local communities and central authorities to reduce tension whenever it arises. Ultimately, however, the onus is on political leaders to take responsibility for setting a tone that furthers reconciliation and the normalization of relations.

During this period, Kosovo's application to UNESCO weighed heavily in public sentiment and debate. However, I would say that too often public

debate and diplomatic struggles have tended to blur the underlying issues. The protection and preservation of cultural and religious heritage should remain the subject of intensive communication between Belgrade and Pristina, including through the Brussels dialogue. We remain closely engaged with all the stakeholders to support consensual and lasting solutions.

Reconciliation also requires enhanced efforts to determine the fate of persons missing from the conflict; more than 1,600 persons are still unaccounted for. The focus should remain on the needs of the surviving family members waiting for clarity on the fate of their loved ones. I welcome the recent cooperation shown by Belgrade and Pristina in the framework of the Working Group on Missing Persons, chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

I would like also to echo the Secretary-General's message in the report on the importance of continued progress in the process of the establishment of the specialist court, as agreed between the European Union and Kosovo.

With regard to the return to Kosovo of persons displaced as a result of the conflict and its aftermath, the current trend indicates that the number of returnees in 2015 will be the lowest since the year 2000. No more than 427 individuals had returned as of October, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I call upon all stakeholders to increase available resources so that more voluntary returns to and within Kosovo will be encouraged and sustained. The Ministry for Communities and Returns is presently working on essential legislation specifically to protect the rights of displaced persons, and I urge that this law be passed as a matter of priority.

Resilience and stability in the region are being further tested at present amid the influx of refugees and migrants transiting through the Western Balkans in unprecedented numbers. According to UNHCR, as of 5 November there had been over 650,000 arrivals in Greece by sea since the beginning of the year, the great majority of them transiting northwards via the Western Balkans route. Over 210,000 people were recorded in October alone. The influx of such a large number has stretched capacities and resources. While Kosovo has been less directly affected so far, the Kosovo authorities and the international presences are working together to prepare contingencies. UNMIK is monitoring the

situation, in close coordination with UNHCR and all partners in the region.

As we have just witnessed in the tragic events in Paris, the phenomenon of violent extremism is a very current and global concern, and the Western Balkans region is no exception. This transnational issue demands close cooperation among regional and international stakeholders, and in this light Kosovo's recent adoption of a strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization is one important element. UNMIK continues to support and facilitate the work of Kosovo's institutions, within its mandate and in close coordination with its international partners. Above all, these risks demand improved information-sharing and cooperation among all regional actors and their agencies.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing my deep appreciation to the membership of the Council for its sustained engagement with Belgrade and Pristina, and for its ongoing support of UNMIK. Indeed, this commitment remains essential in order to safeguard the political process. Our Mission will continue to cooperate closely with all interlocutors and international partners to promote peace and progress, as mandated by the Council.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to most strongly condemn the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Beirut, the downing of the Russian passenger plane over the Sinai and last night's murder in Sarajevo of two soldiers of the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims of those heinous crimes, which undermine the very essence of the values that unite us all. Terrorism and extremism perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist organizations are a threat that requires a global response.

On this occasion, I also express my gratitude for the continued attention accorded the question of Kosovo and Metohija. That is evinced by our regular quarterly meetings, convened in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), to discuss this topic of primary importance for the Republic of Serbia. I am sure that the message that we send from the Chamber to all residents of Kosovo and Metohija is a very powerful one indeed. The

contribution made by other international organizations is also of exceptional importance. Missions, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo, carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, are part of the international civil and security presence in the province.

Regardless of the numerous challenges, the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in coordinating the activities of the international missions on the ground and stabilizing the situation in Kosovo and Metohija is invaluable. I especially thank its staff for the efforts that they make daily in the quest for ways to overcome the still deeply rooted mistrust among ethnic communities and in creating the basic preconditions for the peaceful coexistence of the communities and for the security and respect of the human and civil rights of all residents of the province. I hope that UNMIK will continue to carry out its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999) in the coming period. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to wish much success to Mr. Zahir Tanin, the newly appointed Head of UNMIK, who is participating in today's meeting of the Security Council for the first time in that capacity.

UNMIK's presence and activities are of key importance for the Republic of Serbia, since its United Nations framework, which is based on resolution 1244 (1999), is a guarantee of the status neutrality of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija. In view of the overall political and security situation and the continuing dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, we believe that UNMIK must remain actively engaged in the province, undiminished in scope and unchanged in mandate.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has demonstrated in practice its full commitment to the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. Let me recall that Belgrade was motivated to conclude the Brussels Agreement by the lack of substantial progress in the realization of the basic human rights of the members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as by the desire to help resolve outstanding issues through a constructive approach in the interest of stability in the region and its integration into the European Union. We look on the Agreement as a guarantee that a mechanism

will be established that will make it possible for the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija to lead a normal and dignified life. In the conditions in which they live, the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija see the Brussels Agreement as a commitment by the European Union to their survival and development. The establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities would allow for the interests of the Serbian population to be articulated and would provide an institutional mechanism for the collective realization and protection of their basic rights and contribute to a further and faster normalization of relations.

I cannot but note that, like the previous reports, the report before us (S/2015/833) recognized and underscored the need for the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities as soon as possible, as being crucial for the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. The decision of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo to suspend the agreement on the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities is a unique precedent involving the flouting of an agreement reached in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. The complete and committed implementation of agreements that have been reached by all actors involved is of paramount importance for the dialogue to evolve successfully. The weight of Pristina's decision, the political background of which is not in doubt, is even greater, considering that its announcement was made immediately after the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union.

As it happened, the agreement on the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities was sent to the Constitutional Court to assess its legality one day after the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and the Court decided to suspend the agreement a day after the European Commission published its progress report on Kosovo. It is ironic that the Commission contends in its report that Kosovo delivered on two major commitments by adopting constitutional amendments meant to pave the way towards the establishment of the special chambers and by demonstrating its commitment to the normalization of relations with Belgrade as it finalized agreements on energy, telecommunications, the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities and the bridge in Kosovska Mitrovica.

In outright contravention of what is said in the progress report, Pristina sent a clear and unequivocal

message to all, including the Serbian community, the European Union and the United Nations. The message was that it does not respect the agreements it has signed and the obligations it has assumed and does not intend to make the life of, and the enjoyment of the basic human rights by, the Serbs in the province any better at all. The first key issue is the response by the European Commission and the subsequent response by the member States of the European Union. Equally important is the position that the Security Council will take in order to have Pristina abide by the prevailing practice recognized in international law with regard to the implementation of assumed obligations and uphold accepted values and standards with regard to the protection of the human and civil rights of all residents of Kosovo and Metohija, enabling them to live in dignity and lead a normal life.

It is with regret that I note, notwithstanding the years-long presence of the international community, Kosovo and Metohija continues to be devoid of the basic conditions for an unhindered and sustainable return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Here too, the report before us regrettably does not accord the problem of IDPs the attention that it deserves. I recall that Serbia continues to top the unenviable list of European countries in terms of the number of IDPs. During the conflict of 1999 and after the arrival of KFOR, more than 210,000 people were forced to leave their homes in Kosovo and Metohija, while an additional 20,000 were displaced in the March pogrom of 2004. Currently, more than 18,000 people are displaced within the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, while more than 204,000 displaced people are in central Serbia. According to a study by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 97,000 persons have been identified as still in need, that is, in an aggravated socioeconomic situation and in need of help.

With respect to the IDPs, the Republic of Serbia is strategically committed to rendering full support to each and every person, either for sustainable return or local integration in the place of displacement in accordance with the intention expressed by each individual. Yet any support that Serbia may render to potential returnees will be insufficient if not given the proper attention and commitment by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina. There is a real risk, for example, that the returnees will not be accepted or even tolerated by the receiving community,

especially if the international community is not actively engaged.

To fully understand the obstacles encountered by the IDPs in their quest to return home to Kosovo and Metohija, one should know that, on average, 25 per cent of refugees and IDPs worldwide return home, the percentage varying between a minimum of 12 per cent and a maximum of over 50 per cent. In Kosovo and Metohija, it stands at about a mere 1.5 per cent. That grim reality is a reminder that the task has not been completed and merits the attention of all forthcoming reports of the Secretary-General. The conditions needed for return include, among others, proper security guarantees, freedom of movement, an effective mechanism for the restitution of property and other appurtenant rights, protection from discrimination, access to institutions, documents and justice and support for the economic independence of returnees. The prevention of efforts to obstruct returns is needed, along with respect for the principle of accountability on the part of the international and local actors involved in the process.

I therefore call on the United Nations and other representatives of the international administration in Kosovo and Metohija to see to it that problems that have impeded IDP returns and have aggravated their already difficult situation are overcome. Returnees continue to face repeated security incidents, including attacks on their property, which sends a strong negative message to other Serbs and potential returnees. The situation is not helped by the climate of impunity for crimes committed against Serbs, as reflected in the fact that none of the perpetrators of the murders of more than 1,000 Serbs since 1999 has been given a legally valid sentence.

It is possible to get the false impression, because of the practice of according a separate chapter in the report to Northern Kosovo, that the human rights situation of the members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities south of the Ibar River is satisfactory. In order to get a broader perspective on the situation and because a great deal of time has elapsed since we last had a review of the human rights situation in that part of Kosovo and Metohija, I submit that there is a need for an extensive review of the situation, and that the status of the Serbs and Goranci and the members of other non-Albanian communities who live south of the river be included in the next report.

The property rights of the Serbs continue to be violated throughout the entire province, especially by the sale of enterprises in Serbian communities. Such sales snuff out the potential for communities in which Serbs live to exist economically, jeopardize conditions for return and undermine security. After all, in addition to the lack of security, the absence of an effective mechanism for the restitution of usurped property is one of the most important factors that aggravate and limit IDP returns. It is therefore only appropriate to draw the attention of the Council to the additional institutional measures taken by Pristina, such as the draft law on the Kosovo Property Comparison and Verification Agency. This runs counter to the 2011 Technical Agreement on Cadastre, and its adoption would open the door to the legalization of unlawfully confiscated property in Kosovo and Metohija and cause irreparable damage to the Serbian community. Mention should also be made of the fact that the draft law does not provide for the majority of minority MPs required to pass a law of vital interest to their community.

In addition to making a routine roll call, as it were, of the attacks carried out during the reporting period on monuments that form part of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage, Serbia calls on the international community to step up its engagement in the process of their physical and legal protection, especially in view of current political developments in the province. I would point out that these attacks have never ceased. This is incontrovertible proof of the fact that the majority community has never accepted the Serbian cultural heritage as part of the common heritage and cultural values that have been passed on to us to treasure jointly in Kosovo and Metohija.

Accordingly, the Albanian community does not have the legal, historical, moral or any other right to appropriate the monuments of the Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage that it has targeted for systematic destruction since 1999. Albanian students in Kosovo and Metohija learn from their textbooks that Serbian churches and monasteries from the twelfth, thirteen and fourteenth centuries are Albanian and that the Serbian Nemanjic dynasty from that time is in fact the Albanian Nimani dynasty. This is a falsification of history aimed at erasing the Serbian identity and presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

The talks held on the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the status and protection of the Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija in

the context of the Brussels agreement have yet to be followed up. I take this opportunity to reiterate my call on the international community to send a clear and unequivocal message to the local authorities that it will closely monitor their efforts to prevent criminal acts directed at objects of cultural and religious heritage, as well as their response to the commission of such acts.

In closing, let me underline once again that Serbia is firmly committed to dialogue with the representatives of Pristina. Conducted with the facilitation of the European Union, the dialogue is one of the rare successful examples of the pacific solution of conflicts in today's world. Within the framework of the dialogue, exceptionally important agreements have been reached on the improvement of the daily living conditions of the entire population of Kosovo and Metohija. Our dedication to this process reflects our firm commitment to making an active contribution to the furtherance of the political and economic stability of the Western Balkans and the resolution of all remaining open questions exclusively through political and diplomatic means. With this specific goal in mind, we have demonstrated, in the context of the dialogue, our constructive approach and readiness to compromise. Thus we have made a contribution to ensuring that many complex issues in various areas, including legislation, energy and telecommunications, are resolved in a mutually acceptable manner in the interest, first and foremost, of reconciliation and a common future.

The political, social and economic conditions in which the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija lives continue to be very complex. I emphasize that the Republic of Serbia expects the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to continue to provide assistance on the path of confidence-building, which, we firmly believe, is the only solid basis for ensuring a normal life for all in Kosovo and Metohija.

I would sound a final note of caution: unilateral attempts such as the request for Kosovo's admission to UNESCO are steps in the wrong direction and testify to the flouting of the agreements reached. Another example of this is the suspension of the agreement to establish a community of Serbs. There can be no alternative to dialogue as a means of resolving all outstanding issues. It is for that reason that Serbia remains fully committed to dialogue in Brussels as the way to resolve all issues in dispute.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is my pleasure and honour to stand in front of the Council today and to discuss the periodic report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/833).

Sixteen years ago, Kosovo had no voice in this Chamber. We were witnessing the darkest moments of our lives. We were being deported from our homes, we were being killed, and we were being raped. Our lives and our dignity were being targeted in the most brutal way by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces. Families were being separated, some forever.

Scenes of helpless people being driven away in trains captured the world's attention. But although atrocities of that magnitude expose the worst of humanity, it is in moments like these that we see the very best that humanity has to offer.

We Kosovars are living proof of the fact that when there is solidarity among the free nations of the world, when the world decides to act together against atrocities, injustice and terror, life wins out over death, and good prevails over evil. And although we did not have our own voice in this Chamber, the Council spoke on our behalf. For that we are grateful.

In the immediate aftermath of the war and devastation, the United Nations deployed the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, which found a country in ashes and helped rebuild it as well as our lives. We had to start out again from scratch. The Serbian forces took with them our civil registry, our cadastral records and all documentation. It was not an easy start. Once you are free, you realize that survival is not the only worry and that freedom is not sufficient. There are homes to rebuild, roads to pave, schools to construct, laws to adopt and institutions to build. None of it is easy, but we have managed it together, with the help of the Council.

Today, 16 years later, Kosovo is an independent and sovereign State recognized by a majority of the free nations of the world. We are a constructive partner in the region and beyond. We have gone to great lengths to accommodate minority communities in our young State. We have taken unprecedented affirmative action, unlike any other minority in the region, and we are proud of it. Kosovo has set an example to be followed.

While the political debate back home might sometimes be fierce and filled with tension, let no one have any doubts about our collective aspirations

and commitments to Euro-Atlantic values and ideals. I am honoured to inform the Council that Kosovo's dedication and hard work were rewarded with the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). Although that marks just the first step in our accession process, it is a clear act that demonstrates that our European future is irreversible and unstoppable. It is a clear and mutual commitment. On the one hand, Kosovo institutions commit to continuing with the reforms at all levels, and, on the other hand, the European Union commits to providing a concrete road map to accession.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement will open our markets, increase and ease the exchange of goods and ideas, and stimulate growth and competition. Ultimately, it will make Kosovo a better place to live. We understand that it will be a long process, and it will involve lots of difficult and painful reforms, but we remain committed to it. We also expect a positive recommendation from the European Commission on the visa liberalization process. We have delivered on the criteria; now the European Commission should deliver on its promises.

While the role of the European Union has become more important and the level of interaction between Kosovar institutions and the European Union has increased, we believe that the time is long overdue to change the nature and the format of the relationship between Kosovo and the United Nations in general and the format of the debate in the Security Council in particular. From now on, Kosovo will be represented in the Chamber at the level of an Ambassador. We also believe that there is no need to meet every three months to repeat the same old positions and engage in a discourse that is completely the opposite of what we are trying to achieve through the Brussels dialogue.

We in Kosovo believe that the Chamber is being misused and that the Council's valuable time is being wasted because of desperate attempts from our northern neighbour to project a picture that does not match the reality, to artificially inject the idea that somehow Kosovo's status is not settled, that our independence is a temporary and unfinished business. I wish to be very clear: Kosovo is a free, independent and sovereign State, and we will never negotiate our right to exist as an equal member of the family of the free world.

That brings me to another point, our aspiration to join and contribute within international mechanisms.

Kosovo so far has joined several important international organizations, and we will continue to do so in the future. The path towards that aspiration will have twists and turns, but the Council may rest assured that in the end we will succeed.

I would like say a few words on our unsuccessful attempt to join UNESCO a few days ago. While Kosovo waged a very positive and moderate campaign, focused on our youth and our rich cultural, religious, and historical heritage, we were faced with a very brutal, dishonest, factually incorrect and, ultimately, racist campaign against Kosovo. Waging that kind of campaign against Kosovo's membership in UNESCO is a direct violation of the spirit of dialogue and normalization that we in the region so desperately need. Spending all that time on disseminating fabricated facts and untrue stories, with the ultimate goal of preventing our youth and our culture from being a part of the global family, is unworthy of a country that is a candidate for membership in the EU.

Furthermore, abusing the Serbian Orthodox Church and instrumentalizing it for political campaigns is unacceptable. We have witnessed a Serbia that acts with total disregard for European values, issuing threats and warnings against our immediate neighbours for supporting Kosovo's membership in UNESCO. In contrast to our positive campaign, the top leadership of Serbia used hate speech of an unprecedented and unacceptable kind. They claimed that the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Kosovo were of a lower class, and that Kosovo was comparable to the worst extremist and terrorist organizations. In doing so, many senior officials became promoters of xenophobic attitudes towards Kosovo.

But the Council may rest assured that we will not allow our neighbour's rhetoric and actions to deter us from our strong commitment to cultivating peace, dialogue and interfaith tolerance in Kosovo. The protection and preservation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo is a constitutional issue, as foreseen within the Ahtisaari plan provisions. That issue will no longer be open for discussion, nor will it be a topic in the Brussels dialogue. We will not negotiate with Serbia and we will not ask for Serbia's permission or consent to join international organizations. For we would expect Serbia to act in accordance with the spirit of the normalization process. We will be working even harder to join international mechanisms, not because of vanity, but because it is only by being a member of the

global family and having a seat at the table that we can provide more opportunities for all citizens of Kosovo, regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds.

On behalf of the Government of Kosovo, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the 92 representatives of countries that supported and voted for Kosovo's membership in UNESCO. I want to assure the representatives of the countries that abstained or had doubts or suspicions that we will provide them with reasons to support us in the future. We also understand that, as some of them have told us, their abstentions on our membership in UNESCO were not related to Kosovo. Finally, we urge the representatives of the countries that voted against Kosovo's membership to give us a chance to openly discuss concerns before our application is again on the agenda in 2017.

Kosovo's institutions reassure the Council that we will continue to be proactive and committed to the inter-State dialogue in Brussels. Solely through dialogue can we achieve sustainable peace. But we also need to be honest and to speak in earnest on what the normalization of relations with Serbia means. For us in Kosovo, there is no room for ambiguity. While we commit to implementing all the agreements we have reached with Serbia, since they are in line with our Constitution, we also need to see the same level of commitment from Serbia.

Just yesterday, our Minister of Finance was unable to visit our customs offices in the northern part of Kosovo, despite the agreement with Serbia and despite the fact that Serbia had promised to dismantle the parallel structures. There is a bridge in Kosovo in the twenty-first century that does not serve to connect people, but to divide them, despite the agreement on the freedom of movement with Serbia. That dualism must end.

I also want to inform the Council that we have adopted constitutional changes for the creation of the special court. We take our international obligations very seriously. Our Parliament adopted the amendments and the legislation with a two-thirds majority vote. Now we are at the final stage of the negotiations with the Netherlands for the opening of the special chamber of Kosovo in The Hague. We in Kosovo, more than anyone else, need to close that chapter. We have always cooperated with international justice, and we will continue to do so.

Kosovo has proven itself as an active member of the global coalition against terrorism. Just a few days ago, terror in the streets of Paris reminded us that we are fighting a borderless war. We must all stand together and be united. Please allow me to voice the solidarity of the people of Kosovo with France, and to reassure the Council that we will continue to give our utmost to fight this global threat.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to congratulate the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, on the successful start of his work. We welcome his commitment to assisting in strengthening stability in Kosovo pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), which remains the fundamental document for a settlement in Kosovo. We hope that his great experience in diplomatic affairs will help Mr. Tanin make a significant contribution to ensuring positive momentum in the Kosovo process.

We welcome the participation in the meeting of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and we share his views and considerations. We note that in the statement of Ms. Vlora Çitaku, rhetoric, unfortunately, prevailed over concrete facts. We are also forced to note that in meetings of the Security Council, the representative of the Pristina authorities speaks, of course, in a personal capacity.

The Security Council and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo continue to play a leading role in resolving the problems in the Kosovo region. At this difficult stage, there is a clear need to maintain a high level of United Nations presence. UNMIK should have all the necessary financial and human resources.

The situation in and around Kosovo remains acute. The dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which is carried out with European Union (EU) mediation, is stalled. The reason for that is the suspension by the Kosovo side of the implementation of a key agreement on the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities, which was reached in August. The lack of a palpable reaction to that development on the part of Brussels, which participated directly in elaborating the aforementioned agreement, is puzzling. Claims of the inability to comment on Kosovo's legal procedures are simply unconvincing. Such an approach could

be used to sabotage any agreement. It is common knowledge that the EU examines Serbian legislation with a magnifying glass and even imposes certain legal decisions on Belgrade, making Serbia's progress in European integration dependent on it. It is difficult to reconcile the stated high respect for the so-called Constitution of Kosovo and the cavalier disregard for Serbian law, according to which the province is an integral part of the country. We believe that the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities with the necessary range of powers to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Kosovo's Serb community must be a priority.

It is no coincidence that the decision to slow down the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities was adopted by the Kosovars on the day after the General Conference of UNESCO rejected Kosovo's application for membership in that organization. One gets the impression that that was simply a form of petty revenge directed at the Serbs, who sought to defend their position. The fact that Kosovo applied for membership to UNESCO against the backdrop of Pristina's categorical refusal to discuss the protection of the Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage in the framework of a dialogue with Belgrade demonstrates the real level of willingness of the Kosovar Albanians to cooperate and, in essence, their lack of willingness to compromise.

We cannot but be concerned by the chaotic internal political situation in the province. The so-called Assembly is virtually paralysed. Its members regularly settle arguments by throwing various instruments at one another and even spraying tear gas. It is noteworthy that the main disagreement in that regard revolves around the agreement on the association of Serb-majority municipalities, which the nationalist opposition has tried to destroy from the beginning.

The key issues facing the ordinary citizens of the province are well known. They are social and economic issues, and they continue not to be addressed. A dangerous development is the fact that the internal political disagreements are spilling out onto the street. In the last few days in Pristina there have been mass demonstrations during which the demonstrators threw stones, paint and Molotov cocktails at the police, and law enforcement authorities used tear gas. As a result of those clashes, at least 10 people were injured.

We are concerned by the lack of progress in improving the unenviable situation of the Serb

community. The disregard for Serb property rights, primarily related to real estate, undermines the economic foundation for their livelihood. An extremely alarming case is the legal entanglement of Kosovo/Albanian interests with the Orthodox monastery of Visoki Dečani in an attempt to seize land belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The situation surrounding the creation of a special court to investigate the crimes committed by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army lacks transparency. We hope that progress will soon be made in that area. The punishment of all those responsible, regardless of the positions they occupy, is one of the most important conditions for reconciliation and the restoration of mutual trust between national communities. We hope that that issue will be closely monitored by UNMIK and the international community.

We would also like to express our concern with regard to the lack of tangible results in the investigation into the incursion of the group of fighters from Kosovo into Macedonia in May. Attempts to downplay that case without addressing the underlying causes may well lead to renewed violence, the responsibility for which will be borne by those who, for personal reasons, decided to ignore such a serious incident.

In conclusion, we confirm that Russia's position on the issue of Kosovo remains unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force as the international legal basis for a settlement in Kosovo. We believe that the Security Council must regularly monitor developments in the province.

Mr. Bertoux (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and assure him of my country's full support in his new role and wish him every success. I also thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Ambassador of Kosovo for their statements. I take this opportunity to express to them France's gratitude for the messages of solidarity of the Kosovar and Serbian authorities following the heinous attacks on our country on 13 November.

France welcomes and supports the political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of the European Union. As the Special Representative noted, the signing, on 25 August in Brussels, of four bilateral agreements is a significant step forward. We are pleased that the first concrete steps have already

been taken, such as the launching of the construction work on the Mitrovica bridge.

However, it is crucial that the parties continue to mobilize without reserve their efforts to fully implement the agreement. We will, in that regard, be attentive to the developments following the decision of the Kosovo Constitutional Court to postpone until next January the possibility of adopting the agreement on the association of Serb-majority municipalities. In our view, that agreement is a key mechanism that enables the Serb population to fully embrace their Kosovar citizenship and to stop viewing themselves, wrongly, as foreigners. Its creation will not call into question the unitary status of the country. Kosovo's authorities must pursue their efforts to reconcile with Serbia on this score, all the while stepping up outreach to the population.

The efforts to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must remain more than ever a priority. That entails, first and foremost, unconditional respect for the functioning of its institutions. Recent months have been marked by a series of particularly serious incidents in the form of attacks against members of the Government or even physical attempts to impede the work of the Parliament, as we saw yesterday. Such acts of violence are quite simply unacceptable. They endanger the advances so patiently built up by Kosovo for more than 10 years on its path to constructing an independent, modern and democratic State. We therefore call on all Kosovar political actors to abstain from all forms of violence. The consolidation of the rule of law also entails the fight against impunity. After the Kosovo Assembly's adoption in August of a series of constitutional amendments that authorized the establishment of the specialist court to follow up allegations of war crimes contained in the Marty report, it is important that the specialist court be put in place as soon as possible.

The consolidation of the rule of law also ultimately requires the fight against radicalization in all its forms. France commends the actions taken by the Kosovar authorities in support of the fight against violent extremism. Their mobilization on that front is critically important in our collective fight to combat terrorism. We intend to pursue our bilateral coordination efforts in that realm. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which is working day by day to support the rule of law and security in Kosovo.

I should also like to recall the European position, which recognizes all the Balkan States as a whole.

The signing on 27 October, in Strasbourg, of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo signals an important step that confirms the European Union's full commitment to supporting Kosovo in its implementation of the reforms that are an indispensable part of its pursuit of rapprochement with Europe. The Agreement will be an essential tool for strengthening our cooperation in a great number of domains, particularly in the economic, commercial and political spheres. The measures for their implementation should be put in place at once. Matters relating to the rule of law, justice and internal affairs will be under particular scrutiny within that framework.

In recent years, Serbia, for its part, has undertaken important efforts to draw closer to Europe, whether through internal reforms or by improving relations with its neighbours. We encourage it to continue the full implementation of agreements already concluded with Pristina, and reiterate our willingness to see it accede to the European Union as soon as possible, when the conditions have been met.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the importance of both the Serbian and Kosovar authorities taking the high road in sorting out their differences and concentrating on efforts to normalize their relations, which represents a fundamental requirement for the stability of the region as well as the strong demand of their respective peoples.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome Mr. Zahir Tanin, the new Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. We would like to thank him for his briefing on the situation in Kosovo. Our country wishes him every success in his efforts to promote peace and stability in Kosovo and the region. We would also like to thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitak for their briefings.

In the political arena, we value the progress achieved in recent months with the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, a substantive element of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We recognize the role of the European Union in facilitating the high-level technical negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade, which are contributing to the promotion of trust between the parties. Nonetheless, we note with concern the recent

attacks against political leaders in Kosovo. All acts that could damage or undermine the normal functioning of democratic institutions must be repudiated. We call on the political leaders to refrain from using inflammatory language and anti-democratic methods to express their positions. In that regard, we are also extremely concerned by the violent attacks against minority communities and against the cultural and religious heritage of Kosovo. It is critical to preserve and deepen the conditions for coexistence and to avoid all acts that could endanger relations among the different communities. Promoting respect for minorities is a task that everyone should respect and one with which all should comply.

We recognize the progress made in Kosovo since our last meeting with respect to preventing extremism and radicalization. The adoption of the strategy of 16 September constitutes an important step in tackling that phenomenon. However, an effective strategy requires both recognizing and addressing the diverse factors that contribute to extremism. We stress the importance of continuing to work on addressing the socioeconomic factors that exacerbate the recruitment activities of extremist groups. Similarly, we highlight the importance of coordination between the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime with the goal of addressing the financing of terrorism. Finally, we recognize those initiatives that highlight the important role of women in the fight against violent extremism in Kosovo.

Identifying the whereabouts of the more than 1,600 people who disappeared during the conflict is sine qua non for advancing toward truth and justice and it is a right of family members that must be met by the relevant authorities. In that regard, we commend the recent agreement on the exchange of information signed by the Commissions on Missing Persons of Kosovo and Montenegro, and we urge the authorities in Pristina to strengthen the efforts of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. Progress on that matter is fundamental for closing the wounds left by the war. The restoration of the social fabric in Kosovo requires the return and effective inclusion of those who were displaced by the conflict. We recognize the regional efforts to address that issue and commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the crucial role it has been playing in facilitating the voluntary return of refugees. We would also highlight the central role of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo in strengthening the rule of law and

promoting the security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo.

To conclude, I would like to stress that resolution 1244 (1991) retains its full force as the internationally recognized basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, including strict respect for the principle of territorial integrity.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I wish to welcome Special Representative Mr. Zahir Tanin and thank him for his first briefing to the Security Council. Malaysia looks forward to working closely with Ambassador Tanin in support of the work of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku back to New York and thank them both for their briefings.

Malaysia is pleased with the milestone achieved by Kosovo during the reporting period, including the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union last month. We sincerely hope that implementation of the Agreement will bring stability and prosperity to the people of Kosovo through good governance, the rule of law and socioeconomic reforms. Malaysia also welcomes the progress made by Kosovo towards the normalization of its relations with its neighbours, especially the package of agreements reached by the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo that was facilitated by the European Union on 27 August in Brussels. We also commend the agreement signed between Kosovo and Montenegro to delineate their borders. We are concerned, however, by the violent protest by violent parties opposed to the package of agreements and the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro. We call on the relevant parties to resolve their differences through dialogue and engagement, rather than resorting to the use of violence and intimidation to achieve their political aims.

Malaysia commends the Assembly of Kosovo for adopting constitutional amendments and laws to enable the establishment of the special chambers to try cases that arise from the findings of the European Union special investigative task force. That significant progress reflects the political will and commitment on the part of the leaders in Kosovo to ensure accountability and promote closure and reconciliation.

In view of the challenges faced by the region and the world in combating terrorism, we applaud

the adoption, in September, of the five-year strategy by the Government of Kosovo for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. The strategy and its action plan reflect the Government's strong commitment in addressing transnational challenges to counter violent extremism.

With regard to Kosovo's application for membership of UNESCO, we are encouraged by the overwhelming support shown for Kosovo last week, despite falling three votes short of a successful application. Malaysia supported Kosovo's membership of UNESCO, as it would lead to further assistance and funding for culture and education in Kosovo. We also believe that it could ensure adequate international protection for religious and cultural sites in the country. Despite the setback, we urge the Kosovo authorities to remain steadfast in their commitment to preserve cultural and religious heritage sites and to engage in dialogue with the relevant communities to address issues of mutual concern.

In conclusion, Malaysia stresses the need for all parties in Kosovo to intensify efforts towards national reconciliation among the various ethnicities and religions and to ensure respect for human rights. We will continue to support Kosovo to that end. I also join my other colleagues in reaffirming support for UNMIK, which continues to play a key role in promoting security and stability in Kosovo. We also commend the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for their immense contributions to peace and stability in Kosovo.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Ambassador Zahir Tanin as he makes his first briefing to the Security Council as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I assure Mr. Tanin of our full support in his efforts, as well as for the important role UNMIK has played, and will continue to play in the immediate future.

We have heard the statements made by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku. And we have also heard the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We have read the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/833), carefully and with concern. We are concerned by the atmosphere in Kosovo — as we have heard and read — which has clearly deteriorated

as contrasted with the situation at the beginning of the year. That erosion is also evident in the Secretary-General's three most recent reports.

We are concerned by the unacceptable recourse to aggressive rhetoric, threats and violence by political stakeholders in Pristina, including parliamentarians, without any respect for democratic norms. We are concerned by the unjustifiable lack of implementation of the commitments made — commitments that were the outcome of agreements that just a few months ago we had all celebrated unanimously here in the Council as steps in the right direction. We are concerned by the untimely return to unilateralism on the part of the Pristina authorities, to the detriment of the Brussels dialogue facilitated by the High Representative of the European Union, which the Council has always encouraged. We are equally concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Kosovo, as set out in the Secretary-General's report, as a result of the increasing number of acts of vandalism and violent protests led by political and social protagonists, as well as by ongoing incidents against non-majority communities and against cultural and religious heritage sites associated with those communities. And we continue to be concerned by the lack of progress with regard to voluntary returns of internally displaced persons and with regard to missing persons, as well as by the continued existence of major shortcomings in the areas of human rights and the rule of law.

Those social and substantive issues represent key basic principles of the European identity that Kosovo desires to achieve. It is for that reason that they must be the subject of committed, priority attention — above others of a more formal nature. Spain once again calls for the high-level dialogue between the two capitals to be given the pride of place that the Security Council attaches to it. There is a need to return to the path of dialogue, good-faith negotiation and the implementation of the commitments undertaken — in brief, the path of reconciliation.

The agreements achieved months ago to set up an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities and to set up a specialist court to take up cases investigated by the Special Investigative Task Force were steps in the right direction. Implementing them is crucial for any eventual goal the parties may seek to pursue. We acknowledge that they were complex agreements that were painstaking to finalize, in which both sides had to give something up. That is precisely

the reason that they are good agreements. However, impeding or delaying their implementation would be a step backwards, backsliding that would weaken the process and erode the mutual trust that is necessary in any dialogue process. Moreover, such decisions are detrimental to the interests of the people and of Kosovo, as well as to the advances towards reconciliation, stability and progress. Spain therefore rejects such decisions, as they have been rejected by the Council and by the European Union.

Without prejudice to our position of principle, which is well known and which was recently set out at the meeting of the UNESCO General Conference, Spain has been constructively supporting all efforts aimed at achieving concrete results that would benefit the entire population of Kosovo, such as the Brussels dialogue. We are prepared to maintain that constructive position. However, we hope that all the relevant actors will also demonstrate the same constructive spirit and that such an attitude will result in a clear commitment to continue dialogue and responsible conduct that promotes respect for the rule of law.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): First of all, we would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on recent developments in Kosovo. We congratulate him on his appointment as Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and assure him of our full support. We are confident that he will bring his wealth of experience as former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations to bear in the performance of his duties. We also thank His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

Nigeria takes positive note of the continued progress in technical talks between the parties, within the framework of the 19 April 2013 First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina. We encourage both sides to utilize that crucial bilateral platform to address and resolve all outstanding issues related to the Agreement.

We welcome the adoption of the legislation on the establishment of the specialist court. It is a positive development in the administration of justice in Kosovo. Deliberate efforts should be made to support

the activities of the court in the quest for justice and accountability.

We are concerned, however, by the recent violent actions by opposition groups that have disrupted parliamentary action on the autonomy of the Serb-dominated areas of Kosovo. The territorial delineation agreement as related to promoting regional cooperation between Kosovo and Montenegro remains a contentious issue among some factions of the Parliament. We urge all those concerned to express their disagreements in an orderly, constructive and democratic manner.

The five-year strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization is a laudable step in the fight against terrorism. The law prohibiting individuals from joining armed conflicts outside Kosovo is crucial to addressing the threat of potential foreign terrorist fighters. We commend the authorities of Kosovo for their commitment to combating all forms of extremism.

Reconciliation remains crucial to strengthening cohesion and laying the foundation for peace and progress in Kosovo. The confidence-building projects initiated by UNMIK have been appropriately designed to achieve that objective. They are facilitating dialogue — not only between faiths, but also between cultures — and, in our view, are already yielding positive results. We encourage further reconciliatory efforts in the overall interest of peace and stability.

With regard to the issue of missing persons, we are concerned that the non-appointment of the Chair of the Pristina delegation is hampering the work of the Belgrade-Pristina Working Group on Missing Persons. As 1,670 persons are still listed as missing as a result of the Kosovo conflict, it is important that that post be filled without further delay.

Finally, we wish to note that the role of UNMIK remains vital to the promotion of security and stability in Kosovo. With the Mission's focus on institutional reform, as well as the right to truth, justice and reparations, we are hopeful that reconciliation among the different communities in Kosovo will be attained and sustained.

Mr. Baublys (Lithuania): I thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo for their contributions to this debate. I also thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of

the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his briefing.

Kosovo is a peaceful and more prosperous place today. The Kosovo Government formed last year has actively embarked upon wide-ranging reforms. The progress in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina now is measured in deeds, not words. Kosovo has strengthened its relations with the European Union (EU). It has also made undeniable progress in the light of the challenges faced by many countries of the region in strengthening the rule of law and addressing the social and economic situation.

In October, the European Union and Kosovo signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement, setting out a clear path for stronger relations, deeper political dialogue and economic cooperation. It is an opportunity for the people of Kosovo to access new markets and boost trade and investment, provided that the reforms take place. It is indeed up to the Kosovo authorities to make full use of that instrument, and we look forward to the swift entry into force of the Agreement. Lithuania has been a consistent supporter of Kosovo's path towards the European Union. We are ready to continue sharing our experience in reform, including through the EU twinning programme.

Historic decisions require courage. We welcome the solid steps by both sides aimed at normalizing relations within the framework of EU-facilitated dialogue in implementing the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, signed in Brussels in 2013. Results have been achieved in the areas of justice and civil protection integration. The dialogue has also brought about agreements on energy and telecommunication and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, as well as on freedom of movement and the Mitrovica bridge. The time has come to implement the agreements, and we encourage Serbia and Kosovo to move forward in the normalization of their relations. That is at the core of the European integration agenda for both countries, and the key to regional prosperity and stability. The future of their progress is in the hands of the leaders of both countries. The region needs less divisive rhetoric and more cooperation, trade and increased connectivity.

The leaders of Kosovo have demonstrated their ability to unite in making important decisions, as was seen by the decision to establish the specialist court to try

cases arising from the Special Investigative Task Force. Further efforts to pursue an inclusive political dialogue, a culture of compromise and respect for democratic processes are essential in moving forward with the necessary reforms. At the same time, we encourage the Government of Kosovo to do more in fostering interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue. We welcome the commitment of Kosovo to abide by UNESCO standards, and we believe that all communities throughout Kosovo would benefit from the protection of their culture and heritage provided by UNESCO.

The situation on the ground remains stable, and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continue to play an important role in contributing to security, stability and the rule of law. Lithuania will continue its contributions to KFOR and EULEX. However, let me also take this opportunity to remind everyone of the need to expedite the investigation into the killing of the EULEX staff member, customs officer Audrius Šenavičius, two years ago. We call for cooperation on both sides to expedite the investigation.

The support of the international community for a stable and prosperous Kosovo remains firm. The international community helped to bring security and stability to the region, and the Kosovo authorities have demonstrated that they are able to take matters into their own hands. Given the progress on the ground, I wish to echo the request made by the representative of Kosovo that reducing the frequency of Council debates on UNMIK is long overdue.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I, too, thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing and join others in wishing him well in his new role. I also welcome Deputy Prime Ministers Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to this discussion.

As mentioned, the leadership of Serbia and Kosovo have concluded several agreements since the Council last considered this agenda item (see S/PV.7510). Of particular note is the agreement relating to Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. New Zealand welcomes that significant progress. It demonstrates the ongoing importance of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue in normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina. We hope that both sides will renew their commitment and energy to that process of normalizing relations through dialogue and will implement that which has been agreed. Their people

need to see their leaders living up to their commitments. Gains made need to be banked.

Disagreement and vigorous debate is part of a healthy democracy. However, we note with concern efforts by some political actors to physically disrupt the workings of the Kosovo Assembly. Such actions are irresponsible and risk undermining confidence in a critical democratic institution. We urge all political actors in Kosovo to refrain from such actions and fully respect democratic principles.

The last time the Council discussed the situation in Kosovo (see S/PV.7510), New Zealand welcomed Kosovo's progress towards establishing a specialist court to address serious allegations arising from the EU Special Investigative Task Force. We also said that, while important first steps had been taken, there remained much to do in order to fully establish the court. That is still the case today. We echo the Secretary-General in calling on all stakeholders to move expeditiously in order to complete that process.

Engagement in the Working Group on Missing Persons stalled during the reporting period. That is deeply regrettable. Addressing the issue of missing persons is an essential component of reconciliation and is of fundamental concern to affected families. We urge that all the necessary steps be taken to enable the Working Group to continue its important work. Progress on returnees to Kosovo and the careful curation of cultural and religious sites will also be important for reconciliation.

We welcome the adoption by the Government of Kosovo of a five-year strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. The terrorist attacks in the Middle East, Turkey and, most recently, France underline the critical importance of addressing violent extremism before it takes hold. We urge the Government of Kosovo to implement its agreed action plan.

The progress under way in Kosovo should be taken into account when considering a more flexible approach to how and when the Council should dedicate its limited time and attention to this agenda item.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and wish him every success at his new post. I welcome the presence of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. China also listened attentively to the statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, and understands the legitimate concerns of Serbia on the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal basis for a solution to that issue. Efforts should be made, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions, to find an appropriate solution acceptable to all the parties concerned through dialogue and negotiation.

China appreciates Serbia's positive efforts to identify a political solution to the question of Kosovo, as well as the fact that the high-level political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina has produced positive results in the energy and communication spheres. We encourage both sides to pursue their practical and constructive dialogue in search of a lasting solution to the Kosovo question and to maintain peace and stability in the Balkans and Europe as a whole.

The current security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but complicated and uncertain factors prevail. The parties concerned should effectively protect the legitimate rights of all communities in Kosovo, actively promote national reconciliation, seek to resolve their differences through dialogue, and refrain from taking actions that could complicate or escalate the situation.

China appreciates the work done by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin, and supports UNMIK's ongoing efforts to implement its Security Council mandate. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will strengthen their coordination and form synergies in order to play a positive and constructive role in seeking an appropriate solution to the Kosovo question.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the briefing made by Mr. Tanin, whom we welcome, and congratulate him on his new appointment. We wish him every success in his new functions.

We would also like to thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Flora Çitaku for their briefings.

For the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, resolution 1244 (1999) is of increasing relevance as the international legal basis for achieving a comprehensive settlement within the framework of a politically negotiated solution to the question of Kosovo, taking into account the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Serbia.

We have seen with great concern the actions taken by opposition activists to impede the ongoing discussion of important aspects in the process of applying the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. Venezuela believes that dialogue between the various Kosovar political sectors must be encouraged in order to prevent a recurrence of these violent events and to support efforts to complete the 2013 Brussels Agreement.

My country supports the dialogue in Brussels between Serbia and the local authorities of the province of Kosovo, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable solution between the parties. In that context, we note with satisfaction that progress has been achieved in areas such as energy, telecommunications and freedom of movement across the bridge that connects the city of Mitrovica. The parties must continue their work towards establishing the association/community of Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo.

We recognize the key role being played in Kosovo by the United Nations, especially through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), by promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. That work has been supplemented by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). Given the importance of direct dialogue between the parties, UNMIK, KFOR and EULEX must continue, on the basis of their respective mandates, to play a proactive and complementary role with a view to promoting a lasting, sustainable, fair and mutually acceptable solution to the Kosovo question. Moreover, my country believes that the parties should reaffirm their commitment to achieving genuine national reconciliation based on the promotion and respect of human rights and the full application of relevant international standards to prevent discrimination against displaced persons and minorities.

We are struck by the fact that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/833) again cites a very low number of Serb voluntary returnees who were displaced from their homes in Kosovo. Based on strict

observance of the 2013 Brussels Agreements, continued efforts must be made at the State and local levels to guarantee security, ethnic and religious tolerance, and the property and economic rights and freedom of movement of Kosovar Serbs. That is the only way to reverse this negative trend.

Turning to the issue of cultural and religious heritage, the parties need to work together to protect this heritage by establishing and effectively implementing laws to safeguard that important legacy of the various communities living in Kosovo. However, we are concerned by incidents that have occurred against non-majority communities and their cultural and religious heritage. Those events must be investigated in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

We also value the fact that the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances has presented its report (A/HRC/30/38/Add.1) to the Human Rights Council with a view to shedding light on the fate of thousands of persons who disappeared during the conflict. We hope that regular working meetings between the parties can be resumed as soon as possible so that the affected families can find closure and peace.

In the framework of fighting impunity, we reiterate our satisfaction at the approval of the measures necessary for the establishment of a specialist court to investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict in Kosovo. We urge all interested parties to continue working to ensure that the court can begin its work promptly. We are convinced that the application of judicial due process in those cases will help promote reconciliation and peace among all parties.

Moreover, we recognize the efforts of the authorities of the province of Kosovo to strengthen actions to combat the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and put an end to the recruitment of citizens of that province by terrorist organizations. The scourge of terrorism, which my country strongly condemns, is a threat to international peace and security that requires the resolute cooperation of the international community in the effective implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly that ban financing, training and the transfer of weapons to those groups. We are convinced that, in grappling with the terrorist threat, we must also address the conditions that provide fertile ground for their propagation, including poverty, social exclusion, foreign occupation and interventionism.

To conclude, once again we encourage the parties to redouble their efforts in the quest of a peaceful, fair and lasting political solution, in the framework of international law, and in full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the 2013 Brussels Agreement.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tahin, for his comprehensive briefing, to congratulate him on his appointment to his new position and to wish him every possible success in his endeavours. Similarly, I would like to welcome Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Çitaku, and thank them for their statements.

We have noted the positive progress that has been achieved in Kosovo. We welcome the untiring efforts deployed by the Kosovo authorities to develop institutions and enshrine the values of justice and equality among all citizens. This has been reflected over time in concrete successes on the ground, and these successes have shown quite clearly that the people of Kosovo are able to meet the challenges and make progress on the path towards a modern and prosperous State.

Similarly, Jordan welcomes the adoption by the Government of Kosovo of a strategy for combating violent extremism and radicalization. We also pay tribute to the Government of Kosovo for its ongoing commitment to protecting cultural and religious diversity. There are a great many religious sites in the country. We call on the authorities in Kosovo to bring to justice all those who have defaced or defiled these cultural and religious sites, once the incidents have been duly investigated by the relevant authorities.

We call on the authorities in Kosovo to endeavour to make progress on the issue of disappeared individuals and internally displaced persons. We urge the authorities in Kosovo to continue to bolster the rule of law and transcend all obstacles to that end. In this respect, we reaffirm the importance of the activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which is making a valuable contribution by helping the authorities in Kosovo to strengthen the rule of law and justice.

The existence of a common vision for cooperation and regional integration in the Balkans and the good-faith efforts made by the countries of the region to implement that vision will inevitably lead to economic

recovery and a stabilization of the security situation in the region. Furthermore, it is very important to forge relationships of good-neighbourliness among the countries on the principle of mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each and every State, without, of course, forgetting the critical principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of States. All of this will strengthen social, economic and security progress.

We therefore call on all the States in the region of the Balkans to promote cooperation among themselves in various fields and settle pending issues. To this end, Jordan welcomes the progress made in the European Union-facilitated dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and Kosovo and backs the efforts to fully normalize relations between the two States. We would also like to welcome the positive result between the two countries with respect to the setting up of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between the two countries. We reiterate the call of the Secretary-General to the parties to preserve the current momentum in their relations by implementing that agreement.

Furthermore, we wish to see all disputes settled and all obstacles overcome on the path to implementing the array of agreements that will have to be implemented through agreed upon specialized channels. Jordan supports the legitimate efforts of Kosovo to expand international recognition of it as an independent State, including its efforts to join various international organizations and United Nations agencies, for which it meets all the necessary criteria. We urge the international community to back Kosovo's efforts.

A strengthening of Kosovo's international status is an investment in peace and will lead to stability and security in the region. It will also ensure socioeconomic growth. Jordan again urges the members of the Security Council to request that the reporting period for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) be extended from three to six months because, generally speaking, the situation in Kosovo is stabilizing and there is palpable improvement at all levels.

In conclusion, we wish to convey our gratitude to the Head and staff of UNMIK and to welcome and praise their efforts.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I would like to welcome Special Representative Tanin back to

New York and to the Security Council in his new role as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I congratulate him again on his appointment and thank him for his briefing. I would also like to welcome First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Dačić and the representative of the Government of Kosovo, Ambassador Çitaku, back to the Council. The United States commends both of their Governments for their ongoing efforts to normalize relations through the European Union-led dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade.

During this reporting period, we were encouraged to see the Government of Kosovo reach a number of milestones in the continued strengthening of its institutions and in establishing constructive working relationships with its neighbours. I would like to note a few of them.

First, Kosovo took the very important step of signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union on 27 October in Strasbourg. This is progress, and it is a very important step for Kosovo on its path towards European integration.

Secondly, earlier this month, the Kosovo police adeptly facilitated the visits of hundreds of displaced Kosovo Serbs to pay their respects to family members in cemeteries across Kosovo. The professionalism demonstrated by the Kosovo police during these events is further evidence of Kosovo's progress as a welcoming, tolerant and multicultural society. As the Kosovo Force (KFOR) noted in its quarterly report, the Kosovo police were fully in charge of security and required no intervention on the part of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo or KFOR during the annual Serbian festival of Saint Vitus and the accompanying religious services at the Graçanicë/Gračanica Monastery.

In addition, the Governments of Serbia and Kosovo should be praised for the important agreements reached in August on the general principles/main elements for establishing the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities and on energy, telecommunications and freedom of movement on the Mitrovica bridge. It is important that both Serbia and Kosovo reinforce their commitment to the dialogue by implementing those hard-won agreements from August,

even as they begin to tackle new areas for future progress that were discussed in Brussels this week.

These achievements were, naturally, significant, but we are also encouraged by lesser-publicized initiatives, such as the 13-14 November conference between Kosovo's and Serbia's Chambers of Commerce in Pristina. Business leaders met for two days to discuss opportunities in the construction sector. Kosovo's Chamber invited its Serbian counterpart and more than 30 Serbian business representatives to exchange knowledge, establish contacts and explore potential joint production with Kosovo businesses. Initiatives of this type were unimaginable a few years ago and are the important outcome of the steady progress towards normalization.

There is, of course, work that remains to be done. Speedy and comprehensive implementation of Kosovo's national countering-violent-extremism strategy is critical. At the same time, Kosovo needs to continue to pursue anti-corruption measures, including an e-procurement law, better information-sharing about indicted civil servants to facilitate suspensions, and amendments to the law to ensure the suspension of criminal political appointees. All of this will contribute to strengthening a democratic Kosovo free from corruption.

The ongoing situation in the Kosovo Parliament is worrying. To say that violence, including the use of tear gas, inside the Assembly chamber is incompatible with a modern democratic State is a gross understatement. It must stop. We request that the Government of Kosovo address the situation and not tolerate any criminal activity within its democratic institutions. The people of Kosovo expect their elected representatives to return to work immediately to resolve the important political, economic and social issues facing their country, and they deserve no less.

The Kosovo Assembly's approval of legislation to set up a specialist court outside the country is a critically important step. Kosovo has enacted the right legislation; now it must finalize a host State agreement with the Netherlands without delay. That step will ensure justice for crimes that may have been committed and will build confidence in Kosovo's commitment to the rule of law. The United States has been a steadfast supporter of accountability throughout the countries of the former Yugoslavia, including through assistance to the Special Investigative Task Force and our support

for the development of Kosovo's judicial and rule-of-law capacity. We will continue to support justice for all those who became victims during or following the Balkan wars.

Finally, I would like to commend Kosovo for conducting a dignified UNESCO membership campaign, and applaud the high level of support given by so many United Nations Member States. The United States will continue to strongly support Kosovo's international integration and recognition. We know and believe that the only future for Kosovo is one that is securely within the community of nations, including as a constructive member of multilateral organizations.

In closing, I would like to once again emphasize that while the United States believes that the situation in Kosovo remains an important issue, these meetings are unnecessarily frequent. We repeat our request that the Security Council extend the Secretary-General's reporting period on UNMIK to every six months.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing, and Mr. Ivica Dačić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the United States, for their presence here today.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2015/833) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which we have before us, illustrates the progress that has been made in the dialogue being held between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the European Union, including in the implementation of the 19 April 2013 First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. Chad welcomes the progress made in the European Union-facilitated dialogue, as well as the other agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina on 25 August, particularly on the general principles establishing the association/community of Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities.

The normalization of relations and establishment of those municipalities represent an essential stage in the full implementation of this historic agreement. We congratulate Prime Ministers Aleksandar Vučić and Isa Mustafa on their outstanding leadership in advancing the peace process, despite the numerous incidents created by those attempting to disrupt it. Similarly, Chad urges all leaders in Pristina and Belgrade to

support this momentum by, among other things, signing on to the speedy implementation of all the points in the agreement. We warmly welcome the long-awaited approval by the Kosovo Assembly of the constitutional amendment and other laws aimed at establishing the specialist court. The progress made in that area is proof of Kosovo's commitment to the fundamental principles of justice and responsibility. We call on all the parties involved to finalize the steps needed to fully implement and establish the Court as soon as possible.

Chad condemns the use of violence and intimidation by opposition parties in attempts to undermine the Kosovo Assembly's normal operations, including the incidents of 8 and 15 October involving the use of tear gas. We also condemn the physical assaults by certain militants on Prime Minister Mustafa and other members of his Government. Such acts are unacceptable, and we call on all political actors to refrain from rhetoric and actions incompatible with democratic principles and standards. We urge them to carry out their duties responsibly and maturely, in full respect for the democratic process.

Regarding the country's cultural and religious heritage, we urge leaders to respect the point of view of every ethnic element of Kosovo society. It is critical to refrain from actions that violate the fundamental rights of those communities. Concerning those who have disappeared, the report cites a figure of 1,670 persons listed as missing after the Kosovo conflict. We support UNMIK in asking Pristina to appoint a Chair of the Pristina Delegation for the Belgrade-Pristina Working Group on Missing Persons, so that it can resume its technical work on the issue.

With regard to the spacing of the Security Council meetings on this subject, we believe they should be held every six months.

In the context of the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalism, we welcome the strategy that Kosovo has adopted.

In conclusion, we would like to congratulate Mr. Tanin on his appointment and to assure him of our full support.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We would like to welcome Mr. Zahir Tanin and congratulate him on his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo. We thank him for his briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/833) on the

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and we pledge Angola's support to the Mission in carrying out its mandate. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and we welcome Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

We reaffirm Angola's position that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be a suitable legal framework for reaching a comprehensive solution in Kosovo through dialogue and negotiations, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions. UNMIK continues to play a fundamental role in Kosovo in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights and cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, as well as in its continuing constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade and all communities in Kosovo.

The Secretary-General's report points out that the situation in Kosovo remained generally stable during the period under review, despite recent troubling and totally unacceptable events involving illegitimate pressure on the Government and Assembly of Kosovo. We welcome the progress made in the dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union, including the conclusion of agreements on crucial issues such as energy, telecommunications, the establishment of an association/community of Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo and freedom of movement in the town of Mitrovica. It is our hope that the Parliaments in Belgrade and Pristina will approve those agreements and that such steps will help to improve the lives of citizens in the region. We also hope that the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations will be effectively implemented.

However, the different interpretations by Belgrade and Pristina of the agreement on the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which remains a contentious issue, are a matter of concern. We disapprove of the aggressive rhetoric and use of violence and intimidation by some Kosovo opposition parties with regard to the establishment of the association/community. In that regard, we urge the full integration and accordance of citizens' rights to the Serbian community of Kosovo, whose multi-ethnic and multicultural nature must be preserved.

We take note of the continued implementation of the Belgrade Pristina agreement on the integration of the judiciary, and of the continued integration of formal Serbian civil protection personnel in northern Kosovo. We value the participation of Belgrade and Pristina in the High-level Forum on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons from Kosovo, organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the outcome of which was a joint communiqué on their commitment to regional cooperation in solving the refugee and displaced persons issue.

With regard to human rights, we commend the UNMIK Human Rights Advisory Panel and its review of complaints of alleged human rights violations committed between April 2005 and March 2010, and hope that the Panel can clarify and close the remaining outstanding cases by the end of 2015. We greatly value the round-table meeting, organized in September by the European Union Office and the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies, on the role of women in countering violent extremism in Kosovo, as well as the strategic plan to fight violent extremism adopted by the Government of Kosovo.

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

I join others in welcoming Special Representative Tanin back to the Security Council in his new capacity. I look forward to working with him. I also want to welcome Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Council, and I thank them for their statements.

I would like to begin by welcoming the dignified response shown by Kosovo after its bid to join UNESCO fell short. Kosovo's integration into international organizations is positive for Kosovo and for the region, and we will continue to support it despite the setback. We appreciate Kosovo's strong commitment to protecting Serbian cultural and religious heritage, irrespective of the UNESCO result. The withdrawal of the controversial draft law on cultural heritage was an important signal of that.

But like others here today we understand the concerns set out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/833) about attacks against minorities and religious heritage. Most of these incidents are not ethnically motivated — they are criminal in nature — but we still encourage Kosovo to do more to promote social cohesion and integration. That means

reaching out to minority communities. It means more mayors and police commissioners condemning attacks and working together. We applaud the efforts of those who have already done so, including in Mitrovica.

We recognize that such steps require political leadership and courage. We have seen signs of such political will since August, most notably in the adoption of the constitutional amendments and laws for the specialist court. We are pleased that Kosovo has begun negotiations with the Netherlands and we look forward to continued progress. Political leadership has also been shown by Serbia. We welcome the invitation for Kosovo's Commission on Missing Persons to attend the excavations in Jelovica, Serbia. It is an encouraging sign of better cooperation in identifying missing persons. Sadly, more progress must be made in identifying missing persons in Kosovo, and we urge all those with information to come forward.

We have also seen political leadership in the four positive agreements reached in the dialogue in August. The dialogue remains the most effective way to normalize relations. It is vital to the future prosperity and stability of the Western Balkans and to the well-being of Kosovo's people. We encourage both sides to continue to show leadership and to take the difficult political decisions needed to ensure the success of the dialogue. Both sides need to deliver the benefit of the dialogue for all their citizens. That means implementing the agreements, changing legislation where necessary, and remaining genuinely committed to the process.

We are therefore concerned that the Kosovo opposition is using violence to block the work of the Assembly and, worse yet, that individual members of the Government have been assaulted. We object to the blocking of democratic processes and the opposition's use of violence for political ends. Reports of injuries yesterday should be of concern to us all. The Kosovo Assembly needs to be allowed to hold a free and open debate on all issues affecting the country, including the pressing need to improve the rule of law.

Let me close by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo for a meeting that has been relatively constructive in tone so far. The United Kingdom's long-standing view that we should reduce the frequency of such meetings continues. Though challenges remain, the reality on the ground does not warrant such Council attention. We are now in the third year of the dialogue

facilitated by the European Union between Serbia and Kosovo. The European Union and Kosovo have now signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement, which we warmly welcome and it is time to conclude that it is Europe, and not the Council, that will bring momentum and further progress.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Ivica Dačić has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia)*(spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation)*: Mr. President, you have noted the very constructive statements made here today. Speaking with you and representatives of other Western countries just before the meeting, I accepted your suggestion about adopting a constructive approach to this debate, but I failed to detect such constructiveness in the statement made by the representative of the Interim Administration in Pristina. On the contrary, I noted an aggressive attitude towards Serbia, threats and characterizations of our efforts as being of a racist nature and belittling of the Council.

I do not know if members have noticed that the representatives of Pristina to the Council have always been at the ambassadorial level. I note, however, that Ms. Çitaku is not Kosovo's Ambassador or head of its mission to the United Nations. Kosovo has no mission to the United Nations because it is not a Member of the United Nations. Every country is free to recognize Kosovo and engage in bilateral relations with it, but it is quite clear how the Organization, the Security Council and General Assembly should decide on Kosovo's membership.

I would like to pose a question to countries that unilaterally recognize the independence of Kosovo. If they recognized the secession of just one part of their country, would they not face a challenge similar to ours? It is their bilateral decision to make, but I would like to ask them not to insult Serbia or its territorial integrity. Each country has its own dignity. I have repeatedly warned about that. Let each country do what it will, but a decision on the independence of Kosovo has not been reached here. The Council adopted resolution 1244 (1999). When that is changed, Serbia will reconsider its position.

Serbia did not carry out racist policies against Kosovo. How can it be racist if we are speaking out

against the number of monasteries and churches that have been destroyed, such as the Decani Monastery that was built in the fourteenth century and is under UNESCO protection and which has been defaced with graffiti by the Islamic State, a group we are all trying to combat together? What kind of racist policy is that? The entire world is calling for a fight against Islamophobia. I am calling for a fight against Christianophobia.

We did not speak against Kosovo. We are talking about the fact that this topic was not discussed within the context of the Brussels dialogue. Concerning their statement that they would not talk with Serbia about their admission into international organizations—Ms. Çitaku does not know this because she has spent a great deal of time in the United States—I would note that Mr. Thaçi and I signed the Brussels agreement. It was also in Brussels that Serbia allowed Kosovo to obtain an international dialing code. Why did they ask for Serbia's agreement on this if they did not want to discuss it? The International Telecommunication Union would never have given Kosovo a special dialing code had I not written to them and to the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs to ask for it. That is the result of the agreement reached in Brussels.

Kosovo did not want to reach agreement with us concerning UNESCO because it was convinced that it would be admitted and would obtain membership therein, because it already had an idea of how many countries would support it. Now it is making reference to certain pressures. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation exerted pressure on all its members to vote in favour of or to abstain, and many international Powers brought pressure to bear to support it in UNESCO, but not everything can be done by force.

There should be a dialogue. Agreement should be reached through dialogue; that is what we want. Kosovo signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement not as a State but as a territory. The representative of Spain is here; let him tell us how Spain gave consent for the European Commission to sign that agreement. All members of the European Union here know this full well, so they should not behave as if it were not true. Kosovo believes that it is an independent country, but in the United Nations it is not.

We will continue to participate in these high-level meetings. Ms. Çitaku did not say a word about the agenda item. That is why the Brussels agreement was suspended. How is it possible that the Brussels

agreement was suspended? Which provision made this possible? That was not envisaged anywhere; it is impossible to do that.

Secondly, where are the returnees in Kosovo? Of those who left after 1999, 1.5 per cent have returned. What is happening with them? Thirdly, why has tear gas become the main means of winning the political fight in Kosovo? Yes, there was tear gas in the Assembly. Fourthly, the special court was established because of the suspicion that there was trafficking in human organs, those of the Serbian people in Kosovo. Please do not tell me about the crimes committed by some other side. We agreed that there should be peace.

On our part, we are absolutely open to dialogue. I ask only that the process of dialogue not be abused. We want dialogue not because of the issue of Kosovo becoming an independent State; we want dialogue in order to find a permanent solution to the problem. That is why I am asking Ms. Çitaku to choose her words carefully, because if she thinks that Serbia or the Security Council is scared by the possibility that she will not attend Security Council meetings any more, she lives in an entirely different world. Everyone who loses is entitled to be angry, but please use different kinds of arguments, if they exist.

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

Ms. Çitaku: Kosovo is a free, sovereign and independent country; that will never change. The sooner the representative of Serbia realizes that, the better it will be for him and the better it will be for Serbia. We urge him to accept reality. We call on him to accept the facts. We call on him to read the opinion of the International Court of Justice. After all, it was Serbia that asked for that opinion.

We call on him not to try to change or twist historical facts. The war in Kosovo happened in the twenty-first century, before the eyes of the Council and those of the world. No court, no process, no fabricated facts can rewrite history. We have always cooperated with international justice. We have nothing to hide, and we are looking forward to cooperating in future. The agreement with the Netherlands is in the pipeline; we want that court to be established as soon as possible.

Again, we will never ask for Serbia's permission to exercise our right, just because we did not quite succeed

and were short three votes on one occasion. I assure you that next time we will succeed.

About my status here, I am the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the United States of America. The Head of our Mission in New York will be arriving soon; she is also a woman. We know that we are not

yet a United Nations Member. Just because we are not treated as such does not mean that we will not act as such.

I apologize for having taken additional time.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.