



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8749th meeting

Tuesday, 14 July 2020, 10.35 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Heusgen (Germany)

Members:

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| Belgium | Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve |
| China | Mr. Yao Shaojun |
| Dominican Republic | Mr. Singer Weisinger |
| Estonia | Mr. Jürgenson |
| France | Mr. Michon |
| Indonesia | Mr. Djani |
| Niger | Mr. Abarry |
| Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Ms. King |
| South Africa | Mr. Matjila |
| Tunisia | Mr. Kabtani |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Roscoe |
| United States of America | Mrs. Craft |
| Viet Nam | Mr. Dang |

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2020/603)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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

Report of the Secretary-General the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2020/603)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. Ms. Blum de Barberi will be joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Bogotá.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega, Member of the Municipal Association of Women and defender of Afro-Colombian territorial and human rights.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Carabalí will be joining the meeting via video-teleconference, from Bogotá and Cauca, respectively.

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/2020/603, which contains the report of the Secretary-General the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to present the latest report of the Secretary-General on Colombia (S/2020/603). It is a pleasure to do so in the company of Foreign Minister Claudia Blum. I

am particularly pleased by the participation in today's meeting by Ms. Clemencia Carabalí, whose brave leadership and defence of the rights of Afro-Colombian communities and victims of the armed conflict in Cauca department is an example of the inspiring work of women social leaders around Colombia.

The Secretary-General's report recognizes the perseverance of both the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), as well as multiple other actors, in carrying on with peacebuilding efforts despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic. I commend the parties for their joint work within the National Reintegration Council and within the tripartite mechanism on the transition to legality, whose work has allowed 131 more former combatants to be accredited since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report. The fact that the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement has resumed its sessions, with the participation of the guarantor countries, is also encouraging.

I trust that the constructive dialogue between the Government and FARC will soon lead to agreements on issues related to the handover of assets of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), including on the deadline to finalize this process.

(spoke in Spanish)

The insecurity facing former FARC-EP combatants, communities, human rights defenders and men and women social leaders such as Ms. Carabalí, continues to be our greatest concern, and, unfortunately, that insecurity has continued during the pandemic. Despite the commitments and measures implemented by the Government and State authorities, the number of ex-combatants killed since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is in excess of 200, reaching 210. Without a doubt, the violence committed against those who laid down their arms under the agreement and those who defend human rights and the rights of the communities devastated by the conflict remains the most serious threat to peacebuilding in Colombia.

(spoke in English)

In a positive development, authorities have captured several individuals believed to be responsible for some of these killings. This includes the arrest on 6 July of

an individual accused of being the intellectual author behind the killing of Alexander Parra, a former FARC-EP combatant and leader of the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Mesetas, Meta. The arrest occurred as part of a joint effort by the Elite Corps of the National Police and the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General, two bodies created by the final peace agreement.

These arrests are an example of the results that the mechanisms in the peace agreement can deliver, and a reminder of the need to provide them with all the support required to effectively carry out their tasks. All relevant actors must support the work of the Special Investigation Unit, especially by executing pending arrest warrants. Moreover, it should be a priority to give the National Protection Unit the necessary financial, technical and human resources so that no more former combatants are killed while awaiting evaluation of their protection requests. Since discussions are ongoing regarding the rules of procedure of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, I trust that it will be consistent with the commitments established under the final peace agreement and will soon approve and set in motion the long-awaited public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and their support networks, which are behind most of the reported violence in the former conflict-affected areas.

After months of uncertainty and mounting security risks from illegal armed groups, operations are under way to transfer the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Ituango, a municipality where 11 former FARC-EP members and 7 of their relatives have been killed, to a new location in Mutatá, both in Antioquia department. The hopes of dozens of former FARC-EP combatants and their families, who were forced to leave due to the escalating violence, are now placed in this new site. It is essential to ensure that these former combatants receive the protection and support necessary to successfully carry on with their reintegration into civilian life.

Authorities should also take all necessary measures to ensure that surrounding communities and former combatants who stay behind in Ituango will not be forgotten as a result of this transfer. Since the creation of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, local authorities have always highlighted the fact that they represented an enhanced presence of the State in these long-neglected areas across the

country. Indeed, in these territories, the presence of the State should not be weakened but, rather, strengthened.

As the Secretary-General has noted repeatedly, the consolidated and integrated presence of State institutions is the long-term solution to the violence plaguing Colombia's rural regions. It was with this belief in mind that the peace agreement devised mechanisms such as the development programmes with a territorial focus and the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories. Progress in the implementation of these mechanisms should proceed in an inclusive, participatory and expedited manner.

The peace agreement also created the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, which is aimed at freeing communities from the violent grip of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations by providing farmers and communities with a voluntary path to legal livelihoods. Its implementation should now focus on ensuring that participating families receive timely assistance to develop productive projects.

Regarding the reintegration process, I welcome the fact that additional collective and individual productive projects have been approved despite the pandemic. At the same time, many former combatants' productive initiatives have been affected by the pandemic, making it even more urgent to ensure support for their sustainability, including through technical assistance, the allocation of land and access to markets. It is also important for both the Government and FARC to ensure that the benefits of the reintegration process, including access to productive projects, continue to reach all former combatants in the reintegration process.

The pandemic has demonstrated once again the vulnerable situation of roughly two-thirds of accredited former combatants who currently reside outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The efforts of all actors, including the National Reintegration Council, to consider the needs of these former combatants, including those conducting their reintegration process collectively, are vital to ensure that they can continue to carry on with their reintegration process amid increased security challenges.

I also urge both the Government and FARC to foster the leadership of women former combatants in social, economic and political reintegration, and I trust that the National Reintegration Council will prioritize

the recommendations of the Technical Working Group on Gender. I also encourage the National Reintegration Council to reactivate its working groups on children and youth, and to consider the proposal of the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples to create a working group to address the situation of former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin.

Colombia's model of transitional justice is one of the key innovations of this process. The three components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition have continued their work during the pandemic to ensure that the rights of victims are upheld. In April, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued guidelines on the sanctions that it will impose upon individuals under its jurisdiction and on the tasks, works or activities with reparatory and restorative content. The Truth Commission has resumed its dialogue for non-continuity and non-repetition of the armed conflict with several actors in Colombian society in order to foster reconciliation and discuss the causes of the continued violence in various regions, and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed Missing is helping to provide healing for the families of persons forcibly disappeared during the conflict.

Support to the System by all actors remains paramount, including by respecting their independence and autonomy and ensuring adequate financial resources for its operation. I also urge all parties to the conflict to fully contribute to the work of the three components. This will be important in order to fulfil the expectations of Colombian society as a whole for truth, justice and reparations.

In recent weeks, Colombians have been appalled by incidents of sexual violence committed by members of the public security forces. These cases, which have been strongly condemned by the President and the Minister of Defence and are under investigation, are a painful reminder of the horrific acts of sexual and gender-based violence committed by all parties to the conflict. I am also concerned about the increased reports of gender-based violence in the context of the pandemic. I encourage all parties to redouble measures to improve protections and security for women, including women former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders. Such measures include the prompt implementation of the action plan of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, which has been delayed due to the pandemic. Efforts to address cases of

domestic and gender-based violence within the former territorial areas for training and reintegration are also of the essence.

The Security Council's voice and its active engagement have provided essential support to the cause of peace in Colombia. I sincerely hope that its resolution 2532 (2020), following on from the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, can inspire efforts by all concerned to halt violence and facilitate the pandemic response.

There is no justification for continuing to inflict violence upon vulnerable Colombians who are already under tremendous hardship. We have already seen how even the temporary cessation of violence can bring relief to suffering communities on the ground. Indeed, all efforts right now should focus on addressing the facts of the pandemic, protecting the most vulnerable and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts continue charging forward in the midst of this difficult storm. I encourage Colombians to remain united as they navigate this crisis and to keep their sights and actions set on their common objectives of security, development and genuine and lasting peace.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Carabalí Rodallega.

Ms. Carabalí Rodallega (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to extend a greeting full of peace and goodwill to the diplomatic representatives of the various Governments participating in today's important gathering, to the members of the United Nations system and to all those who have made our participation in this meeting possible, especially the Permanent Representative of Germany, who is presiding over this meeting.

I am Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega, from Buenos Aires municipality, in Cauca, Colombia. I am a survivor of an attack carried out by armed actors on 4 May 2019, which also threatened the lives of 25 other men and women leaders, all of whom are activists working for the defence of the ethnic and territorial rights of our communities in Colombia.

Since the Spanish invasion over 500 years ago, which led to the enslavement, dispossession and death of the peoples of our America, the ethnocide in Colombia, we must say, has not stopped. Every day we wake up to the news that a black or indigenous person has been killed, that a member of the Indigenous Guard

or the Cimarrona Guard has been threatened, that a woman — a girl or an adult — has been raped, or that the deaths of leaders and human rights defenders persist. These situations have increased exponentially due to the coronavirus disease in Colombia.

Since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Colombian State and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 686 leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered in Colombia, 120 of them this year alone. These include the assassination, on 1 September 2019, of Ms. Karina García, candidate for mayor of Suárez municipality, and five other people who supported her in her electoral campaign and in the exercise of politics; the assassination, on 29 October 2019, of Cristina Bautista, Governor of the Nasa indigenous community, and four members of the Indigenous Guard who were with her; the dismemberment, this past 5 July, of Paola del Carmen Mena Ortiz, a member of the Renacer Afro-Colombian Community Council from Cañón del Micay.

These examples are all proof of how communities, and women in particular, are enduring a profound violation of our right to life as a consequence of the persistence of the armed conflict in our territories, the absence of the civil presence of the State, and the national Government's militaristically focused intervention as a response, which has increased the threats to our survival in our territories, as it has put us in the middle of the crossfire and provoked confinement, displacement and acts of violence against women and girls.

In many territories around the country, illegal and organized armed groups have reconfigured and entered territories previously controlled by the former FARC-EP. Added to this situation are tensions generated by multiple other conflicts, such as the presence of economic elites with extractive interests, illegal economies, including crops for illicit use, corruption and illegal mining. Despite the peace agreement signed in 2016, there is still no genuine, stable and lasting peace for our people in Colombia. Those who suffer most from the consequences of armed confrontation are the civilian population, the ethnic communities, our youth, girls and women.

As women who are committed to peacebuilding and who resist all acts of violence in our territories and against our bodies, we value the support of the

international community, United Nations agencies and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We are especially grateful to Sweden and Norway as defenders of women's alliances and to the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for sustaining peace in Colombia, which, through its support to civil society, has contributed to creating conditions for the participation and empowerment of Afro-descendent and indigenous women for the implementation of the peace agreement and the exercise of our rights.

Considering Colombia's important constitutional, legal and public policy framework, we demand the following from President Iván Duque Márquez.

First, the normative frameworks, particularly the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, and the comprehensive programmes on security and protection measures for communities and organizations in the territories must be fully implemented.

Secondly, there must be compliance with the implementation of the peace agreement in a comprehensive manner, including the entirety of the peace agreement's chapter on ethnic issues and its provisions on gender.

Thirdly, the material and intellectual authors of violations of human rights and ethnic and territorial rights that persist in the country must be effectively investigated and prosecuted as a measure to prevent the impunity that covers these crimes.

Fourthly, progress must be made in the implementation of collective protection measures with differential gender and ethnic approaches, as well as cases 004 and 005 of 2009 and case 092 of 2008, *inter alia*, to reduce the enormous risks generated by practices of dispossession. The structural transformation of rural Colombia should integrate the regions, contribute to eradicating poverty, promote equality and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights of all citizens.

Fifthly, we call on the national Government to guarantee our rights, protect our lives and make peace a priority in the country's public agenda.

As women who want peace and as the winner of the National Award for the Defence of Human Rights in Colombia, we ask the international community, first, to encourage the armed actors who operate in our territories to agree on a humanitarian agreement that will make it possible to promote measures to guarantee life, respect

for human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as our territorial autonomy and forms of self-governance in our communities; secondly, to protect our communities and visit our territories, as the Security Council did last year in the municipality of Caldonó; and thirdly, to assist our peacebuilding initiatives, not only through technical and economic support, but also with political commitment as guarantors in order to help move the implementation of the peace agreement forward in a sustained and comprehensive manner.

We are grateful for the visits to our territories by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu. Similarly, we cordially invite him to meet with us, the Afro-descendent and indigenous peoples of Colombia, as members of the Ethnic Commission for Peace and the Defence of Territorial Rights, together with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, to consider the critical situation of the survival of our communities in the midst of the ethnic cleansing and systematic atrocity crimes that are being perpetrated against us. This is urgent.

We also call on the international community to promote the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and its related national action plan in Colombia, in order to strengthen the participation, protection and leadership of women and youth in building and maintaining peace and integrating a focus on gender and the rights of children and women in our territories.

I thank you very much, Mr. President, for allowing our voice be heard here.

I am because we are.

The President: I thank Ms. Carabalí Rodallega for her briefing.

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

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): Before I begin my intervention, may I join you in offering our sincere thanks to the Secretariat, the interpreters and the security personnel who have made our presence here today possible. It is good to demonstrate that, when required, meetings at our Headquarters can be delivered.

I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing and for the continued hard work

of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia despite the difficulties posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). I also thank Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega, our civil society briefer, for her powerful and clear testimony.

We note the potential challenge the pandemic poses to the important advances made in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in the last three and a half years. We also note the efforts of the parties to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. I would address Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi in stating that the United Kingdom welcomes the Colombian Government's continued commitment to comprehensively delivering on the agreement, and in particular the confirmation that the Colombian Government does not intend to modify it. Although some key challenges remain, significant progress has been achieved since 2016.

Colombia's transitional justice institutions have adapted to the pandemic admirably, quickly moving their work to the virtual space. We believe that victims must be at the heart of peacebuilding. We are encouraged by the progress those bodies have made in such a short time. We hope they will continue to receive the resources they need to carry out their valuable work. We note the aspiration of the parties for the United Nations Mission to assume a role in verifying the sanctions imposed by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We would welcome the Mission taking that forward.

The implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus also continues to advance, with all of Colombia's municipalities now including those programmes in their planning instruments. The involvement of local communities is vital for a sustainable and inclusive peace. We would encourage the Government to continue to ensure their active and effective participation.

It is encouraging to see the mechanisms of the peace agreement being used to help prevent and respond to local COVID-19 outbreaks in and around former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including reinforcing their health-care capacity and delivering food. That is all the more important given the economic impact of the pandemic on former combatants' entrepreneurial projects. We hope the Colombian Government will continue to work with

its partners to assist those communities so that reintegration remains on track.

However, it is with great concern that we note yet again the high number of killings and threats against former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Indeed, it was striking to hear the description of this situation by both the Special Representative and Ms. Carabalí Rodallega as the greatest threat to the peace process. Urgent action needs to be taken on this issue.

We urge the Colombian Government, first, to devote additional resources to responding to protection requests and carrying out those requests effectively. There must also be a prompt and cross-Government response to the Ombudsman's Office's early warnings. Preventing such attacks from happening in the first place is crucial. We note that the National Commission on Security Guarantees has not met fully since January. We would encourage the Government and civil society organizations to make full use of that body to develop a public policy to combat the serious threat posed by the perpetrators of those attacks.

More work is also needed on bringing the perpetrators of such attacks to justice. We are pleased to see that three territories now have working groups to follow up on threats and attacks at a local level. We hope that initiative will soon be expanded across the country. In line with the Secretary-General's ceasefire call, as endorsed by the Security Council, and with grave concern for the humanitarian impact of armed violence, we encourage all conflict parties in Colombia to create the conditions necessary for a cessation of hostilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, progress remains slow on former combatants' access to land, which also affects their access to housing. At a time when they are facing potential economic hardship due to COVID-19, developments on that front would help ensure the sustainability of the reintegration process.

Colombia has faced many challenges on its journey to peace, and the COVID-19 pandemic makes this a key moment. The United Kingdom remains committed to doing everything it can to support the Colombian Government at this difficult time in building a lasting peace that can be enjoyed by all.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African States members of the Security Council, namely, the Niger, Tunisia and South Africa, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

We extend warm greetings to Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, and we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega for their briefings.

Today's meeting is taking place six days prior to the celebration of a significant day in Colombia's history — Independence Day — which is an auspicious occasion when Colombians everywhere are filled with unbridled elation, reflect on the past, acknowledge the present and contemplate a prosperous future for their country. In Colombia's journey towards a prosperous future, the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is very integral. We believe it is the only viable, sustainable solution to resolving the conflict, which must be nationally led and in the interests of the Colombian people.

As the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic wreaks havoc across the globe, challenging our ideas of the world as we know it and testing the resilience and tenacity of Governments and peoples, countries emerging from difficult conflicts, such as Colombia, are faced with additional challenges. The A3+1 remains in solidarity with the Government and the people of Colombia and commends the efforts by Colombians in responding to the pandemic. We also encourage the international community, including the United Nations and the Security Council, to continue providing support.

Since the conclusion of Colombia's final peace agreement, there have been setbacks as well as progress. The A3+1 urges all parties to continue advancing with the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 agreement. It remains key for the security and prosperity of all Colombians and, by extension, of the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are mindful that there will be impediments along the way. But Colombians must remain enterprising and prudent, as the circumstances demand the same spirit that saw them move forward on a path to sustained peace in order to overcome encumbrances and new challenges with the same tenacity.

The A3+1 acknowledges the progress highlighted in the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2020/603), including the inclusion of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in processes to formulate regional and local development plans. However, it is of concern that the COVID-19 pandemic is delaying progress in the implementation of the peace agreement. Therefore, the A3+1 urges all parties to address more assuredly the lingering challenges outlined in the report. We take this opportunity to highlight the following.

First, we are pained by the senseless killings of former combatants, human rights defenders and indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders. The persistent violence against these most vulnerable groups, including women and children, is particularly troubling. We encourage the National Commission on Security Guarantees to regularly convene meetings to address security issues. It is also imperative that the authorities redouble their efforts, strengthen institutions and enhance coordination to robustly tackle this scourge of violent killings and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Security protection mechanisms to guarantee the safety and protection of former FARC combatants and their families must also be efficaciously applied, as they remain crucial for the proper reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society. In addition, the protection of those particularly vulnerable groups will be an important yardstick for the effectiveness of the security measures in general. In that regard, we echo the call by the Secretary-General for strengthening efforts towards longer-term reintegration with benefits for all former combatants, which will ultimately determine the long-term sustainability of peace in Colombia.

Similarly, we continue to call for the cessation of hostilities of armed groups and organizations, which continue to exacerbate the suffering of Colombians through violence. We regret that the unilateral ceasefire ended and urge full compliance with the recently adopted resolution 2532 (2020), which is especially necessary during this time as the country battles the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We further encourage the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional to engage in a constructive and inclusive dialogue to that end.

Secondly, the implementation of the development programmes with territorial focus are crucial to the peace process. We therefore urge the Agency for

Reintegration and Normalization and the National Reintegration Council to address delays in the implementation of productive projects of the national comprehensive programme for illicit crop substitution. We also call for the resolution of the situation pertaining to the allocation of lands and for the situation concerning former combatants residing outside of the territorial areas for training and reintegration to be addressed urgently. Those residual issues are indispensable for the collective reintegration of former FARC combatants, especially since economic and housing projects are vital safeguards for lives and livelihoods that facilitate successful reintegration. While we acknowledge that the spread of COVID-19 is an additional obstacle, it is all the more reason for redoubling efforts to promote the livelihoods and development of former combatants to ensure sustainable integration and overall peace.

Thirdly, we welcome the advances within the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, especially within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, particularly to ensure that communities and victims of the conflict are prioritized in the peace process. The adjustment in the working modalities to adapting to current realities is testament to the decision by the Government to continue implementing the agreement despite the pandemic. We therefore encourage the Colombian Government to continue in that vein, and we emphasize the fundamental importance of the reconciliation process, as many of our countries today have benefited from the positive aspects of such processes. Equally, we commend the efforts of the Special Investigation Unit of the Attorney General's Office in bringing peace to victims, and urge the authorities to expedite remaining cases. Likewise, we appreciate the progress within the tripartite mechanism on transition to legality of former FARC combatants. We encourage continued cooperation to resolve outstanding issues.

We are cognizant that Colombia is tasked with implementing the final agreement under extreme and difficult circumstances, but we believe that the same spirit that Colombians displayed through the fever of its history will aid them in moving forward. We are therefore confident that the resolve and tenacity exhibited by Colombian forebears in laying the solid foundation for the country through hard work and sacrifice will be renewed and demonstrated during these challenging times. The A3+1 reaffirms its support to the Government and the people of Colombia

in their pursuit of lasting peace, as well as to the United Nations verification mechanism and the country team, whose work in Colombia continues to be invaluable in supporting the comprehensive implementation of the final peace agreement. Colombia must stay the course for its sustainable development.

We extend our sincerest congratulations to Minister Blum de Barberi and all the people of Colombia as they celebrate the 210th anniversary of independence next Monday.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his update and the work of his team, and I thank Director Carabalí Rodallega for her briefing and courageous efforts to defend human rights. As always, we welcome the presence of Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi with us today.

I really want to start out by thanking the President, Mr. Heusgen, for his persistence in making this meeting happen today. I especially thank the people we do not see but who were here — I cannot even imagine at what hours of the morning — to be able to set this meeting up for us and provide a detailed plan and logistics so that we can all be here together in safety and security. My thanks again. May we all take a page from your book on persistence, Mr. President. It is amazing.

I commend the Government and the people of Colombia, as well as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for their efforts to continue implementing the peace accord against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The pandemic has worsened an already complex humanitarian situation and has negatively impacted the security situation of women and girls. It has strained health care and social services for many of Colombia's most vulnerable communities, including the 1.8 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia. In the face of those challenges, we recognize President Duque Márquez's resolve to ensure that the pandemic does not deter Colombia from its path towards prosperity and security. The Trump Administration continues to stand with the people of Colombia. On 1 July, we announced the delivery of 200 ventilators donated by the United States Agency for International Development — a continuation of our long-standing partnership and an addition to the nearly \$13.6 million we have provided to help Colombia respond to the pandemic.

But as I have said before, this is also a personal commitment for me. My travels to Colombia last fall

allowed me to see first-hand the heartening way in which Colombia welcomes those in need, providing human dignity to everyone, including refugees and displaced persons in their country. I have carried that touching experience back with me, and I am happy today that we are able to gather together to speak about it.

We must reiterate the urgency of protecting Colombia's human rights defenders, social leaders, former combatants and their families. Ending this violence and holding those responsible accountable must be the highest priority.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2020/603) highlights the impact of the ongoing conflict-related violence on rural, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. Let me be clear: there can be zero tolerance for human rights abuses, and reprisals and attacks against civil society actors should be vigorously investigated and prosecuted.

We must also condemn the activities of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, which have used the pandemic to impose social control measures and illegal checkpoints and to expand their territorial control during this pandemic.

We welcome Colombia's continued progress in counter-narcotics efforts and reiterate our commitment to continued partnership with the Duque Administration to combat the destructive illegal drug trade. The United States remains fully engaged with the Government of Colombia to reduce coca cultivation and cocaine production. By extending its State presence, Colombia will foster integrated rural development and legitimate economic activities.

As we have said before, it is vital to ensure meaningful justice for victims and accountability for the crimes committed over decades of conflict, whether by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, paramilitaries or State agents, including the military in Colombia. A victim-centred transitional justice system that promotes peace and the pursuit of truth and justice is essential to Colombia's peace process. Accountability should be for all.

Colombia's peace accord is a remarkable achievement, but we are all conscious of the urgent needs that must still be addressed. It is essential to protect the lives of social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants, to sustain the

reintegration process and to address the need of the conflict-affected communities.

The Trump Administration stands firmly with the Government and the people of Colombia as we work together to build a more prosperous future.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Like others, I would like to thank the Secretariat for making it possible for us to return to this august building. As you suggested, Mr. President, I will be brief.

First, I join other speakers in extending a warm welcome to Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. It is an honour to have her here at this briefing. I would also like to thank Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega for sharing her inspiring contribution in supporting the implementation of the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace on the ground. I would also like to express Indonesia's appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu Aguirre and his team for today's briefing and for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

While the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created an additional challenge and clearly affects the implementation of the peace agreement, we are encouraged by the commitment and efforts made by all stakeholders in Colombia to adapt and to ensure its continued implementation. Having said that, let me make three brief points.

First, with regard to the progress and challenges during the reporting period, we acknowledge several positive steps that have been achieved, including by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in the area of legal guarantees, as well as in the various programmes for social and economic integration. However, it is also crucially important to continue to focus on areas where progress is still limited, such as the illicit crop substitution programme, access to housing and the allocation of land to former combatants. Indonesia continues to call on all the relevant parties to redouble their efforts in ensuring the effective implementation, sustainability and success of those programmes. Reintegration is key. We look forward to further progress despite these unprecedented and difficult times.

Secondly, we remain deeply concerned about the continuing violence against, and killings of, human rights defenders, social leaders and former

combatants. We therefore call for more progress in the operationalization and implementation of related programmes, such as the action plan of the Intersectoral Commission on Security, Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the reintegration road map, so as to enhance their safety. In that regard, we would like to join the Secretary-General in welcoming the progress made by the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General in investigating those responsible for crimes against social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants. However, we are also concerned about the increasing presence and activities of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations in various regions. That must be stopped. We therefore urge them to refrain from violence so as to enable relief to be provided to communities already affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, we once again join the Secretary-General in urging all actors to avoid reopening discussions on possible modifications to the final peace agreement. We believe that this is not the time for modification, which could lead to renewed polarization and division among Colombians. Instead, let us continue to build on the positive momentum to ensure that the implementation of the final peace agreement moves forward.

Like in many other places, the COVID-19 outbreak will pose many challenges for Colombia in the coming months. However, we are confident that the resilience and courage of the people of Colombia to achieve peace, security and development in their country will continue to inspire the world. To that end, the Security Council owes them its continuing support.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu Aguirre, and the civil society representative, Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega, for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the participation in this meeting of the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi.

I wish first to express France's solidarity with the Colombian Government and people in the fight against the coronavirus disease. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic also weighs heavily on the implementation of the peace agreement, especially on the most vulnerable communities. In that context, the Colombian Government and the various stakeholders have made serious efforts to ensure that the gains made in the

implementation of the peace agreement are preserved. They have our full support in that effort. As we well know, the long-term success of the peace agreement depends on the coherent implementation of all its parts.

We note that the reintegration efforts have continued in recent months despite the pandemic and the impact of the lockdown on productive projects. Efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants into the health system are particularly important in that context.

Unfortunately, however, killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders have also continued in recent months, as Ms. Carabalí Rodallega poignantly described in her personal testimony. Not only has the pandemic not decreased the pace of the killings, but illegal armed groups and criminal organizations have taken advantage of the situation to expand their territorial control. We believe that it is more necessary than ever to strengthen the response in that regard, including in the areas of protection and the prosecution of perpetrators of such acts. In that regard, progress by the National Commission on Security Guarantees is expected.

The Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition is a cornerstone of the peace agreement, as we have regularly stressed in the Security Council. We have noted with interest the desire of the parties in Colombia to entrust the United Nations with a role in verifying compliance with the sanctions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which are one of the most innovative aspects of the peace agreement and should therefore be strengthened and legitimized to the maximum extent possible. We share the hope that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will contribute to the legitimacy of this transitional justice process.

The peace agreement has also provided original solutions on many other points to address the root causes of the conflict in Colombia, in particular through the illicit crop substitution programme, which should be strengthened, the principle of rural reform, greater political participation and responses to ethnic issues, including the situation of persons belonging to the Afro-Colombian minority, and the issue of gender equality. We support the efforts of the Government and of all peace stakeholders to strengthen their work in those areas.

We are also aware that the pandemic is not the only challenge facing Colombia. The presence of internally

displaced persons and refugees, particularly from Venezuela, is a burden on Colombian society and its economy. Those people must not be sidelined, especially in terms of access to health services in the context of the pandemic. We would like to pay tribute to Colombia's generosity in welcoming the migrants and refugees. We also recall the support of the European Union, notably as demonstrated at the Brussels conference of 26 May.

Finally, we hope that the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, which the Council endorsed on 1 July in resolution 2532 (2020), will contribute to the further entrenchment of peace in Colombia, wherever armed groups continue to use violence. The peace process in Colombia might be facing challenges, of whose significance we are well aware, but France, in its national capacity and as a member of the Security Council and of the European Union, will continue to lend its support to all those in Colombia who strive to overcome those challenges every day.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for gathering us here today. I also thank all those who made this meeting possible. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing, and Ms. Carabalí Rodallega for her inspiring account of her efforts to defend the human rights of the Afro-Colombian community in Cauca. I welcome the participation at this meeting of Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi.

We recognize the response of the Colombian authorities to the coronavirus disease pandemic and are encouraged by the assurances of the parties that they will continue to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace despite the current situation.

We remain very concerned by the persistent high level of violence against human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants, including from the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as Ms. Carabalí Rodallega described. By providing support to local non-governmental organizations, Belgium is contributing to the protection of human rights defenders, including in Cauca, who are calling for collective protection measures rather than a purely individual approach. Additional tangible actions are needed to end that violence, and we urge the National Commission on Security Guarantees to convene on a regular basis in order to dismantle illegal armed

groups, in partnership with civil society. We await with interest the roll-out of the comprehensive programme for women social leaders and human rights defenders, which is particularly urgent in the context of a marked increase in sexual and gender-based violence resulting from the lockdown measures.

We welcome the efforts to reintegrate former combatants — for instance, through the approval of productive projects and their coordination with territorial development programmes. Comprehensive rural reform, in particular with regard to access to land, remains a major challenge for the sustainability of the reintegration process.

The precarious situation of children in the conflict is another source of concern for Belgium, which is currently facilitating the Council's findings on that topic in response to the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/603). The recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations remain a serious concern. We encourage the National Reintegration Council to reactivate its working group on children. In addition, we are alarmed at recent reports of sexual abuse of minors by members of the Colombian armed forces. We expect in-depth investigations into those cases.

Belgium is paying particular attention to the transitional justice process in Colombia and welcomes the progress achieved by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed Missing in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict. We underscore how important it is for those institutions to be able to work independently. We are in favour of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia playing a part in monitoring adherence to the sanctions imposed by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

In conclusion, the Council has endorsed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. We hope that his call will also be heeded in Colombia. We urge the armed groups there to refrain from engaging in any form of violence and encourage all the parties to take this opportunity to move towards peace.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank the President and the Secretariat for making this meeting at United Nations Headquarters possible. I join others in warmly welcoming Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, and the Permanent Representative of Colombia to today's

meeting. I also thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega for their informative briefings. My delegation wishes to make the following points.

First, we share the concern, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/603), about the difficulties during the reporting period in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and peace-related programmes in Colombia, especially owing to the adverse effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We highly commend the efforts of the Government, as well as the valuable assistance of the United Nations and the international community, to address the pandemic and overcome the difficult times. We believe in, and look forward to, the continued efforts by the Government of Colombia, the national political parties and other stakeholders, the United Nations and regional and international organizations to implement all the necessary measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic for the benefit of the population, especially those living in the conflict-affected areas.

Secondly, we support the efforts of the Government of Colombia and the Congress to discuss draft bills and constitutional reform. The Government, Parliament and all political parties bear the primary responsibility of serving the people of the country. In that regard, we call on the parties in Colombia to engage in constructive dialogue on issues relating to the implementation of the final peace agreement with a view to bringing about reconciliation, solidarity and progress for all. While efforts aimed at reintegration are highly appreciated, it is also important to note that the process will be long-term and will require patience, political will and practical steps. We commend the efforts of the Government and its partners to consider the specific needs and roles of women, children, youth and ethnic groups.

Thirdly, we are concerned about the violence, clashes and continued killing of social leaders, former combatants and human rights defenders. We call on the relevant parties to heed the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire. We hope that the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional will continue to take the necessary measures and make full use of the security guarantees mechanism provided for in the final peace agreement to protect civilians in conflict-affected areas, especially women and children. In that regard, it is also important to redouble efforts to ensure security and bring about development in conflict-

affected communities through practical measures. It is through the well-being of those communities that the values of peace will be proven and maintained.

Fourthly, we take note of the progress on reintegrating former combatants through individual and collective socioeconomic development programmes and projects, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to the role to be played by the National Reintegration Council, together with the United Nations and regional and international organizations, in actively supporting the financial mechanisms and recommending appropriate initiatives to assist former combatants in stabilizing their lives.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support to the Colombian people in their pursuit of peace and stability. We are committed to working constructively with the United Nations, regional and international organizations and relevant stakeholders in contributing to the peace process in the country.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to welcome Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi and extend our good wishes to the Colombian people. We thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his presentation and Ms. Carabalí Rodallega for sharing her experiences with us.

Regarding the impact of coronavirus disease in the sister country of Colombia, we see in a positive light the prevention measures adopted by the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común and encourage them to continue to move forward with the implementation of the peace agreement despite the challenges arising from the pandemic. We reiterate the support of the Dominican Republic for the peace process in Colombia and encourage all parties to continue to cooperate in a constructive spirit until the peace and national reconciliation to which Colombians aspire are achieved.

The support and protection of women human rights defenders and social leaders must remain a priority as a path towards national reconciliation. Many of them continue to be murdered or, like Ms. Carabalí Rodallega, threatened. We remain concerned about violence against former combatants and community leaders. We support any action to ensure that human rights violations are properly investigated and that perpetrators are brought to justice. Therefore, we encourage the Government to take advantage of existing bodies, mechanisms and institutions, such as the Comprehensive Programme

of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, to guarantee the security of those individuals and their communities, particularly given the effects of the pandemic on their security. We hope that efforts will be made to implement the programme.

We believe that it is important that more resources be allocated to protection services and justice for the victims of gender-based violence, primarily for Afro-descendent and indigenous communities, in line with the peace agreement and resolution 2366 (2017). That includes promoting the meaningful participation of those communities' officials and of women's organizations. To meet the expectations of the victims, it is important that all actors contribute fully to the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. The Dominican Republic welcomes the progress made in the cases initiated by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We also see as positive the possibility of adding the monitoring of transitional justice sanctions to the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to be renewed in September. It is important that all efforts be victim-centred.

In addition, we would like to congratulate the Government of Colombia, whose illicit crop substitution programme has enabled approximately 99,000 families, of which 35,304 are led by women, to move towards legal livelihoods. The fact that 96 per cent of the families enrolled in the programme have fulfilled their commitment to substitute the coca leaf and move into the legal economy speaks to the success of the Government's initiative.

The Dominican Republic condemns all serious violations against children, in particular sexual violence and the recruitment and use of children, including Venezuelan children. We commend Government for its efforts to address that situation and ensure that the release and reintegration of children be conducted in line with international standards and with a community and family approach, while always ensuring the best interests of the child.

Finally, we are concerned that, since the short ceasefire declared by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) expired, violence and clashes have resumed in areas where the ELN and other illegal armed groups have a presence. We stress that the ELN must release all kidnapped persons and end all illegal activities as a gesture of goodwill and a demonstration

of its determination for peace. We reiterate our strong support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and its efforts to build lasting peace.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Like other Security Council members, we also wish to thank the Secretariat and all those involved in organizing this meeting. We thank Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the Mission (S/2020/603) and for his briefing on the implementation of the obligations under the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the situation in the country, which, like others, could not escape the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We also welcome the traditional participation in this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi. We also listened with great interest to the compelling assessments of Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega.

We expect that, as the epidemiological situation in Colombia improves, Colombians will be catching up in all the areas where progress either faltered or slowed during the fight against COVID-19. As the Secretary-General's report rightly mentions, the country needs to make immediate progress on all tracks — from agricultural reforms to the political and socioeconomic reintegration of former combatants and ensuring their safety and security. The peace process in Colombia should not be put on hold. It is important to revitalize the dialogue among the various political parties as quickly as possible in order to facilitate mutual understanding on key issues relating to the country's future development and the reform process.

We welcome the Colombian Government's declared commitment to the obligations under the peace agreement and fully share the Secretary-General's call to observe them. The Secretary-General and the Security Council see the peace agreement in the form in which it was signed over three years ago as the basis for a settlement. It has made possible broad international support for the Colombian peace process. We hope that all political forces in the country will demonstrate the necessary national ownership and focus on its implementation.

We regret that the authorities of the country did not observe the unilateral ceasefire initiatives proposed, in line with the Secretary-General's call. We recall

that there can be no sustainable peace without the participation of all key forces, including the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

We call on Bogotá to promptly engage in a constructive dialogue with Havana and Oslo in order to settle the issue of the status of negotiators currently on the island. At the same time, it is imperative that the existing guarantee protocols be observed. I recall that Cuba hosts those individuals on its territory as part of its international mediator obligations.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat that in the Council we have frequently called Colombia a showcase for effective international support. Today it needs to justify to that trust by becoming a showcase of national ownership.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia stands ready to continue to support the Colombian peace process provided that the Government is committed to fully implementing the final peace agreement. We trust that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will continue to play a significant role in ensuring the reintegration of former members of armed groups into peaceful life and political activities.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): We would like to thank the briefers and to welcome Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, to this meeting.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis has highlighted the systemic vulnerabilities and inequalities in implementing the Final Peace Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We stress the importance of ensuring that the people of Colombia have equal access to basic services, including education and health care. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Government of Colombia to combat the pandemic and to establish, together with the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, a COVID-19 working group within the National Reintegration Council. It is important that all armed groups cease hostilities in Colombia during this critical period in accordance with the resolution adopted regarding COVID-19 (resolution 2532 (2020)).

Lasting peace cannot be achieved without justice. The killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders have continued during the pandemic, underlining the urgency of immediate and concrete action to address this problem. We welcome

the progress made by the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General in investigating these crimes.

We are also deeply worried that the pandemic has triggered an increase in sexual and gender-based violence, with an even worse effect on female activists and social leaders. Violence against ethnic and indigenous groups has also remained high during the pandemic and continues to be a serious concern.

We encourage the Government of Colombia to make a continuous and consistent effort to prevent attacks on people defending fundamental rights. It is important to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the violations. The vicious cycle of violence and impunity must stop. Victims and their families have a right to justice, truth and reparations.

The special protection needs of witnesses and victims, especially children, must be fully addressed in the framework of transitional justice. In that regard, the work of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition is essential. It is important to guarantee the independent functioning of all transitional justice mechanisms.

We condemn the continued recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. The recruitment and use of children must end.

We urge the Government of Colombia to regularly convene the National Commission on Security Guarantees. There is also a need for a more effective response to the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office through the intersectoral commission.

We reiterate the urgent need to move forward with the implementation of the final peace agreement to ensure progress despite the challenging circumstances.

Finally, we encourage all parties to continue cooperation in a constructive spirit in order to achieve lasting peace. We would like to express Estonia's strong support for the comprehensive implementation of the final peace agreement.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, like previous speakers, I would like to thank all those at the Secretariat for providing services for this meeting at a risk to themselves. China welcomes the presence of Foreign Minister Claudia Blum de Barberi. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-

General Carlos Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega for their briefings.

The Colombian peace process established a standard for resolving disputes through negotiated solutions based on dialogue. In recent months, the Colombian Government and other stakeholders have worked together to overcome the difficulties posed by the coronavirus disease and to continue promoting rural reform, poverty reduction through development, the reintegration of former combatants and institution-building, as well as strengthening the judiciary. The follow-up mechanisms to the peace agreement are functioning effectively and peacebuilding is moving forward. China commends and supports the positive efforts of the Colombian Government in that regard.

As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/603) and in the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu, the Final Peace Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is facing challenges in its implementation. China is of the view that, in order to fully, effectively and sustainably implement the peace agreement, the focus should be on the proper balance and synergy between the two interdependent and inseparable pillars, namely, development and security. Security without the support of development is like a river without a spring. Conversely, development without the safeguard of security is like a castle in the air. The development perspective should be stressed to promote peace through development. Rural reform, development programmes and poverty relief and eradication feature prominently in the Colombian peace agreement. They also represent a conclusive approach to tackling the root causes of the conflict.

China encourages the Colombian Government to overcome the difficulties, continue to implement development programmes with a territorial focus, and ramp up its efforts to promote balanced, inclusive and sustainable development, especially by helping those who have no land or insufficient land to gain access to it.

China supports the efforts of the Colombian Government to strengthen infrastructure development in the territories most affected by the conflict, including transport, irrigation and electricity, and to provide essential public services, including education, health care and housing, in order to narrow urban-rural disparities and those between territories.

Capacity-building is needed to ensure lasting peace. In its preamble, the peace agreement states:

“Emphasizing that peace has come to be universally described as a superior human right and as a prerequisite for the exercising of all other rights and duties incumbent upon individuals and citizens”.

The Secretary-General’s report notes that the recent fragile security situation in some parts of the country and the ongoing activities of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations have caused displacements. There have been sporadic killings of former combatants and community workers and the recruitment of child soldiers continues.

China encourages all parties to the Colombian issue to step up their efforts to combat such criminal activities by making the best use of the mechanisms established under the peace agreement, including the National Commission on Security Guarantees, to support the Government in further promoting illicit crop substitution programmes and to curb the breeding ground for crime.

China has been supporting the Colombian peace process with concrete actions. The two countries have had productive cooperation in areas such as agriculture, poverty reduction, energy and mining. A number of joint infrastructure projects, such as highways and coal-fired power stations, are contributing to Colombia’s accelerated development.

In order to ease the impact of the coronavirus disease, the Chinese Government, from among its provinces, cities and partner businesses, have donated personal protective equipment and medical supplies, including testing kits, face masks, goggles, gowns, infrared thermometers and ventilators, to various communities in Colombia.

China will continue to support Colombia in achieving sustainable development and building lasting peace. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia have been providing valuable assistance to the country in implementing the peace agreement. China commends its efforts. We look forward to the Mission playing a greater role in Colombia’s peace and stability, while respecting the country’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We hope that, for their part, the Colombian Government and

other stakeholders will genuinely shoulder their own responsibilities and obligations, work for the greater good of the country and its people and support the good offices of the United Nations and its Verification Mission so that the Colombian peace process can go from strength to strength with a greater amount of tangible deliverables.

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

Let me first thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his statement and, through him, the United Nations team in Colombia for their work under very difficult circumstances. I would also like to thank Ms. Carabalí Rodallega for her very powerful statement and for her courageous work as a defender of human rights in her country. I very much appreciate the presence of Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, as she is of German descent. But, more important, her participation is a powerful sign of Colombia’s commitment to the peace process and to the support of the Security Council, so I thank her again for attending this meeting. I will make six brief points.

First, as many who spoke before have said, we are deeply concerned about the death toll among human rights defenders. We see that social leaders and human rights defenders who support the Final Peace Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups and women human rights defenders continue to be at particular risk. I was struck by the figure mentioned by Ms. Carabalí Rodallega in her statement with regard to the fact that since the beginning of this year, 160 social leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered in Colombia — 160 individual fates. I just want to repeat the names of some of those whom she mentioned: Karina García, Cristina Bautista and Paola del Carmen Mena Ortiz.

Secondly, we commend the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition for continuing its honourable work. Let me recall that last year, as the Council, we met with the representatives of the Comprehensive System, and they are doing laudable work. We look forward to a possible role of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in verifying compliance with the sanctions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Thirdly, we welcome the renewed commitment of Cuba to maintaining its status as a guarantor of the peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia,

Fourthly, the coronavirus disease has had a particular impact on Colombia, as in other countries. The security situation of women and girls has been especially affected. We also see a marked increase in sexual and gender-based violence and ongoing violence against women leaders and female former combatants. We are also appalled that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/603) notes an increase of 150 per cent in domestic violence.

My last point, which many have already raised but which is key — and we saw that last year when we were there — is the fact that it is crucial that the presence of State institutions be extended to remote and conflict-affected areas and that there be a State presence to end impunity and to create a secure and stable environment for all Colombians.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Blum de Barberi (Colombia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for all the remarks and support of the members of the Security Council. I thank Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for the report presented (S/2020/603) and for the commitment of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I also note the statement delivered by Ms. Clemencia Carabalí Rodallega at this meeting.

Like all other countries, Colombia is facing enormous challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. My Government has implemented comprehensive measures to safeguard public health, provide support for the most vulnerable, preserve jobs and protect the welfare of our citizens.

Even in the context of this pandemic, we continue to be firmly committed to implementing the terms of the 2016 Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. We have not held back any areas of work that make up the “Peace with legality” policy. Its implementation is a priority of President Duque’s Government.

The framework put in place by the agreement continues to function. The National Reintegration Council, as well as the various tripartite working groups, have met periodically. The Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement held six meetings during the reporting period.

Measures for COVID-19 prevention and risk mitigation have been adopted by all agencies that are implementing the “Peace with legality” policy. The beneficiaries of these measures include former combatants, victims and farmers committed to the national programme for illicit crop substitution. In the former 24 territorial areas for training and reintegration, protocols are in place to prevent contagion and to ensure referrals to health centres when necessary, in close coordination with local authorities.

We also continue to work hard on the approval and implementation of projects in the 170 municipalities most affected by poverty and violence where development programmes with a territorial focus are being carried out. Stabilization efforts are funded mainly by the national budget, complemented by other public and private funding, and international cooperation. Confident of results being achieved, international support remains committed. In the regions where those development programmes are being implemented, during President Duque’s Administration 186 projects, worth \$423 million, have been funded by royalties from oil and mining exploitation. Government agencies also continue to support 100,000 families that have expressed their willingness to abandon coca cultivation and transit to legality.

In addition to the challenges posed by the implementation of the agreement and the response to the pandemic, Colombia continues to devote significant resources to assist 1.8 million Venezuelan citizens who have been forced to leave their country.

The success and sustainability of the reintegration of former combatants is decisive in order to prevent new cycles of violence. We continue to work with determination to support productive projects. The number of beneficiaries of the projects put in place in the first half of this year increased by 71 per cent as compared with the same period in 2019. Former territorial areas for training and reintegration are operating normally at the administrative level, and the Government has guaranteed the provision of the

necessary goods, services and supplies. The food supply has been expanded, despite the fact that the legal status of those areas long ago expired. Monthly allowances continue to be awarded to ex-combatants residing inside and outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration.

Digital connectivity has been strengthened to give access to education and technical assistance for productive projects. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has adopted virtual mechanisms for attending to ex-combatants. In addition, the Agency for Territorial Renovation has held virtual meetings to reinforce the relationship between the central and regional authorities and to align the institutional offer with local planning instruments.

The safety and protection of former combatants, human rights defenders, social leaders and communities remain our greatest challenge. The Government has articulated actions by 15 different agencies to strengthen prevention, individual and collective protection, and support for investigation and prosecution, all this with a comprehensive concept of security in the context of reintegration and a zero-tolerance policy against any irregular conduct by State agents.

During the reporting period, we analysed in detail the security threats present in the municipalities of Ituango and Caldono. Our recommendations to establish safer locations for residents in those areas took time to be followed. Through close coordination between national and local authorities, with the support of the Mission, former combatants were relocated from Ituango to the municipality of Mutatá. The protection measures requested by female ex-combatants were also approved.

As of 8 July, the Office of the Attorney General had advanced in the investigation of 146 of the 294 crimes registered since the signing of the agreement against ex-combatants and their families. That represents progress in 49.7 per cent of the cases. So far there have been 198 arrest warrants issued for homicide, attempted murder and forced disappearance, including 51 for the identified instigators, as well as 27 convictions against those responsible for those crimes.

From the results of the investigation, it is quite clear that the attacks are related to the complexity of the environment and the threat posed by organized armed groups involved in drug trafficking and illegal mining. Those criminal actors include non-reintegrated

members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) terrorist group and other groups engaged in transnational organized crime. We must not forget that the exponential growth in illicit crops occurred between 2013 and 2017. We are now facing the toll for the silence kept during that period, in the face of a situation that created new threats to the most vulnerable communities, social leaders and human rights defenders.

President Duque's Government is strongly committed to reducing illicit crops and promoting crop-substitution options for communities. According to the most recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime monitoring system, in 2019 Colombia achieved a 9 per cent reduction in the area planted with coca. It was the second year with an area decline. Colombia will not achieve the desired peace if the illegal economy remains profitable. International cooperation and co-responsibility are essential to address this problem.

The implementation of the agreement is a two-way process and requires the effective commitment of both the State and the FARC political party. My Government reiterates the need for UNVIC to demand FARC compliance with the provision of information regarding drug-trafficking groups, the location of missing persons, the delivery of assets that contribute to reparations for victims, the recruitment of children by dissident groups and the location of landmines, among other things.

Our Government continues to provide support to the transitional justice system, including funding for all of its mechanisms. I must underline that there has not been, nor will there be, any reduction in the budget. The success of transitional justice depends on satisfying the rights of the victims, particularly in terms of justice, truth and reparation.

Within the framework of the agreement, a variety of sanctions and restorative actions have been defined according to the degree of collaboration and acknowledgement by those subject to the jurisdiction. The agreement also foresaw that sanctions compliance should be verified in order to safeguard victims' rights. Our Government has initiated an inter-institutional coordination process in close cooperation with the Mission in order to design a system that will properly address this need once the Special Jurisdiction for Peace begins to deliver its sanctions.

Lastly, I should like to refer to the active unilateral ceasefire announced by the ELN terrorist group on 29 March and its recent request for a bilateral ceasefire. The Government strongly reiterates that this alleged willingness for peace must result in concrete action by the ELN, such as the release of all persons kidnapped and the cessation of any criminal activity.

Let us be clear: the ELN failed to deliver on its March announcement, and there is no sign that it will deliver on this new announcement. The Colombian authorities will not cease carrying out their constitutional mission to protect our citizens from the terrorist and criminal threat that the group poses.

The Government of President Iván Duque is firmly committed to building peace with legality. The support of the United Nations is vital in order to continue advancing in the stabilization and development of the territories most affected by violence and poverty. In the midst of the current global crisis, we will not slacken our efforts and will continue to devote all possible resources to convey the results that our citizens deserve.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.