



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8459th meeting

Thursday, 7 February 2019, 3.20 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Ndong Mba/Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Fiallo Billini Portorreal
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

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/2019/102)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 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/2019/102)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): 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. Mr. Tanin will be participating in the meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

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/2019/102, 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: As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/102), this past period was characterized by action and rhetoric that did not improve the overall atmosphere or the potential for a swift resumption of the political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Antagonistic gestures and accusations continue to be far more evident than efforts to return to the new phase of dialogue that has been widely discussed for many months now. While there is no question that the leaders on both sides are facing serious challenges, the minimum requirement for a continued dialogue is to find

the means to steady rather than agitate the atmosphere. Instead, there has been a tendency to disrupt rather than de-escalate the situation. The absence of a unified stance in Pristina on the conditions for the resumption of the dialogue with Belgrade has reached a critical point in the days since the close of the reporting period, raising concerns about the continued viability of the current Government coalition in Kosovo.

Where does this leave the prospects for constructive political engagement? Much attention has been focused on the 100 per cent tariff introduced by the Pristina authorities on goods originating from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, beginning in November last year. This measure has been challenged in many quarters and Belgrade has made a resumption of the dialogue contingent on Pristina's revocation of the tariff. Pristina has linked the lifting of the tariff to a number of conditions. This is not the only example of positions taken by the parties that complicate efforts to return to the negotiating table. A responsible and forward-looking approach is essential if we are to remove obstacles to restarting the political negotiations. An expanded negotiating team for the dialogue, which includes members of the Assembly of Kosovo, was established in Pristina in December. However, internal discussions on the key principles that should guide Pristina's position in future negotiations are still ongoing. At the same time, more must be done on both sides to prepare the ground for whatever agreement may be reached between the parties. It will require more active engagement with and support from a wide range of stakeholders, including by pursuing the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the dialogue-related processes and by taking gender perspectives into account.

In December, the Kosovo Assembly enacted three laws that relate to the composition and activities of the Kosovo Security Force. They were not supported by the Serb caucus and were heavily criticized in Belgrade. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) provides the sole legal framework for the international security presence, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. KFOR has reiterated that stance, stressing that any adjustments must be transparent and inclusive, and that all previous commitments by Pristina regarding the Kosovo Security Force must continue to be honoured.

Recent developments in the relations between Pristina and Belgrade have complicated the efforts to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and good-faith compromise. This is a reminder that while commitment at the top levels remains central, dedication to building mutual confidence and trust across the communities on the ground is just as crucial. In order to contribute effectively to this important aspect of normalization and reconciliation, the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has focused on facilitating people-to-people engagement in Kosovo. Together with the United Nations Kosovo team and other international partners, UNMIK is advancing the implementation of the joint recommendations of the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum held in May 2018 in Ljubljana, focusing on supporting activities across various sectors and layers of society. They include cross-community dialogue, the promotion of language rights and equality under the law, youth empowerment and gender equality. In collaboration with the United Nations Kosovo team, the Mission has also engaged Kosovo civil society to help reduce gender- and ethnic-based discrimination. UNMIK has leveraged its limited resources by combining its efforts with those of our international partners.

UNMIK also continued to support the implementation of human rights-related initiatives and legislation, which are often made harder by inadequate financial and other resource commitments. Important progress has been made in the work of the Working Group on persons who are unaccounted for in connection with events in Kosovo. No obstacles in the form of political influence should be placed in the way of this work if we are to maintain momentum on the issue, which is vital to long-term reconciliation. More needs to be done to effectively guarantee the rights of non-majority communities, including Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma, as well as returnees and internally displaced persons.

Promoting genuine gender equality in Kosovo is another area that deserves particular attention. I have already mentioned the need for gender perspectives in the dialogue. For its part, UNMIK supports initiatives that build women's entrepreneurial skills and their ability to start new businesses. I have been engaged directly with women leaders at the central and local levels to promote such initiatives, and I believe that there is a growing sense of empowerment.

UNMIK, in partnership with other United Nations actors, supports local-level Kosovo institutions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of domestic violence. The Mission has contributed to a series of advocacy initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women and girls, within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. During the campaign, a UNMIK-produced documentary called *Not Your Property* was launched in Pristina, followed by screenings in 10 municipalities of Kosovo, organized in collaboration with UN-Women and led by local authorities and civil society partners. The documentary features stories of survivors from across Kosovo's communities and interviews with experts on how the exceptionally low property ownership by women, owing to customary norms, leaves women vulnerable to domestic violence.

In supporting intercommunity trust-building, UNMIK has placed a special focus on youth empowerment. In recent months, UNMIK has partnered with two youth-led non-governmental organizations to implement projects aimed at fostering sustainable reconciliation through human rights education. UNMIK continues to support multi-ethnic teams of young leaders in organizing various activities that bring positive change to their communities. UNMIK also supports youth advisory boards in enhancing their capacity to engage in cross-community dialogue. In January, the United Nations Kosovo team, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, launched a project, in coordination with UNMIK, to empower youth for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future in Kosovo.

The European perspective remains an important incentive to achieve peace and stability in the region. It is important for Kosovo's leaders to maintain focus on advancing initiatives that are essential to the people of Kosovo, particularly in the areas of rule of law and anti-corruption, human rights, strengthening the independence of the judiciary and bringing legislation in line with the European Union *acquis* and other international standards.

In conclusion, let me underline the importance of the support of all members of the Council for the engagement between Belgrade and Pristina. Reducing tensions, enhancing mutual trust and removing obstacles to the dialogue are crucial to stability in the region. I have committed UNMIK's resources to promoting trust-building at all levels of Kosovo society, and we will continue to focus on that process in close

coordination with all our partner organizations on the ground. I thank the Security Council for its support to our Mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I should like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative Mr. Zahir Tanin for their report (S/2019/102). The presence and activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) are of crucial importance. I therefore extend to the Special Representative my special gratitude for his hard work and dedication to fulfilling the mandate of the Mission under resolution 1244 (1999).

I also want to thank Equatorial Guinea for including this meeting on the Security Council's programme of work. Serbia believes that it is necessary for the Security Council to be open and ready to consider all questions relevant to international peace and security, and consistently to pay special attention to its prevention role and to respond to situations that, in addition to being clear violations of the resolutions of this organ, lead to increased tensions and threaten stability and security.

We ask for these meetings not for the purpose of one-upmanship, but to contribute to the stabilization of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and to peace in the region. Serbia is a constructive, credible and predictable partner. That is why we initiated the agreement on the dynamic of the Security Council's meetings on UNMIK, which remain necessary, and I am pleased to express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council that have agreed on this important question in order to avoid needless debates in this organ with respect to these meetings. The most important thing is that the Security Council will continue to consider the Secretary-General's reports on UNMIK on a continued basis. I recall that the Security Council continues to discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina twice a year, as well as the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, and no one has asked that these topics be removed from the Council's agenda.

I continue to believe that we should and can find a common denominator of our interests and strive to achieve it. We all want to resolve the question of Kosovo

and Metohija. We all want it to no longer be a topic on the Security Council's agenda. We all want UNMIK to complete its mission, and successfully so.

That moment is not yet near, however. I have often pointed out that we are at a very delicate juncture and called on all to proceed to create conditions for us to sit and talk constructively, without preconditions or the imposition of solutions. Let me recall that talks between Belgrade and Pristina have entered their seventh year and that progress has been made — sometimes more, sometimes less — in this time. Yet, we have talked. As Prime Minister during those years, I signed the Brussels Agreement. Regrettably, the agreement has not been fully implemented to date, while at this moment in time there are no talks in Brussels, and everyone here knows why.

I know that many Council members will call on both sides to refrain from unilateral acts and commit themselves to dialogue and the quest for a lasting solution. I can only tell them that Serbia has refrained from unilateral acts. We have not engaged in such acts, despite the fact that the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, as the most important part of the Brussels Agreement, has yet to be established over the past five years, or to prevent such unilateral decisions as the confiscation of the Trepča mines property that Pristina undertook several days ago.

The dialogue has been forestalled for one reason — the unilateral decision of the so-called Kosovo to impose taxes on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina at a rate of 100 per cent. This act, let me recall, has been condemned by the entire international community, Pristina's staunchest allies included, which have called on Pristina to suspend the decision.

We have entered 2019 facing major challenges and problems, the solutions for which are barely apparent nowadays. I recall that, in addition to the decision to establish the so-called Kosovo armed forces shortly following the Security Council meeting in November 2018 (see S/PV.8399), instead of de-escalating tensions and making maximal efforts to promote dialogue, Pristina rushed to adopt misguided and senseless decisions relative to the imposition of taxes on Serbian goods. They were followed by numerous pronouncements relative to "Greater Albania", which were hardly a call to compromise, but rather intended to gin up instability in the region. The one-sided decision of Pristina to increase taxes on Serbian goods

by as much as 100 per cent, in contravention of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, is primarily a politically motivated decision that wreaked irreversible damage and forestalled the continuation of the dialogue on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. For its part, Serbia continues to firmly believe that talks are the only way for achieving a solution to outstanding issues, and refrained — even following the imposition of the taxes — from retaliatory measures or any other act that would have aggravated the situation. We demonstrated once again responsibility, common sense and credibility.

The taxes are intended to make the situation of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija even more difficult. Despite the condemnation and the intense pressure of numerous international institutions, Pristina soldiers on and continues to levy the taxes it imposed more than two months ago. Owing to the fact that it can take and implement unilateral and destabilizing decisions and measures without consequences and that it can breach agreements and raid a Serbian-majority territory, Pristina is continuing in those practices unabated. We are therefore faced today not only by the absence of the community of Serbian municipalities, but also by continued attempts to take over northern Kosovo and Metohija, as evidenced by the raid carried out by the special Regional Operations Support Unit of that part of the province in November 2018, the imposition of draconian taxes on Serbian goods, the arrest of four Serbs in Kosovska Mitrovica in a brutal action carried out by the special Regional Operations Support Unit and the call for the unification of the northern and southern parts of the town. Tantamount to a drive to intimidate the Serbs living in the northern part of the town, it also serves as a screen for the intended takeover of northern Kosovska Mitrovica and the expulsion of Serbs there in the same way that they were expelled from its southern part.

Pristina continues to undo everything in which the European Union and other international actors invested considerable efforts through dialogue and regional ties. Should we then expect that any given agreement will be respected when the basic principles underpinning modern-day Europe are being ignored? The decision to ban the free flow of goods, capital and people as a result of displeasure with a political decision is — let me point out once again — inconceivable in the twenty-first century. Pristina's contention that the act was taken as a countermeasure to Serbia's policy, which it

characterizes as aggressive, is entirely false. Rather, it was taken as a consequence of the withdrawal of the recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo by 13 countries and its failed attempt to become a member of INTERPOL. The explanation that has been provided is that it is detrimental to the dialogue. Ever since it unilaterally declared its independence in 2008, so-called Kosovo has lobbied for recognition, aided and abetted by certain States.

After all, some members of this body called on other States in our previous meetings to recognize Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. Serbia has taken no unilateral measures as a result of those actions. On the contrary, we entered the dialogue and engaged in discussions notwithstanding the recognition that had taken place. For those who are unaware, we began the dialogue in 2012, and 19 countries have recognized Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence since then. No one said that those countries' recognition impeded the dialogue. I would cite the example of Madagascar. Nothing was said in November 2017 indicating that its recognition would be harmful to the dialogue but, when Madagascar decided to withdraw its recognition in December 2018, some Council members viewed the withdrawal as extremely harmful. I truly need help understanding such reasoning.

Pristina bears a grudge over the failure of its bid to join INTERPOL and UNESCO, as well. However, in 2015, prior to Pristina's request for admission to UNESCO, Serbia, and myself personally, proposed that the protection of cultural heritage be included in the agenda of the dialogue and that an agreement be reached on that issue. The proposal fell on deaf ears without an understanding, just like the one concerning INTERPOL. Pristina said that it was not obliged to discuss that with us, that it had the support of the majority of members of those organizations and that it would try to become members. We tried to explain that the INTERPOL candidature, which would entail the inevitable lobbying for and against it by the various sides — were an application for admission to be submitted — would not create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. As it was irate following its failed bid, Pristina raised the import tax to 100 per cent. Let me recall that so-called Kosovo continues to falsely bandy the statistic that it has been recognized by 116 countries. Seventy-four States Members of the United Nations voted in favour of Pristina's admission to INTERPOL. It required and lacked an additional

36 votes. It now blames little Serbia for those results. We take this opportunity to call for solving all issues through dialogue, and we are ready to make every best effort to find a lasting solution.

Some Security Council members maintain that the situation in Kosovo is significantly different from that of 1999 or 2009, and are calling for revising UNMIK's mandate. Let me remind them that the Mission is already significantly different than it was in 1999. At the time, it numbered 4,718 civilian police officers and 1,269 international and 3,566 local personnel. Its budget then totalled \$427 million. Today it has been decreased by almost by 90 per cent, and the members of its personnel number about 500 men and women. Its budget is \$40 million. The Mission's scope was reduced too much and too soon. Many errors have been made over the past 20 years, and, for that reason, I call on members not to make the same mistake of making hasty decisions. Assertions that the Mission is unnecessary and has completed its mandate do not reflect reality. Ramush Haradinaj's accusation that UNMIK and the Secretary-General issue fake reports warrants our collective condemnation, as does the decision to discontinue cooperation with the international Organization's Mission. Let me recall that Haradinaj accused the European Union of killing the dialogue in a meeting with the highest-ranking officials of the Union.

We welcome the fact that the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Office of the Specialist Prosecutor began hearings concerning certain individuals from Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, we hope that the initial indictments will soon be issued, while especially bearing in mind the importance of that step for revealing the perpetrators of the crimes committed against Serbs and other non-Albanians. Those who were served hearing summons included several high-ranking officials, former members of the command structure of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army. That is of paramount importance, as ample evidence has been collected linking those individuals to crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija. Given the evidence, it is now important to issue arrest warrants and try alleged offenders in a judicial institution, which, to date, has never been done. A large number of Serbs and non-Albanians imprisoned by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army were killed, while others escaped or were released. The Commission of the Republic of Serbia on Missing Persons continues to collect evidence in its archives with regard to more than 580 Serbs and

non-Albanians incarcerated in approximately 140 illegal prisons. The investigation must continue, as information and evidence abound. The "yellow house" and the crimes relating to illegally trafficking in human organs committed therein must be investigated, as well. We hope that Pristina will cooperate with the competent institutions so that those crimes will be punished. Yet war criminal Sylejman Selimi has been appointed as an adviser to the Prime Minister of so-called Kosovo, a fact that has been condemned, including by the United States Ambassador in Pristina. There is not much room for optimism, is there?

I would also like to remind the Council that Mr. Selimi has been on a conditional release since he was convicted of war crimes against Serbia. That is the person who was appointed as an adviser to the Prime Minister of so-called Kosovo. That is of crucial importance for the stabilization of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the efforts to achieve historical reconciliation.

It is also important, however, to push back the unscrupulous lies and montage of information brought forth incessantly by the highest-ranking Kosovo Albanian officials to cover up their own crimes, who continue to posture as victims of the conflict. They misuse and viciously manipulate the data with the aim of incriminating Serbs alone for all the atrocities committed in Kosovo and Metohija, as if only their victims — their expellees, killed, missing and tortured — mattered. What happened, however, was an armed conflict between two warring parties: between regular armed forces and police and the insurgent and terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army.

Albanians do not mention that the victims included 2,197 Serbs, 159 Roma, 95 Bosniaks, 78 Ashkalis, 75 Montenegrins, 38 Egyptians and 46 members of other communities, who had lived in peace and harmony in the province. Speaking of the numbers, let it be known that 2,725 Serbs and other non-Albanians were reported as killed or missing.

Special fervour is displayed in hiding the truth that most crimes were committed after the withdrawal of the regular armed forces of Serbia from the province in June 1999. One of the reasons is attempts to conceal the settling of accounts by the Kosovo Liberation Army with their disloyal fellow Albanians: 377 of them killed at the hands of their co-nationals.

We should also mention that 1,250 Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were killed by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army in 1998 and at the beginning of 1999, prior to the NATO aggression, to which testimonies of members of many families have been made and are in our possession. Pristina is less than eager to unveil the number of killed or missing members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which, according to international sources, reaches 2,132.

Pristina continues to contend that the missing persons number is 1,647, but fails to point out that the number includes 570 Serbs and non-Albanians. It does not indicate that a large number of missing Albanians was kidnapped and certainly killed by the Kosovo Liberation Army. Following 10 June 1999, they totalled 55. So far, none of Pristina's representatives have said if a joint consolidated list of missing persons has been established, or that the tracking of missing persons continues in agreement and cooperation of the competent bodies of the commissions under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

At the same time, Pristina refuses to make public that the human remains of 900 Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were exhumed at locations in central Serbia from 2001 to 2017 and released to their families, and that each and every request it submitted to check for potential mass or individual graves has received a response. On the other hand, no location in Kosovo and Metohija that is suspected of containing mass graves of killed Serbs, Roma or disloyal Albanians has been checked to date, 20 years after the confrontation, despite many requests made by our side.

According to the recent report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo, the number of incidents directed at the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija last year increased by as much as 30 per cent, compared to 2017. How are we to expect then that any progress will be made in the return of the internally displaced persons, let alone in the building of a multi-ethnic democratic society, if no basic human rights, including the right to a safe and secure life for all in Kosovo and Metohija, are not respected?

It is self-defeating to speak of those numbers today, 20 years after the establishment of the international civil presence, that is, the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), which entrusted the international civil presence with a clear responsibility of

“assuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo.” (*resolution 1244 (1999), para. 11 (k)*)

Do the constant attacks on returnees and their property, pressure and low-intensity violence, discrimination and intolerance tell the Council anything as to whether the goal that was proclaimed 20 years ago has really been achieved? And are we ready for political goals and strategic considerations to close our eyes to what is happening and say that the situation is peaceful and stable? We must not, and we do not want to, allow that to happen. We must speak, today and tomorrow, about the 200,000 displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, just as we would for any other such person in Europe or elsewhere in the world, for each and every one of them has the right to return home.

A conclusion in the dialogue was that the question of property would also be a topic of discussion. Heedless of that conclusion, Pristina took a one-sided decision to confiscate the property of the Trepča mines. Let me recall that, so far, Serbia has paid \$750 million, with \$200 million remaining, on the loan taken out on behalf of the Kosovo and Metohija borrowers, even though so-called Kosovo is a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. With Serbia paying the debt, why is Kosovo not a part of Serbia? If it is an independent country, why does it not pay off its loans itself? If the situation is as it says, then how can it proclaim to own those companies?

Serbia is fully committed to dialogue and stands ready to move forward with it, but it will happen only once Pristina revokes its decision on taxes. I thank the members of the international community that have condemned the decision of Pristina and called on it to revoke it. I plead with them, at the same time, to persevere and continue to bring pressure to bear on the representatives of Pristina so that the decision can finally be revoked and we can continue with the talks, despite some serious and significant consequences that have already taken place. It is my hope that Pristina will revoke the taxes; it would be reasonable and open the door to the talks. If it does not do so, however, it will be clear that it is not after agreements and compromise, but rather it is after blackmail.

It is my earnest hope that this year will not be beset by the challenges we faced in the past period, the like of which we have not yet managed to overcome. Let me reiterate once again that Serbia continues to maintain

that problems should be solved through dialogue and with respect for the principles of international law. We trust and believe that appropriate conditions will be created in that regard. For our part, we shall continue to conduct a policy of peace, but we expect that the other side will fulfil its obligations and refrain from unilateral acts and provocation. Twenty long years after the conflict, it is high time we turned a page in the history of Serbian-Albanian relations and proceeded to lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: As always, I am honoured to be here with members of the Security Council today, and it is precisely because I truly respect and value the Council that I cannot quite comprehend why it is that we are actually here today. Kosovo is certainly not a novel topic for the Council. For many people around the world, it was the war of the late 1990s that put Kosovo on the map. However, the war itself was not just an isolated formative experience for my people; it was predicated on years of oppression, segregation and exploitation, years when we were denied our most fundamental rights. We did not have the right to read or write in our own language in schools, or to sing songs out on our streets. We experienced years of being silenced by the deafening noise of Serbian guns, years of tremendous suffering that came to an end only when Council members' predecessors, sitting around this very table two decades ago, gave a voice to me and my people.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo, we also celebrate the role of the United Nations in Kosovo. When 1 million refugees were returning back to their homes, United Nations agencies were there, in Kosovo, waiting for them, readily offering their support. Our country has risen from the ashes of war, and it was the United Nations Administration that lifted us up.

Throughout the many years of the United Nations Administration in Kosovo, the Council has provided guidance and facilitated a healthy debate about Kosovo and its future. It was precisely United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari who recommended independence as the ultimate solution for Kosovo. And it was upon Serbia's request that the International Court of Justice ruled clearly and without any ambiguity that Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence and that it did not break or violate any

international law. I do not have to remind the Council that the ruling of the court was accepted by the General Assembly, which recommended the launch of a dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

With those facts in mind, I address the Council with the absolute candour and correctness that this forum implies and say that I can seriously not understand why on Earth we are here today talking about Kosovo for the third time in four months. It is unbelievable that the Council has convened more meetings to talk about Kosovo than it has for Syria, Yemen or Venezuela. There are real problems out there, real challenges that require the Council's valuable time and attention. There are real people who need the Council's help, as we in Kosovo once did. It is unacceptable that this Chamber is being turned into a theatre by our northern neighbour, that this esteemed forum has become a stage for Serbia to tell its fairy tales to the world, fictional stories that they do not even believe themselves. It is shameful, yet again, that this Chamber is being misused purely for domestic consumption. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has no role and has no mandate to exercise. These meetings have lost their purpose. In fact, the charade that is being put on in this Chamber is yet more proof that Serbia is not genuine in its articulated intent to engage in dialogue with Kosovo about the normalization of relations between our two countries.

The dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia was not, is not and will never be about Kosovo's right to exist as a free nation under the sun. Let us not distort the facts. A new and young republic was born in Europe 11 years ago this month and Kosovo will not ever negotiate its statehood or its independence — not today, not tomorrow, never. We want, and are prepared, to talk about building constructive relations as neighbours, as equals. However, that is exactly where the problem lies. Serbia is inherently opposed to the idea that Kosovo is its equal. That is why it creates unnecessary drama everywhere it can about anything that makes it view us as its equal. It is pervasive. We see it everywhere. We see it in sports and arts and politics. There is a stubborn refusal to accept us as peers. But, frankly speaking, that is Serbia's problem. What I cannot understand is why we have to meet here so often and entertain its ideas about a parallel universe that it chooses to live in. It is up to the members of this important Council to stop enabling this parody.

Always, every single day, Serbia continues to create artificial drama in order to avoid accepting reality. We have gotten rather used to it. It is hard for Serbia to surprise us with its absurdity anymore. However, if it thinks that it can make giving up our right to exist as a sovereign State a condition for dialogue with us, it is in for a fast-approaching awakening. Kosovo is not going to freeze its existence until Serbia has an epiphany and decides it is time to accept Kosovo as an equal.

First, less than two months ago, we were summoned to the Chamber for an extraordinary meeting to urgently address the most natural and ordinary decision that our institutions undertook when we established our army (see S/PV.8427). The decision to establish an army was a legal, constitutional and prudent obligation to create the requisite security mechanisms that will enable Kosovo to contribute and be part of regional and Euro-Atlantic security alliances. Furthermore, it was a decision that demonstrated the maturity of Kosovo as a State. It is a paradigm shift of no small proportion for us to transform from consumers of to contributors to security.

Serbia is now imposing conditions on the continuation of the dialogue with the removal of tariffs. The decision of our Government to impose tariffs on Serbian goods was not a decision we took lightly. However, the question at hand should be why that decision was made in the first place. The tariffs were a direct response to the aggressive and brutal campaign of the Serbian Government against Kosovo. One cannot use one's hand to fight for its existence, with everything they have at their disposal, and extend the other one with the pretence of being earnest about normalizing relations with Kosovo. In addition, political arguments aside, that decision was also based on economic factors. No product whatsoever that is labelled made in Kosovo can pass the Serbian border. Why should Kosovo extend Serbia a courtesy that it does not reciprocate?

The tariffs are not the issue. They are merely an excuse to refuse to come and sit with us at the table in Brussels. At the end of the day, the real economic effect of the tariffs on Serbia is minimal. Serbia exports weapons all around the world, even to countries that are under a European Union or a United States embargo, and it sells biscuits to Kosovo. Only 3 per cent of Serbia's exports are to Kosovo. There is no humanitarian crisis of any kind in Kosovo. I ask Council members to come and visit Kosovo, and they will witness the unquestionable reality with their own eyes.

The bottom line is that Serbia will use any excuse that it can find, and it will invent more if there are no excuses, only to delay the inevitable, namely, the recognition of Kosovo as a free and independent State. All the excuses and delays do not alter the fact that Kosovo is a free nation. Dialogue should therefore not be conditional on excuses because, at the end of the day, Kosovo has real and painful reasons to place conditions on the process. We have 20,000 reasons, for each of the women that were raped by the Serbian military forces. We have 1,370 more, for each child who was killed in Kosovo by the Serbian military forces. We have 1,600 reasons, for each and every one of the people who are still missing today. Yet Kosovo has never placed conditions on the dialogue process because, for us, building a prosperous Kosovo, at peace with its neighbours, is the best way to honour the sacrifice that was made. Although our scars may never fully heal, we will not be hostage to our own pain.

Even today, we heard attempts to rewrite history. We heard no remorse for the crimes that were committed, from Srebrenica to Račak and Izbica. The war in former Yugoslavia happened before the eyes of the world. We all know who the victims are and who the perpetrators are. There is one address and that is in Belgrade. The Kosovo Liberation Army was not a criminal or terrorist organization. It comprised young women and men who had the courage to stand up and fight Milošević. We are very proud of that.

Instead of seizing this opportunity for redemption and peace, Serbia chooses obstruction. I urge the Council to remember that even if the Government of Kosovo were to suspend the tariffs today, Serbia would find some other excuse to inhibit the process. What is its excuse for the lack of implementation of almost everything that we have agreed to in Brussels? What is its excuse for the lack of implementation of the energy agreement or the agreement on the recognition of diplomas? What is its excuse? It has none. The truth is that until Serbia recognizes Kosovo as its equal, our part of the world will sadly keep producing endless and pointless drama and conflict.

The most recent iteration was Belgrade's reaction to the legitimate and constitutional decision on the Trepça mines. Belgrade's reaction to that decision revealed in the most blatant and brutal way the true neocolonial attitude that Serbia harbours towards Kosovo. Kosovo will not negotiate with Belgrade about Trepça or any other of our resources. They are in Kosovo and they

belong to the people of Kosovo. The time when decisions regarding our resources were made in Belgrade ended a long time ago.

Serbia needs to want peace. It needs to want an agreement. If it truly does, it needs to act on it. Our Serbian citizens in Kosovo are the ones that suffer the most in this situation. Let there be no mistake — there is only one Government that exercises pressure on them. That is the one that sits in Belgrade, not the one that sits in Pristina. Any member of the Kosovo Serbian community who dares to think differently to or independently of the Government in Belgrade is subject to systematic intimidation. From hand grenades thrown at the homes of the Serbian members of the Kosovo security forces to the detention of Serbian Members of Parliament who dared to challenge the Government in Belgrade, Serbia has left no stone unturned in its attempts to obstruct the integration of the Serbian community in Kosovo. Belgrade does not view them as people who need its support. Belgrade views and uses Serbs in Kosovo as an instrument for its destabilizing foreign policy. We have seen similar scenarios in Bosnia, as well.

Only recently when we gathered here, we all demanded progress on the investigation into the assassination of Oliver Ivanović (see S/PV.8399). The Kosovo police and other law enforcement mechanisms worked hard to bring the perpetrators of that crime to justice. Let me mention the attack on the Kosovo Special Police Unit to which my colleague from Serbia referred. Arrests were made, but look at the irony — the main suspect is in hiding in Serbia and Serbia refuses to hand him over to the Kosovar authorities. I will refrain from commenting any further on this matter and allow Council members to make up their own minds as to what that means.

As we prepare to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo, I cannot help but reflect on the future. Regardless of the roadblocks and despite all the obstacles that we face, we remain determined to do all that is in our power to achieve and cherish a stable and lasting peace for the sake of our children, our athletes, our artists and our scientists, who are undaunted by the temporary constraints of our current circumstance. They transcend the borders of prejudice and they scale the walls of politics to raise our flag all around the world. For the sake of our brave women who challenge the status quo to transform social norms and break glass ceilings and for the sake of the

fallen, who made the ultimate sacrifice, we continue to strive for a better tomorrow. Even though we still have a long way to go, I am just as hopeful for our young republic today as I was on 12 June 1999, when Kosovo was liberated from Serbia.

It is time for Serbia to liberate itself from Kosovo now, for the sake of peace and stability in the region. We all must show courage and end this conflict. Kosovo is ready.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing, and his team for their continuing dedication to this issue. I also extend a welcome to His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Serbia and Her Excellency the Ambassador of Kosovo.

I have spent a lot of my career dealing with the Balkans. I have spent some time in Kosovo and in Mitrovica, which is in northern Kosovo and a Kosovo Serb-majority community. It is fair to say that there are still tensions in the communities, and it is also fair to say that the communities have not always treated each other with kindness, respect and friendliness. But I was sorry to not hear any recognition today, from one of the speakers, of the events that led us to 1999, to the NATO intervention and to resolution 1244 (1999) and the presence of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which we are dealing with today. I heard no contrition or acceptance of the enormity of the war crimes that were committed on the ground. Those war crimes have been established by the international tribunal that the Council set up for that purpose. I heard no recognition of the events that led up to the Ahtisaari process on the status of Kosovo and the events that then followed, or of the attempts by the Council, as a whole, and by individual members of the Council, notably the United States and Russia, acting with the European Union (EU), to try to resolve the status issue. All of those efforts came to nothing and remain in abeyance. That is not at all to take away from the fact that each of the communities in Kosovo could do more to build a tolerant, inclusive society where rights are respected across the board. But there is a very big difference between that point and the description of how we got where we are.

The situation in Kosovo in 2019 has changed dramatically since UNMIK entered in 1999. UNMIK has played an important role, with the help of the European Union and NATO, in promoting security, stability and human rights in Kosovo and the region. Kosovo is no longer a country in conflict, and it is becoming increasingly integrated into the international community.

The Council deals with very many important issues related to international peace and security. With the agreement we have been able to reach today on reducing the frequency of UNMIK meetings going forward, followed by the endorsement of the President of the Council — and I thank you, Mr. President, for your role in that — we have taken a step commensurate with the nature of the issue regarding Kosovo, thereby enabling the Council to focus its efforts on much more fierce, intractable and live conflicts. At the same time, we support a strategic review of the Mission to ensure that UNMIK's efforts are fully tailored to the situation on the ground.

As the UNMIK report (S/2019/102) makes clear, and notwithstanding overall developments in Kosovo, tensions between Belgrade and Pristina, sadly, rose over the reporting period. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to look forward to potential solutions, and for political leaders in the region, but particularly in Kosovo and Serbia, to refrain from exacerbating tensions and divisions.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that Kosovo is not an acute crisis situation of the sort that the Council, sadly, has to deal with all too often. Rather, it and Serbia are fortunate in that the European Union has offered a dialogue within which they can normalize their relations and make progress towards integration into the European Union as equals and as sovereign nations that respect one another. There are other conflicts where we have no such prospect of reaching any sort of agreement along those lines. I would really like to use this meeting to appeal to the political leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to recognize the opportunity that the EU-facilitated dialogue offers them to be able to resolve their differences and move forward for the sake of their peoples, their history and their relations as equal and sovereign neighbours working together for the prosperity and democracy of Europe. In addition to that, I look to both parties to cease all provocations, which increase tensions, and call on them to show the good faith that the dialogue expects. Progress on the

dialogue is not only vital for the prosperity, stability and security of both Kosovo and Serbia and the wider region, it would also be an important example of how, at a very unpredictable time in world affairs, two former adversaries could come together and show that a way forward can be found to mutual benefit.

I want to say that we also welcome the law mandating the Kosovo State delegation, which passed its first reading on 2 February. The State delegation, in the context of the dialogue, will help ensure that a plurality of voices from across the political spectrum is able to deliver a deal that the Kosovo Parliament and the country can accept. And of course, any deal should be comprehensive, inclusive and contribute to regional stability and security.

If I may, I would also like to highlight one aspect of the Special Representative's report to which the Kosovo Ambassador alluded, that is, the transition of the Kosovo Security Force, which the Council discussed in December (see S/PV.8427). I would like to reiterate what I said at that time, that the United Kingdom believes that it is Kosovo's right as an independent, self-governing State to develop its own armed forces. Our legal interpretation of resolution 1244 (1999) is that it does not contain anything that precludes the future transition of the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force. I also repeat something else I said in December, that we look to Kosovo to act responsibly, transparently and in consultation with NATO allies to uphold existing commitments to arrangements with the NATO Kosovo Force.

In closing, I would like to again pay tribute to Council colleagues who have helped us reach a sensible and proportionate way forward on the frequency with which the Council discusses Kosovo, and I would like to reiterate our thanks to the Special Representative and his team for their efforts on behalf of the Council.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): As we sat around the table to discuss the programme of work on Monday, I wondered why you, Sir, were so insistent about convening today's debate on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We have already heard 46 minutes worth of statements. It has been very repetitious; much of it we have heard before. I think we have found a very good solution for reducing the amount of discussion we have around the table on the issue.

I would subscribe to everything that my colleague of the United Kingdom, Ms. Pierce, has said with regard to developments in the country and only reiterate that Kosovo has made considerable progress since 2008. With respect to dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, we have the Brussels dialogue, facilitated by the European Union, although it is not making the kind of progress we want. Nonetheless, we have it. Therefore, I do not see the importance of having such discussions, in particular on UNMIK, here in the Council.

I would like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his team for their work and for the briefing. I listened very carefully to what he said. Unfortunately, he also stated that there are many antagonistic gestures and many things that can and should be improved. He pointed to the work being done and we very much support the person-to-person contacts, youth exchanges and the participation of women and empowerment of women leaders. That is all very important. We believe that it can all be taken over either by the Kosovar institutions themselves or by other international organizations. Therefore, in our opinion, it is time for a strategic assessment of UNMIK and we should align the Mission to the situation on the ground. As I said, many or all of the tasks can be taken over by other institutions.

I would like to highlight one point in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/102) that we find very important. It is that Kosovo has made significant progress in recognizing the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We welcome that survivor-centred approach as a positive example for others in the region and beyond to follow. We believe that it is very important that we look at the victims of violence, in particular women, in the various conflicts on the Council's agenda, from South Sudan to Myanmar to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We always see that women are the victims and we must take care of them. Tomorrow, Germany will host an Arria Formula meeting on that issue and on the very important question of accountability.

Let me briefly turn to the normalization dialogue. We think — and both briefers have stated — that the European perspective is very important. Special Representative Tanin also said that the European perspective is very important for Kosovo. I do not understand how the issues that have been discussed are in conformity with the European perspective.

First of all, with regard to the Kosovo Government, we look forward to Kosovo becoming a member of the European Union and to the removal of tariffs and trade barriers. Tariffs on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are at odds with the European perspective and I would urge that they be removed. At the same time, with regard to Serbia, the President of Serbia has launched a very good initiative to create a free-trade zone in the Balkans. Not allowing Kosovar products into Serbia is at variance with that initiative.

With regard to the Serbian initiative, in his intervention Mr. Dačić mentioned that there have been 13 withdrawals of recognition. From reports, I also know that Ivica Dačić has travelled to some of those countries. He has made some beautiful trips to the Caribbean and the Pacific islands, but I do not understand the logic behind that. The Kosovo declaration of independence was recognized by the International Court of Justice as being in conformity with international law. There is an independent Kosovo. The only way that Serbia will enter the European Union is if the normalization dialogue is successful and by recognizing Kosovo. By travelling to various countries to encourage them to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo, he is shooting himself in the foot. I still do not understand the logic of it because I have always believed that Serbia wanted to join the European Union.

Lastly, with regard to the Brussels dialogue and the Brussels Agreement, nothing in the Agreement mentions border adjustments, border changes or territory swaps. Germany does not think that such ideas contribute to a solution. We believe that such efforts are risky and could destabilize the entire region.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. I also welcome Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku back to the Security Council.

We appreciate the understanding reached by the Council to end the practice of quarterly briefings on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and that next year there will be two meetings “on the issue”, not necessarily on UNMIK. There are much better uses for the Council's limited time and resources than to maintain the past frequency of UNMIK briefings.

It is disappointing that, at a moment when the atmosphere begs for improvement, these Council

meetings continue to be used to deploy antagonistic language. I agree with much of what my colleagues of Germany and the United Kingdom have said. It is unfortunate and one reason that many Council members are reluctant to continue those meetings, wondering whether they actually contribute to or detract from the prospects for international peace and security. We underscore that UNMIK has achieved its original mandate and its drawdown is long overdue. The United Nations continues to have an important and useful role to play in Kosovo, but through the United Nations country team and the United Nations Development Programme, not through UNMIK, and that should be reflected in the Council's approach to meetings "on the issue".

As the United States has requested previously, we would like the Secretariat to initiate a strategic review of UNMIK to develop an exit strategy. Taking that step will empower the Security Council with critical resource management and oversight information to better evaluate the United Nations presence in Kosovo. Such a step would also advance the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

We continue to support the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. As our President has made clear, we believe that this is a unique moment for both Serbia and Kosovo to reach a comprehensive normalization agreement. We believe that is achievable in 2019. Failure to seize this opportunity would be a setback. The dialogue should be both countries' overarching priority. Both Kosovo and Serbia should take immediate steps to lower tensions, remove barriers and create the conditions necessary for rapid progress on the dialogue. For Kosovo, that means immediately suspending tariffs on Serbian and Bosnian imports. Reaching a deal will take courageous leadership and flexibility on both sides. Normalizing relations must be a priority for both countries. Now is the time to work for forward momentum and pave the way for their respective EU paths. We believe that is the best way to ensure a stable, secure and prosperous future for the Western Balkans.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his clear and precise briefing, and I also thank Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Çitaku, the Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, for their statements. I would like to respectfully point out

that, in accordance with the working methods of the Security Council, as stipulated in paragraph 22 of note 507 (S/2017/507), those statements should not exceed five minutes.

As the representative of the United Kingdom has eloquently made clear, while the issue under discussion is rooted in a past marked by traumatic violence, over the past decade Kosovo has made remarkable gains that must be consolidated. We must redouble our efforts today to leave behind the wounds of the past and the remaining problems. Given the situation described in the Special Representative's briefing and the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/102), as well as the visible tensions in the statements by the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo, I want to briefly emphasize the following three points.

The first concerns the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), whose consistent efforts to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region must be acknowledged. France especially welcomes UNMIK's activities in bringing communities closer together and promoting the women and peace and security agenda in cooperation with UN-Women. Women's presence and participation in the political arena and its institutions should receive greater attention in that regard, and the efforts to combat violence against women mentioned by the Special Representative should also be continued and encouraged.

Almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), we must continue to devote attention to the issue of refocusing UNMIK's actions while considering the situation on the ground, the Mission's performance and the initiatives of other regional and international actors, particularly the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). The note by the President of the Security Council on the frequency of our meetings also supports this view.

My second point concerns the normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade, which depends on the dialogue conducted between the two parties under the auspices of the European Union. In that regard, we support the mediation efforts of Ms. Frederica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. I expressed our positions on the dialogue and the difficulties it has encountered at our meeting on 17 December (see S/PV.8427). They remain

fully valid, and I want to reiterate today that France deplores the fact that several incidents and unilateral decisions mentioned in the Secretary-General's report have obstructed the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in recent months, particularly the Government of Kosovo's decision to impose a 100 per cent tax on goods coming from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina comes to mind. We once again ask that it be repealed, if possible, or at the very least suspended. It is important to encourage two-way communication. We hope that the dialogue, which is currently at an impasse, will be resumed as soon as possible. We also want to ensure that security commitments are respected.

France calls on both parties to show a spirit of compromise and political will. We urge the political leaders of both States to create the conditions conducive to a comprehensive and final agreement, which would be a major step towards achieving lasting stability in the Western Balkans and making progress on the path to a European future. It is crucial to ensure that both parties refrain from any actions, statements or measures that could undermine normalization. For its part, France intends to continue providing support for regional cooperation efforts, particularly the French-German initiative on the control of small arms and light weapons.

My third and last point concerns the European future of Kosovo and Serbia. Given the values that are central to the European project, we underline the importance of the reforms needed to consolidate and strengthen the rule of law. In Kosovo, EULEX is contributing to that goal by focusing on the effectiveness, ethics and multi-community nature of the Kosovo judicial system.

In conclusion, I want to remind the Council that the primary responsibility for Serbia and Kosovo's European visions lies first and foremost with their political leaders. Only the full normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade will make it possible to achieve that shared European future.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to thank our colleagues from Equatorial Guinea for their principled position and for including this meeting on Kosovo in the Security Council's February programme of work to enable us to discuss the situation there and the Secretary-General's periodic report (S/2019/102), issued on 31 January, on the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). We welcome the participation

of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, in this meeting, and we share his serious concerns about the situation in Kosovo. We also thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his informative briefing on the situation in the region. We value the Mission's work and support Mr. Tanin and his efforts. We also listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku said that she simply could not understand why we were here today. I will now explain why. Furthermore, having read out to us yet another tract, in which I heard not one substantive response to Deputy Prime Minister Dačić's fair and serious claims regarding Kosovo, she called this Security Council meeting a charade. I am much obliged to her for her opinion of our Council meeting. And as long as she considers them a charade, she is completely free to choose not to participate in these meetings, to which she is invited, by the way.

We cannot accept Pristina's Western sponsors' position on removing the subject of Kosovo from the Council's agenda. Behind phrases such as "we recently discussed", "there is nothing to discuss", "the situation is calm" and "why so often?" we see a desire to hide the truth from the international community about the real situation on the ground and the games being played with Kosovo behind the scenes. The same applies to the calls for a strategic assessment.

We want to remind everyone that the Security Council has been and continues to be the main platform for international dialogue on Kosovo, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). Considering that the problem is getting worse, it should remain firmly under the Council's control and be considered based on the established practice of holding open briefings. The situation in Kosovo is extremely unstable and could spiral out of control at any time. Incidentally, the semi-annual report of the Head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Mission in Kosovo has a similar assessment, expressed recently at a meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Kosovo remains the main hotbed of instability and a source of potential conflict in the Balkans. The authorities in Pristina have taken a path exacerbating the crisis that poses a threat of renewed violence and war. Twenty years after NATO's barbaric bombing of the allied

Republic of Yugoslavia, and after 10 years of unilateral independence, we are seeing an increasing number of signs that the Kosovo-Albanian leadership is emerging out of the control of the Western countries that designed this so-called independence. To put the question another way, could the so-called Pristina leadership behave this way without outside collusion? The answer is obvious.

During the reporting period, Pristina initiated a whole series of provocative acts directed at Serbia and Serbs in the autonomous region. In violation of its obligations under the Central European Free Trade Agreement, Kosovo's so-called Government announced its introduction of a 100 per cent tariff on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The measures are still in force, despite President Vučić's urging, including here in this Chamber. The United States and the European Union have made unconvincing demands, unsupported by any concrete measures, that the tariffs be lifted, and Pristina has simply ignored them.

On top of that, on 14 December, in a serious violation of resolution 1244 (1999), the so-called Parliament decided to transform the Kosovo Security Force into a fully fledged Kosovo army. As the Secretary-General emphasized once again, the resolution remains the fundamental international legal basis for a Kosovo settlement. It includes a completely definitive requirement for demilitarizing any armed Kosovo-Albanian groups, and the sole presence permitted on Kosovo's territory is that of multinational contingents under international control. Based on that, if Pristina establishes any armed forces, the Kosovo Force must disarm them. On the contrary, however, those who should be preventing the creation of an army are doing everything they can to facilitate and encourage it. Pristina's Western patrons have been trying to whitewash the decision, arguing that it does not really change the nature of the Kosovo Security Force. But the fact is that its numbers are being doubled and reserves created, and above all its purpose — which until recently was civil defence — has changed. With the assistance of the United States and several NATO countries, the Kosovo-Albanian military is undergoing intensive training and being supplied with increasing amounts of weapons and technology. There can be no guarantees that these so-called Kosovo armed forces, consisting in large part of terrorists from the Kosovo Liberation Army, will not be used in future against the Serbian population in the north.

The calls from Kosovo-Albanian parties for the so-called unification of North and South Mitrovica are also a serious cause for alarm. In the current tense situation, any movement in that direction could become, as we say, the spark that starts the fire. It is quite clear that the decisions made in Kosovo are all links in a chain. The goal is to intimidate the Serbian population in the region and deprive them of possibilities, and all of that is happening against a backdrop of loud propaganda about the creation of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

In the light of our partners' biased approaches, the impotence of the European Union's mediation efforts, which our partners refer to as if to a guiding star, in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina makes perfect sense. A case in point is that for more than five years now there has been no progress in reaching a key agreement on the formation of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. Brussels is not in a position to get Pristina to do it. Nothing has been heard in response to the Kosovo Albanians' outright flouting of their obligations. Instead of that we hear vague urgings, for some reason addressed to both sides, to normalize relations, which only reinforces one side's feeling that it can get away with anything, inciting it to take maximalist approaches that do not allow for compromise.

Russia's position on Kosovo is consistent. We support a viable, mutually acceptable and sustainable settlement for Belgrade and Pristina on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999). It should be fair, it should comply with international law and it should have the Security Council's approval. In our view, forcing a so-called final normalization between Belgrade and Pristina and tying it to any artificial deadlines would be destructive. If we want to achieve stability in the Balkans, we must be able to find compromises, and when solutions are found in the framework of those efforts, they must be implemented, not sabotaged. That particularly applies to the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

We are seriously alarmed about the series of flagrantly irresponsible statements by Pristina about UNMIK. The statement by the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, that his so-called Government is going to stop cooperating with the Mission is a blatant violation of resolution 1244 (1999). I had a question at this point in my statement — that I would be interested to hear what our Western partners thought of that situation, or whether they would prefer

to ignore it and once again pretend that nothing has happened. I have listened intently to our colleagues' statements, but frankly I knew the answer already. None of them even mentioned it.

There have been no results in the work of the Specialist Chambers investigating the crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army, including the kidnapping and murder of people in order to harvest their organs. There was a noteworthy interview in the Serbian newspaper *Večernje novosti* with the Swiss former member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Dick Marty, the author of the report on "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo". The interview contains some interesting facts. For example, in July 2014 Clint Williamson, the former United States Prosecutor in the Specialist Chambers in The Hague, stated that the results of the investigation were consistent with the fundamental conclusions of the report, and yet, strangely enough, for some reason resigned immediately after that. A third Prosecutor was then appointed, but nothing has happened.

In Mr. Marty's words, it is inconceivable, absurd and dubious from an ethical point of view that Geoffrey Nice, a former prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, should now be employed in defending Kosovars in the Specialist Chambers. Mr. Marty's most striking point is that it is entirely possible that the Kosovo-Albanian leaders involved in those crimes will not be held accountable. In our opinion, that sums up both the real situation of the Chambers and its prospects and the tendencies we see in its work. In that regard, we emphasize that the unambiguous message that Mr. Marty is sending requires an adequate response on the part of the international community. What is at stake is the reputation of international justice and the European Union as a guarantor of the Specialist Chambers' implementation of its functions. Those who were involved in the most serious crimes, including the illegal trade in human organs, must be severely punished, regardless of the offices they currently hold in Pristina. We will not allow the issue to be swept under the rug, and we will continue to shine a light on it in future. We should note in passing that our Western partners' position on the Specialist Chambers only confirms the multiple levels of standards that they apply to international justice.

Kosovo has continued to be a haven for recruiting radicals, and terrorists returning from Syria and Iraq

have been flocking there. Unfortunately, every year fewer and fewer refugees and internally displaced persons return. Crimes against Serbs and their property are a daily occurrence, but the perpetrators frequently escape punishment. We continue to see takeovers of Serbian Orthodox Church property by Kosovo Albanians. We want to point out once again that the Church of Saint John the Baptist and the Saint Paraskeva Pyatnitsa Chapel in the town of Peć are no longer listed in the local land register as Serbian Orthodox Church property. There have been attempts to carry out illegal construction in UNESCO-protected areas near churches and monasteries. Let me remind the Council that Kosovo has tried to join UNESCO. We should also view in that context the so-called Parliament's recent adoption of a new charter for the Trepča mining complex, in Serb-populated northern Kosovo, which constitutes an unlawful expropriation of a Serbian State enterprise on whose functioning thousands of families in the area depend.

We continue to see determined attempts by the Kosovo authorities, with the support of a number of States, to join various international organizations. We reaffirm our unwavering position, which is that Pristina can participate in multilateral structures only through UNMIK. Anything else would be a serious contravention of the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). We would like to focus the Secretariat's attention on the importance of thoroughly monitoring developments in this situation, which, as the facts I have stated show, requires close attention at the international level, which should be conducted by the Security Council.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his briefing. We welcome the presence here today of Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and we also listened carefully to Ms. Çitaku's statement.

The current security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but is still confronting complex dynamics. China notes that the Kosovo authorities have recently imposed tariffs on imported goods from Serbia and decided to transform their security forces, measures that in our view are not conducive to enhancing mutual trust and dialogue. We call on the parties concerned to abide by resolution 1244 (1999), refrain from any rhetoric or action that could complicate or escalate the situation

and work to create conditions conducive to a proper settlement of the Kosovo issue.

Resolution 1244 (1999) provides an important legal basis for resolving the Kosovo issue. All parties should, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, reach a mutually acceptable solution through dialogue and negotiation, within the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands its legitimate concerns with regard to the Kosovo issue and commends Serbia's efforts to find a political solution to the Kosovo issue. China hopes that Belgrade and Pristina will stay committed to promoting the normalization of bilateral relations through dialogue and consultations, make constructive efforts to implement existing agreements, gradually enhance mutual trust and create the conditions conducive to a comprehensive and lasting solution.

Achieving reconciliation and common development is in the fundamental interest of all peoples in Kosovo. It also contributes to peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans region. We hope that all parties concerned will put the well-being of their people first, protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities, and promote the economic and social development of all ethnic groups. We believe that the Security Council should remain seized of the Kosovo issue and that the international community should play a constructive role in promoting a proper solution to the Kosovo issue.

China supports the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in implementing its mandate. We hope that UNMIK will maintain coordination with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force to jointly improve the situation on the ground and promote a proper settlement of the Kosovo issue.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and the Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements.

At the outset, I would like to turn to recent developments, which I regret to say have not been conducive to creating a climate for the normalization

of relations between the two parties. We have taken note of the adoption by the Kosovo Assembly of laws strengthening the mandate and capacity of the Kosovo Security Force. While we recognize Kosovo's sovereign right to legislate in this area, Belgium regrets the timing of this initiative and the lack of national and international consultations. We also regret the imposition of an import tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we call on the Kosovar authorities to lift it immediately.

It should be noted that the two measures that I have just mentioned are part of a broader context of conflicting relations between the two parties. We therefore call on Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from any action or statement that may stoke tensions.

The conclusion of a comprehensive legally binding agreement on the normalization of relations is the only way to achieve regional stability. We call on the Serbian and Kosovar Presidents to fully engage in the dialogue conducted under the auspices of the European Union. Both parties must uphold their commitments to creating an environment conducive to dialogue. We stress the importance of including civil society, including women and young people, in this process. Belgium fully supports the efforts of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, to that end.

We welcome the compromise reached in the Council on reducing the cycle of meetings and reporting on this subject. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations have undoubtedly contributed to an improvement of the situation in comparison with the situation 20 years ago. The challenges currently facing Kosovo are, however, primarily addressed in the context of European integration, in cooperation with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Furthermore, as I have already recalled, the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo is conducted under the auspices of the European Union. Therefore, we join our European colleagues in their call for the efforts of UNMIK to be refocused and fully adapted to this development. Ultimately, we are convinced that Serbia and Kosovo have a European future, but achieving it remains to a large extent in their hands.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and Mr. Tanin for his important briefing. We also

welcome the presence of Mr. Dačić and Ms. Çitaku. We have taken due note of their statements.

We acknowledge that the situation in Kosovo has improved since the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in 1999. However, we are also aware that major challenges remain to be overcome in order to achieve sustainable peace and reconciliation in the region. For that reason, we are pleased that an agreement has been reached on the frequency of Security Council meetings on this issue.

Peru reiterates the importance for all parties to remain committed to the fulfilment and implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement, and for the Council to remain united and attentive to fulfilling its role as guarantor. We have already expressed our concern about the repercussions that the adoption, by the Kosovar Parliament, of three laws establishing the creation of an army and the decision to raise the import tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to 100 per cent may have on stability in the Balkan subregion. Trade contributes to peace and understanding, so it should be encouraged, not restrained.

We also call on the parties to avoid actions that exacerbate mistrust and tensions and to take the necessary measures to allow this dialogue process to resume in a constructive and pragmatic manner. We believe that the dialogue process facilitated by the European Union continues to play a key role, both in contributing to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and in promoting their compliance with the commitments related to their respective European integration processes.

In that connection, we wish to stress the importance of involving the citizens of both countries, and in particular women and young people, in building this vision of the future. We welcome the initiatives promoted by the Mission in the area of women and peace and security and we hope that priority will be given to the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda. We also underscore the importance of respecting and strengthening the rule of law and the trust of all citizens in institutions, especially in the promotion and protection of human rights. That requires the recognition of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the population and of its heritage. In that regard, we underscore the work being carried

out by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, as well as the process of the transfer of powers to the Kosovar authorities and the role of the Specialist Chambers.

My delegation would like to conclude by expressing our appreciation for the work of UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the other international organizations involved, and for their ongoing contribution to building a sustainable peace in Kosovo.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing on the recent situation in Kosovo. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to New York and to thank him for sharing his views on the recent development in the field.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General provided us with a picture of the situation on the ground. We have noted with concern the continuing rising tension in the region. It is now important to ensure that that rising tension does not escalate and deepen the conflict. That therefore needs the commitment of all parties to exercise restraint and not to further exacerbate the situation. I believe that that is the main purpose and the sole reason for us to gather here today. We will continue to gather if there is no long-standing resolution that leads to peace in the region. In brief, I would also like to bring the following three points to the attention of the Council.

First, the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) is and remains the basic framework to resolve the conflict in the region. Each party is of course expected to honour its part of the bargain in line with the resolution, without exception. It would be unfortunate to throw away two decades of progress due to violations of the resolution, which would almost certainly have the potential to threaten peace and security in the region. Allegations and rhetoric do not help anyone but, in particular, make the path to reconciliation more difficult.

Secondly, Indonesia consistently upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States Members of the United Nations, including Serbia, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We will not condone any act that violates the

sovereignty or territorial integrity of any State. Should any differences occur, dialogue is always the best and the only way to address the issue; hence the need to create a conducive environment for talks to resume.

That leads me to my third point. Indonesia strongly believes that, in resolving the issue, all parties need to use peaceful means through dialogue and negotiation in the spirit of constructive engagement and mutual accommodation. There are legitimate concerns that have been raised today by the parties, as well as by many Security Council members. We believe that the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force and the imposition of a 100-per-cent tariff on targeted countries are not in line with constructive engagement and can quickly diminish confidence between the sides. Tariff conditionalities by Pristina hamper progress on negotiations and are ill-intentioned, as they do not help anyone but hurt the common consumers. Indonesia believes that, with a spirit of constructive engagement and mutual accommodation, even if it is not easy, there is hope for peace and a solution through dialogue. We, of course, welcome the efforts of the European Union in that regard.

We would like to express our appreciation for the work undertaken by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) thus far. We support the continuous engagement of UNMIK and encourage the Mission to continue to create a conducive environment for the resumption of political negotiation. Innovative approaches to building confidence and trust through inter-community trust-building, youth engagement and the participation of women in the dialogue are most welcome. People-to-people contact is important in order to build tolerance.

My childhood was spent in Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. I saw people from different communities and ethnic backgrounds living together in harmony and happiness. I, for one, would like to see that happen again. Pending that becoming a reality, the Security Council needs to remain seized of the matter and to push for all parties to come to the negotiating table and find a mutually acceptable and beneficial solution for the sake of all peoples in the region.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his detailed briefing to the

Council on the report of the Secretary General on the Mission's activities in Kosovo (S/2019/102). We also pay tribute to the vital role of the United Nations during this past period to assist Kosovo in building its institutions pursuant to relevant Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1244 (1999). I also welcome the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and the Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, and thank them for their statements.

I would like at the outset to reaffirm that the high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue in Brussels between Belgrade and Pristina remains the most appropriate framework for settling all outstanding issues between the two parties. It is the right means for reaching lasting, just and consensual solutions. We call on both parties to practice self-restraint, take all measures necessary to diffuse tensions, strive to overcome obstacles, demonstrate the necessary political will, commit themselves to reaching a comprehensive agreement, and create the appropriate conditions for a return to dialogue and the full normalization of relations between them.

While we are aware of the sensitivity of the step approved by the Kosovo Parliament to turn the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force, given that it is the sovereign and genuine right of any State to form its national institutions, we urge both parties to continue to address the issues of concern through dialogue. In that regard, we share the concern of the Secretary-General pertaining to the tension between Belgrade and Pristina and the resulting danger to stability, particularly in northern Kosovo. Both parties should therefore refrain from taking any unilateral measure that would trigger further tensions.

We welcome the progress made by the Working Group on Missing Persons following the events in Kosovo and we call on both parties to take advantage of that momentum and make further progress on the issue of disappeared persons in order to establish lasting reconciliation and create an environment conducive to good-neighbourliness. We also welcome the ongoing work of UNMIK, in cooperation with the United Nations country team in Kosovo and in partnership with local and international stakeholders, to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum, held in May 2018, in support of building confidence among the communities.

In conclusion, the international community should continue to strive to encourage Pristina and Belgrade to overcome their differences and reach consensual, just and lasting solutions accepted by both parties, which will help to establish a basis for peace, security and stability in the region.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and congratulates Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, on his comprehensive briefing.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the encouraging political, economic and security trends seen in Kosovo in recent years. That progress is also due to the backing of the international community through UNMIK, whose support of the Government's efforts has allowed significant advances in the process of reconciliation among the various communities, as well as the restoration of peace and stability.

On the security front, the efforts made since 1999 by the Kosovo Force have contributed substantially to maintaining a safe and secure environment and to ensuring the free movement of people and goods. Despite those encouraging signs, my country remains concerned about the growing tensions and the persistent challenges to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. That situation could undermine the efforts of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which is to be commended for its contribution to Kosovo's return to normalcy and institutional stability.

Côte d'Ivoire calls on the Kosovo and Serb communities to redouble their efforts to prevent the re-escalation of tensions through constructive dialogue and reciprocal confidence-building measures. It also believes that the revision of the customs duties, set at 100 per cent, on products imported from Serbia and Bosnia, would contribute to the resumption of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia with a view to reaching a free trade agreement with the European Union.

My country also urges Kosovo authorities to take the necessary measures to eliminate all obstacles to the creation of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which would undoubtedly help to ease and palliate the sociopolitical climate.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the efforts of the Kosovo authorities to promote the rule of law and to fight impunity. In that regard, it welcomes the arrest of three individuals implicated in the murder, on 16 January 2018, of Oliver Ivanović, leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice". In the same vein, my country welcomes the creation of an inter-institutional committee tasked with monitoring and reporting on issues related to violent extremism, as well as the indictment by the Office of the Specialist Prosecutor, on 20 December, of an individual for links to a terrorist group.

The precariousness of the current situation calls for the immediate resumption of the negotiations led by Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. That mediation would contribute to breathing new life into the reconciliation process, promoting human rights and permanently settling the Kosovo issue.

In conclusion, my country calls on the international community to make a significant contribution to the trust fund to support the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his informative briefing. I would also like to thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for their statements before the Council. We are pleased that the Council was able to reach a broad agreement on the frequency of future Council's meetings on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Ten years have passed since the last strategic review of UNMIK. We believe that the time is ripe for a new review that leads to a gradual reduction of the forces and possible resource savings. There is most certainly no need to maintain the current level of United Nations involvement. We are encouraged by the fact that there is a growing number of Council members who share that view.

We support and attentively monitor the ongoing Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. The normalization of relations between the capitals is of crucial importance to the European Union integration process of Serbia and Kosovo. We expect both sides to be equally engaged in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement.

There are domestic tensions and the political situation remains fragile in Kosovo. It is important for political forces in Kosovo to focus on the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the European reform agenda, as well as dialogue with Serbia. Progress has been made, but it needs to be further accelerated. Commitment to the rule of law and the fight against corruption and organized crime must continue.

Poland is committed to the process of stability and security in Europe, including the Western Balkans region. We are the biggest national contributor — with approximately 115 people — to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, supporting relevant rule-of-law institutions in Kosovo on their path towards increased effectiveness, sustainability, multi-ethnicity and accountability. Moreover, we contribute approximately 250 soldiers and civil employees to the Kosovo Force.

Poland supports the European Union's open door policy, because European integration is the only guarantee of long-term stability, economic development, security and good-neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans. Furthermore, we underscore the importance of the Specialist Chambers and the Office of the Specialist Prosecutor for the country's international and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Turning to the issue of the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force, we are convinced that its transformation into an army should not contradict resolution 1244 (1999) and should be pursued through an inclusive, gradual and transparent process, in accordance with the Kosovo Constitution. The transformed Kosovo Security Force should serve the security interests of all communities, including Kosovo Serbs.

Additionally, we encourage Kosovo to reconsider its decision to apply customs tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are forums for addressing such issues and grievances, and the parties should make good use of them.

Let me conclude in the same manner we have concluded on several occasions in the Chamber. Poland regards Kosovo as being fully capable of managing its own future and realizing its potential within the shared framework of European values. We are ready to contribute with necessary assistance, as well.

Mr. Fiallo Billini Portorreal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the holding of this informative meeting. We thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his briefing on the situation in Kosovo from 16 October to 15 January. We would also like to thank the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo, who are with us today.

We welcome Mr. Tanin's introduction of the Secretary-General's detailed report (S/2019/102). The Dominican Republic believes that much progress has been made on the ground, despite the many setbacks since the deployment of the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). We note that Belgrade and Pristina are on the right track to a lasting normalization of their relations, through the facilitation of the European Union. However, it is fitting to urge the parties at this time to adopt more flexible positions and to commit themselves to supporting the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the 2013 Brussels Agreement. We recommend that the necessary initiatives be taken to reduce tensions and that communication between Pristina and Belgrade be reopened in order to give way to a constructive exchange that will allow them to continue to make progress in the negotiations to reach a solution.

Our delegation believes that it is necessary to redirect our efforts towards the common good, to foster intercommunal trust and to seek a viable agreement for all exclusively through political dialogue. In that regard, we support opening new spaces to strengthen the leadership of women and young people so that they can begin to play a more influential role in the dynamics of the normalization process.

The Dominican Republic supports UNMIK and therefore recognizes the impact of the situation on peace and security throughout the Balkan subregion. In that regard, we reaffirm our belief that the parties will reach an agreement based on the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes, multilateralism, the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law. We believe that now is the time to conclude the long chapter of fruitless confrontations and to allow for the possibility of a future where respect for peaceful coexistence is the lasting bridge to the sustainable development of their communities and the solution of present and future problems.

Lastly, we thank UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for their work in Kosovo in the quest for peace, under the auspices of the Council.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): I thank you, Sir, for placing this matter on the agenda today. After following the due process provided for in the working methods of the Security Council, you have my support.

May I also thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. We also welcome His Excellency Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and thank him for his briefing. We also take note of the statement delivered by Ms. Çitaku.

South Africa welcomes the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, with the support of the United Nations country team, whose efforts have contributed significantly to creating an environment conducive to compromise, reconciliation and stability in Kosovo, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/102). South Africa also commends the efforts of Belgrade and Pristina in the European Union-facilitated dialogue towards normalizing relations, despite challenges faced by both leaders in finding a sustainable and peaceful political solution.

Surely the imposition of 100 per cent tariffs on Serbian goods and the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into regular armed forces do not contribute to creating an environment that is conducive to finding a durable solution in Kosovo. Perhaps the Kosovo Administration may want to reflect on those decisions, with the possibility of suspending or totally revising them as a contribution to establishing an environment of peace in which negotiations can take place.

South Africa also wishes to recognize the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and their support for the peace process in Kosovo. It is not easy. It is a very difficult process. We wish to reiterate that the presence of the United Nations in Kosovo is critical to reaching a solution and encouraging cooperation among all parties, as per the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). However, we remain concerned about the renewed tensions in Kosovo with regard to the special protective zones where

construction activities persist. All relevant parties should commit to upholding and protecting religious integrity and heritage and to respecting the rule of law, as well as the decisions of the Implementation and Monitoring Council.

South Africa wishes to reiterate the sentiments of the Secretary-General in his report regarding continued engagement with the authorities, civil society and bilateral and international partners. That will play an important role in ensuring active support for peacebuilding and intercommunity trust-building efforts in Kosovo. We hope that the spirit of dialogue will build the foundation for negotiations on an inclusive, fair political settlement that will be acceptable to both sides.

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

Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing on developments in Kosovo over the past few months. Similarly, I thank His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Her Excellency Ms. Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, for their briefings.

Our delegation welcomes the decision to convene today's meeting to address the situation in Kosovo. We believe that today's meeting has afforded the members of the Security Council the opportunity to play a constructive role in improving the situation on the ground, and that it will serve to encourage both parties to demonstrate their full commitment to reaching an agreement on the Kosovo issue.

In line with that position, we take note of the report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2019/102) and are particularly concerned about the tensions that arose between Belgrade and Pristina in the reporting period. Actions, such as the decision taken by the Kosovo Government to raise the import tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to 100 per cent; the decision of the mayors of the four Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities to resign and cease official communication with the authorities in Pristina; and a series of intercommunity incidents clearly require the Security Council's attention and commitment to

working with Belgrade and Pristina in the process to normalize relations.

We therefore welcome the fact that the members of the Security Council are ready to address the latest developments outlined in the Secretary-General's report. In the same vein, we share the Secretary-General's remarks that, now more than ever, the leaders of Belgrade and Pristina should avoid any action that could further increase tensions and seek to re-engage and work to advance the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. In that regard, we encourage them to step up their efforts in the quest for a political, inclusive and peaceful solution to the Kosovo issue.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. We therefore urge the parties to pursue the dialogue to promote the normalization of relations, since ensuring security and stability in

Kosovo requires the commitment of both parties to continuing political dialogue in the quest for a lasting solution that is acceptable to all parties.

Lastly, we commend UNMIK's excellent work on the ground and the support it provides to all communities in Kosovo, as well as to regional and international actors, in fulfilling the mandates set out in resolution 1244 (1999), which is the legal basis for a just solution to Kosovo. We therefore encourage them to pursue their constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade in order to pave the way for a solution to the Kosovo issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.