



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9155th meeting

Tuesday, 18 October 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Biang.	(Gabon)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil.	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
	Kenya.	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America.	Mr. Wood

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/2022/739)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2022/739)

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

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

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz 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/2022/739, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ziadeh.

Ms. Ziadeh (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of October.

In the region where the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is deployed, this month is characterized by crucial deadlines for the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. That is the case in particular with regard to the road map on energy and license plates, with deadlines imminent, as well as many discussions at several European levels on multiple matters relating to the European prospects of Serbia and Kosovo, which will have an impact not only on the lives of the people

of the region but also on the political and security environment in which the Mission operates.

(*spoke in English*)

I am honoured to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's report (S/200/739) on UNMIK and the latest developments in Kosovo. I will also offer my observations on the situation in Kosovo within a wider context.

As detailed in the report, the past six months included many instances of political posturing over matters that remain a part of the agenda of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina: the energy road map, people's freedom of movement, the validity of identity cards and the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities — to name just a few. We will continue to extend all possible support towards the success of that dialogue.

Equally, I am cognizant that developments in Kosovo, as with all open matters in the region, are affected by the European security environment as a whole. In that light, I have been in close conversation with many partners and stakeholders on the ground, as well as interlocutors across the region. A shared assessment is that issues that appear dormant can easily return to the forefront of the dialogue agenda. That places extra responsibility for ensuring close coordination among the various missions on the ground. When working together, coherently and effectively, we can contribute to clarifying misunderstandings and avoiding escalations. We can also help to empower leaders whose vision recognizes the benefits of reducing tensions, not inflaming them — leaders who are ready to open up space for progress and positive change.

Since last spring we have all observed several escalations in political rhetoric between Pristina and Belgrade, as well as a few moments of acute tension on the ground. They threatened to set back many of the gains previously achieved through the EU-facilitated dialogue. During those moments, the attention of both sides was invested in mutual accusation rather than in making use of formal or informal channels for engaging in constructive dialogue. Diplomatic interventions, along with a top-level dialogue meeting on 18 August, led to temporary relief in the form of extended deadlines and promises to continue discussions. Yet at best, the parties' willingness to risk dangerous confrontations on the ground has set the process back. At worst,

it may lead to far more serious consequences, even if unintended.

At times, when the line between political provocation and overt belligerence blurs, we are reminded of the importance and the discerning role of our mandated international partner, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), whose presence continues to ensure a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. I want to express my personal appreciation to departing KFOR Commander Major General Ferenc Kajári of Hungary, under whose leadership KFOR played its role in an exemplary manner. I would also like to acknowledge his newly arrived successor, Major General Angelo Ristuccia of Italy, who I have no doubt will continue to foster the essential UNMIK-KFOR partnership.

As I emphasized here in the Council in April (see S/PV.9019), the Government of Kosovo has an ambitious agenda, whose delivery depends on sound decision-making, strong partnerships and public consensus. That agenda is based on the rule of law. We recognize the continuing efforts of the Government to strengthen the rule of law and justice, which can succeed only through full compliance with all applicable legal frameworks and by ensuring due process. In that context, I want to highlight the importance of the full implementation of all high court decisions, such as those of the Constitutional Court; full respect for human rights, including social and economic rights, property rights and freedom of movement for all communities; and full respect for all obligations previously undertaken and ratified within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Time and again, in the spirit of our shared responsibilities in maintaining stability and security, I have reiterated my call to both Belgrade and Pristina to remain actively and constructively engaged in the EU-facilitated dialogue and to preserve and build on the acquis. There are many choices to be made by political leaders in the days ahead about how to manage their ambitions and objectives, given the wider contours of economic and security uncertainty at this time. Choices must be made between cooperation and division, between threats and gestures of goodwill and between compromises and zero-sum calculations. In that connection, responsibility starts at home.

Amid all of the challenges, we have witnessed positive examples of leadership and cooperation. The Government of Kosovo remains focused on addressing

critical issues in relation to the rule of law. We hope those efforts are being noted by European member States weighing their positions on the visa liberalization and travel regime for the people of Kosovo. As long as we, the international community, remain actively engaged in Kosovo, we also have responsibilities, including the responsibility to support the choices that offer hope for a better future to families and individuals across society.

Regional Government-led cooperation initiatives, regardless of their labels, authorship or participation, can also contribute to the resolution of political tensions and problems. That is especially true now, as all parts of the region are affected by similar supply-chain risks and other economic challenges. Of course, regional initiatives are not a panacea. Sustainable peace requires much more, including the direct engagement of communities and a better understanding of their views, concerns and interests. That is where the role of missions such as ours can do more to support progress. Our Mission continues to adapt its focus, carrying forward some of the best initiatives launched in the past, such as the long-established trust-building agenda, while accurately assessing present realities. We are renewing our resource priorities, refining our institutional partnerships and enhancing our internal working objectives and culture. My goal is for UNMIK to focus on those areas where our continued presence, in concert with the entire United Nations family — as well as our other partners in Kosovo — contributes consistently, with positive effects.

That includes, first, participating in and promoting effective communication across ethnic and political lines at all levels of society. It involves creating opportunities that promote an atmosphere where respect for human rights, the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of differences is more consistently manifested.

Secondly, it means redoubling the Mission's commitment to support trust-building actors from across all parts of Kosovan society, amplifying the power and energy of those who possess the drive and orientation to shape a promising future for themselves and for generations to come.

Thirdly, it means helping to promote broad awareness about the interdependence and shared problems and interests of people across Kosovo and throughout the region. It includes doing all of that in

a manner that is well informed by the current regional and global political landscape.

Our Mission will be refining its work with local partners to advance the trust-building agenda with a focus on women and young people, but also, more broadly, on future leaders and changemakers from all walks of life. In the past six months, we have used our convening power in so many ways, including by bringing together more than 150 youth leaders from Kosovo and the region for the fourth United Nations Youth Assembly, the largest multi-ethnic youth forum in Kosovo, and hosting the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security to raise the profile of women's participation in political processes. We have also supported 37 civil-society organizations from across Kosovo's communities to launch the third annual human rights report. Critical topics were constructively and safely addressed in those forums: misinformation, hate speech, women in leadership, youth decision-making, domestic violence and more. We have also supported access to justice and language rights, including through initiatives to provide legal aid, translators in court and free language-learning tools.

A few weeks ago, in his opening remarks to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General stated, "we live in a world where the logic of cooperation and dialogue is the only path forward." (*A/77/PV.4, p.2*) He also stated, "[w]e need hope, and more, we need action." (*ibid., p.1*) I echoed that message during my meetings with leaders across the region about the recent developments in Kosovo. I am now more and more convinced that any agreement between Belgrade and Pristina can be achieved and implemented with a high degree of public involvement and ownership. Allow me, in that regard, to take the opportunity to commend the EU Special Representative for his continuous engagement in that regard.

Based on the mandate given by the Security Council for the international presences in Kosovo, we look forward to cooperating with the institutions of Kosovo based on good faith and full respect for one another. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Council for its sustained engagement and continuous support of our Mission.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Ziadeh for her briefing.

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

Mr. Selaković (Serbia): I am honoured to address this body once again and to discuss the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2022/739). I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative for submitting the report.

We take note of the efforts that Ms. Ziadeh makes in performing her very responsible duty, especially bearing in mind the necessity of a comprehensive overview and the complexity of the situation on the ground.

I also take this opportunity to underline that the Republic of Serbia highly values the activities of UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija, established under resolution 1244 (1999). We advocate for its continued operation in an unchanged and undiminished scope and capacity, especially bearing in mind that the Mission has not yet achieved the main goal of its mandate — a peaceful and normal life for all citizens of our southern province.

Unfortunately, the past few months have not brought more stability in Kosovo and Metohija, and the situation in the province is not exactly as it is presented in the report. The unilateral moves of Pristina continue to consciously and systematically deepen ethnic differences, causing discrimination against the non-Albanian population. To our knowledge, 105 ethnically motivated attacks have been recorded since the beginning of this year. In addition, Pristina is actively working on administrative and bureaucratic obstacles by taking measures that were not agreed upon in the dialogue, the basic mechanism for negotiations and reaching solutions between Belgrade and Pristina.

Pristina's approach is problematic in many ways. The irresponsible conduct of Pristina is consciously sabotaging the efforts not only of Belgrade, but also of the European Union and other parties involved from the international community, with the clear intention of achieving two goals — the first is to avoid the implementation of assumed commitments; the second, the ultimate and far more alarming goal, is the intimidation, marginalization and persecution of Serbs.

In all previous statements before the Council, Pristina focused on what happened in the past while failing to mention, which is painful to witness, how non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija are living today. Serbs are still intimidated in different ways and forced to leave their homes, villages and cities. Those

displaced are discouraged from returning to where they were born and lived their lives. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina work systematically to remove and erase as much as possible of the cultural and national diversity that is left. At the same time, Pristina is consciously fuelling inter-ethnic tensions using all available methods.

Attending religious celebrations seems to be a crime in Kosovo and Metohija. That is the case for Nikola Nedeljković, who was arrested for allegedly “inciting ethnic hatred and intolerance”, but actually his imprisonment was for attending the Saint Vitus Day celebration. Nikola was sentenced to eight months in prison without any material evidence. On the other hand, let me remind Council members that to this day there is not a single perpetrator held legally accountable for the more than 1,000 Serbs killed since 1999. Owing to planned intimidation, almost all towns and villages in Kosovo and Metohija are ethnically cleansed. Representatives of Pristina are ignoring the suffering and insulting the open wounds of the Serbs who had to leave their ancestral homes, and I underline, there are more than 200,000 of them. Such conduct has not changed for the past 23 years, and it is completely contrary to the democratic values and principles that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government often promote in their statements.

Therefore, I consider it necessary to emphasize that true political will by the international actors involved and by Pristina is necessary in order to create the conditions for the beginning of the end of discrimination on a national basis and common life in the province.

I would like to draw the attention of Council members to the rigid, problematic and extremely irresponsible conduct of the other negotiating party within the dialogue. In achieving the goals I mentioned, Pristina applies the so-called policy of reciprocity, a well-thought-out, malicious strategy that, unfortunately, was not constructed independently. By continuously insisting on mutual recognition as a central part of the dialogue, the so-called policy of reciprocity demonstrates the essential unwillingness of the current political leadership of Pristina to find any compromise solution.

Let me remind Council members that the talks between Belgrade and Pristina did not start with the most recent elections in Pristina, but have been in progress for 11 years since the technical dialogue started on 8 March

2011. Therefore, we deem inadmissible attempts to disregard the current format of the dialogue and annul the agreements only because they are not to the liking of the current political actors. It is unacceptable that the current geopolitical circumstances are being used to simply erase what has been painstakingly worked on for years.

Belgrade, I underline, was institutionally involved in the dialogue from the very beginning, while the commitment of the other side has varied and continues to vary depending on the political option that is in power. The harsher political rhetoric and narrative of the current leadership of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina are accompanied by concrete destabilizing steps. During the reporting period, measures on license plates were imposed, disguised as attempts at alleged integration into society. Let me remind the Council once again that there was no agreement on such measures in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

I believe that even today we will hear from the representative of Pristina that its side has fulfilled all obligations, but the decision on re-registration of license plates shows that Pristina is not only failing to fulfil what has been agreed upon, but it is nullifying the results of the dialogue, creating a new crisis all over again. The effect of such forcibly imposed measures is best illustrated by the fact that, since the decision was made, a single-digit number of re-registered vehicles with Serbian license plates has been recorded, of which only two are Serbs from the north of Kosovo and Metohija. That is another indicator that Pristina does not enjoy full support, but that, on the contrary, it continuously provokes the natural reaction of the Serbian population, which cannot endlessly be subject to the arbitrariness of temporary institutions.

I believe that even today we will hear the already known narrative of representatives from Pristina trying to present every reaction of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija as an activity organized by Belgrade in alleged attempts at destabilization. Such claims are simply not true. Serbia, for its part, cannot in any way contain the unease present among the non-Albanian population of Kosovo and Metohija. It is an undeniable fact that citizens' protests represent a voice decrying many years of institutional violence and the deprivation of the rights of the non-Albanian population, which, in this case, is denied the right to the peaceful enjoyment of private property acquired in a legal manner. Pristina

continues its attempts to confiscate property and, as is well-known, one of the targets is the Serbian Orthodox Church. By calling into question the return of property to the Visoki Dečani monastery, Pristina, paradoxically, is not carrying out the decisions of its own so-called Constitutional Court.

I thought for a long time on how to best illustrate the true picture of everyday life of the non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija. I will mention only a few facts. Numerous ethnically motivated incidents, hate speech, intimidation, violations of the right to a fair trial, threats to the right to the freedom of movement and religious rights and the desecration of churches and graves were recorded in the most recent reporting period as well. The frequent attacks on the sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church are also unacceptable, especially the shaming attitude towards Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage, including the four monuments inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Numerous administrative and technical barriers are being imposed on priests and monastic communities, making it difficult — even impossible — for them to survive on church properties.

When it comes to civil rights, the basic political and civil right to vote has been taken away from Serbs in the province, along with frequent intimidation and violent incursions of the ROSU special forces, which are an instrument for the implementation of Pristina's goals, under the pretext of allegedly fighting crime. In December, Bratislav Nikolić, the President of the municipality of Štrpce, was detained for organized crime and corruption. He has not yet been charged, but is being held in a detention unit. The sole reason for that is to add yet more pressure on the Serbian community living in south-eastern Štrpce, a Serbian enclave in southern Kosovo and Metohija.

How can that be justified as the fight against crime when special forces are used to raid village festivals, schools and kidnap drivers of ambulances transporting infusion containers and medicines? What are the motives behind those actions, and how can one justify them? Think of Ms. Dragica Gašić, the only Serbian returnee in the town of Djakovica. She is still not allowed to buy bread because of her origin and nationality, because she lives in a municipality that the local Albanians proudly consider forbidden to non-Albanians. As many as 11 Albanian civil society organizations are demanding her expulsion, as well as a ban on any non-Albanian ever returning to that town.

That is the level of intimidation that Serb returnees are facing. That is why the percentage of returnees is below 2 per cent and why it is still one of the lowest in the world. Let me pose a question — are those the characteristics of a fully fledged democracy and a factor of stability in the region, as that society presents itself to the world?

We are aware that the dialogue has a wider dimension and that it can affect the situation in the entire region. That is reflected in every statement made by Serbian officials, including the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić. "It is better to negotiate for 100 years than to fight for a day". Those are the words of our President that best describe the policy of peace, reconciliation and regional cooperation pursued by the Serbian leadership, which is guided by the vision of building a common and prosperous future of the Balkans.

I believe that it is a duty of today's leaders to create a clear common vision for future generations. Such a vision was shown by the leaders of Belgrade, Skopje and Tirana by creating the Open Balkan Initiative, an initiative from the region and for the region, which is already producing concrete results. Serbia has, on several occasions, reached out to Pristina in order to invite it to join that initiative. We counted on an awareness of the importance of economic connectivity and progress for the benefit of the citizens of the entire Balkans. However, our invitation was not met with understating from the other side.

We categorically reject Pristina's argumentation regarding the alleged unconstitutionality of the formation of the community of Serb municipalities. It is clear that Pristina's attitude towards that obligation reflects its attitude towards the Serbian people in the province. It also indicates that Pristina is against Serbian people being organized as an ethnic community, and thus exercising their collective rights. The aim of their approach, as a preferred model, is a community without Serbs, such as those in Pristina, Djakovica or Peć or similar localities in the province.

For our side, it is unacceptable that Pristina has refused to fulfil its obligations and discuss the formation of the community of Serb municipalities for as many as 3,470 days, but I assure the Council that, regardless, Serbia will not give up on its efforts to find a compromise solution for the current situation.

I remind the Council that the representatives of Pristina, although they often repeat in their statements that the case of the so-called Kosovo is a *fait accompli*, continue not to be recognized by the majority of United Nations Member States for 14 years now. If the so-called Kosovo's independence is a reality, how come we have the dialogue? And how come Belgrade is faced with increasing pressure as regards the need for mutual recognition? What the current political leadership of Pristina refuses to accept is that Belgrade cannot be left out in the search for a final solution. The same also applies to the case of the increasingly frequent indications about Pristina's upcoming membership in international organizations. Will those moves help to create the necessary atmosphere for dialogue? In that way, are we rewarding Pristina's destructive behaviour and refusal of dialogue? Our view is that the attempts of so-called Kosovo to join international organizations are an unacceptable act, and Serbia will work decisively against such steps.

During the previous meeting in April (see S/PV.9019), we heard the calls of some members of the Security Council for the reduction, or even the termination, of UNMIK, with the explanation that Pristina had its own functional institutions. However, the circumstances that I have presented and the situation on the ground again remind us that the international presence in our southern province is still necessary. In that regard, we support the efforts made by UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo within their mandates. The Serbian and other non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija has the highest confidence in the international presence and considers it a guarantor of security, which further confirms that international missions need to remain engaged in an undiminished scope and capacity, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

In conclusion, I would like to point out that lately, in all international forums, we keep hearing calls for respect for the principles of the United Nations. We support the territorial integrity of all States Members of the United Nations. But what about Serbia? I would like to ask the members of this organ whether the need to implement the principles of the Charter of the United Nations applies only to some or to all of its Members? As a country that consistently respects international law and still suffers the consequences of it being

violated, we believe that the United Nations Charter and international law, including the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, should be respected by all and apply indiscriminately to all States Members of the United Nations.

It was this organ that, more than two decades ago, adopted resolution 1244 (1999) (see S/PV.4011), which confirmed the territorial integrity of my country, the Republic of Serbia. That fact did not prevent certain countries from recognizing so-called Kosovo, thereby violating not only the principles of the United Nations, but also the resolution that they had adopted, by adjusting international law to their interests and goals. Precisely because of that, the increasingly frequent mentioning of the case of Kosovo is an indication that the precedent set opened a Pandora's box, because the strength of each principle rests on its full and universal application and unconditional adherence.

Participants will notice that I posed many questions in my statement, and I express the hope that today we will hear answers to at least some of them from members of the Security Council and the representatives of Pristina, because the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija of any nationality, whether they are Serbs or Albanians, deserve it.

All inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija have every right to expect an improvement in the atmosphere and a reduction of tensions at the ethnic level, which are a prerequisite for a normal life. For such a step to be made, we need constructiveness, which is not lacking on the Serbian side, and the genuine support of international actors. I emphasize that Serbia has always been, and remains, deeply committed to finding a sustainable solution by peaceful means for the sake of peace, stability and a common future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation.

(*spoke in English*)

As Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, I appreciate the opportunity to once again discuss the current situation in our region and the opportunities, as well as the challenges.

The Republic of Kosovo is the youngest democracy in Europe and the country with the youngest population.

Our country is very much on the right track despite all the difficulties. Last year Kosovo registered economic growth of more than 10 per cent, a record increase in foreign direct investments and a record increase in tax revenue so that our Government could set up programmes for economic growth, invest in crucial areas and assist people in need.

This year the growth was again significant, until the Russian aggression against Ukraine caused disruption and an energy and food crisis for many people in Europe and beyond. But we are optimistic that we will also meet those challenges, together with the most optimistic and most resilient people in the region.

Our hard fight for the rule of law is being acknowledged, and Kosovo jumped up 17 positions in the Transparency International ranking. The World Justice Project ranked Kosovo first in the Western Balkans with regard to the rule of law.

Kosovo has made significant progress in international relations. Among other things, we signed more than a dozen important agreements with neighbouring and other countries. We have reason to be optimistic that Kosovo is on its way to becoming the next member of the Council of Europe, which will further strengthen the rule of law in our country. Being encouraged by the highly positive response by many countries of the European Union (EU), Kosovo will apply for EU membership this year. We also aspire to become a member of NATO as soon as possible.

Following that short overview, I must address some serious threats to stability and peace in our region. The most imminent threat is the escalation that the Serbian President, Mr. Vučić, is threatening against our Republic at the end of October. At the end of this month, the transition period for replacing illegal licence plates with legal ones will come to an end. Already 90 per cent of the respective car owners have replaced their illegal licence plates with legal ones. There is a minority of about 10 per cent left, who still have two weeks remaining to register. It is quite simple: if one owns a car, one has to have insurance and a legal licence plate. Otherwise, one's car is not allowed on public or private streets.

Extremist Serbs are brutally chasing and intimidating law-abiding fellow citizens, even burning the cars of Serb citizens of Kosovo who have already changed the licence plates. It is a huge mistake for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission

in Kosovo to suppress those facts, thereby not helping citizens against extremists. Surely the topic of car licence plates is not at all a matter for any foreign interference from the neighbourhood in such technical regulations. We urge the Security Council and the international community to urge Serbia to stop its dangerous course of again trying to instigate disruption and violence at the end of this month.

We are grateful that the Kosovo Force (KFOR), NATO, the United States of America and other allies are ready to help our country to mitigate the tensions instigated by Serb extremists and Mr. Vučić, as they did in 2021 and again in 2022. It was NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg who stopped Mr. Vučić from further escalating the situation by making it clear that "should stability be jeopardized, KFOR stands ready to intervene". Our courageous Kosovo police and law enforcement, with the help of KFOR, successfully managed the crisis.

The decisions of our Government are long overdue. Already in 2011, in Brussels, Serbia had agreed to freedom of movement. But for another 10 years Serbia breached its commitments, as has always done. When our Government asked Serbia to finally stop preventing our freedom of movement, Mr. Vučić refused. He therefore forced us to enact reciprocity on the issue of licence plates. Reciprocity is not aggression. It is a best international practice, as everyone in this Chamber knows.

The way Mr. Vučić can be motivated to take a different approach is seen in the issue of identity cards. Again, Serbia had agreed in 2011 to freedom of movement, and, as always, it breached that agreement for more than 10 years.

When Kosovo announced that it would also implement reciprocity with respect to identity cards, Mr. Vučić threatened us with violence again, leading NATO and the European Union (EU) to intervene to prevent violence. After more than 10 years, therefore, citizens of Kosovo can finally travel in Serbia with their identity cards, as they do when they travel through neighbouring countries, such as Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro.

The threat to stability and peace came from one side — there is no place for "both-sides-ism" in this context — and that side is Belgrade. Kosovo has not provoked or threatened anyone. Kosovo only insisted

that Serbia, after more than 10 years, rightfully stick to an agreement it had signed.

In order to understand current and future threats, it is necessary to know the background. Why is it that Vučić is talking war? Where does that come from? A European colleague of mine was quite surprised when he learned recently that Mr. Vučić had been Propaganda Minister for former Serb President — and war criminal — Slobodan Milošević, and this during the Serb genocide in Kosovo, and that Mr. Vučić never apologized for that. Instead, he continues to celebrate war criminals as heroes.

Mr. Vučić is also notorious for his statements on the Serb genocide in Bosnia. In 1995, when thousands of civilians in Srebrenica came under fire and shelling by Serb military, the United Nations considered sending military defence for these innocent civilians. It was then that Mr. Vučić said in the parliament of Serbia

“For every Serb killed, we will kill a hundred Muslims”.

This “Serb supremacy” is a threat to peace. Mr. Vučić is promoting the racist ideology of “Serb World”. He even made it an official Government doctrine. This ideology is a recycled version of the “Greater Serbia” ideology, which was the ideological basis for the wars and genocide that Milošević’s Serbia waged against four countries in the 1990s. The ghosts of the past are returning.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations in Serbia are warning the international community that the ideology of “Serb World” could lead to conflict and war in the Balkans once again. How such an aggressive ideology can end up is being demonstrated today by Russia, which banked on the ideology of the so-called “Russian World”.

Aggressive nationalism in Serbia has been in the making for many years. More than a decade of relentless nationalist and racist campaigns by Vučić and others have emboldened the supporters of Serb supremacy. That is how Serbia, with the support of imperial Russia, has come to be a threat again. Vučić is preparing for aggression, militarily and ideologically, just as Putin has done. I urge the Security Council to see this parallel and take active measures.

In line with this nationalist agenda, Mr. Vučić — together with, as we hear, his Foreign Minister — constantly claims that Serbs are under

threat. He does not even shy away from open lies, such as the idea that Serbian citizens of Kosovo would be victims of pogroms.

The world knows who the perpetrator of genocide in our region was. Milošević went down that path. Back then, the United Nations ignored Milošević’s hate propaganda, as he prepared for years to trigger the first catastrophic war in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

Not only has Mr. Vučić stepped up his aggressive rhetoric inside Serbia, but he has also been engaging in the largest systematic military buildup since the end of Yugoslavia in 1991. From just 10 military exercises with Russia in 2012, when Vučić took over, Serbia has taken part in roughly 100 joint military exercises with Russia in 2021 alone. Russian military personnel are even working directly in the Serbian Ministry of Defence. With the support and at the direction of Russia, Serbia has become the second most dangerous threat to European security, after Russia itself.

Just recently more than 40 members of the Serbian parliament signed an amendment that calls for the “reintegration” of Kosovo into Serbia. That sounds dangerously similar to the Russian concept of reintegration of Ukraine into Russia. A Serbian non-governmental organization criticized this document as a “recipe for war”. A prominent supporter of this proposal is the former Serbian Foreign Minister and a past President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, who was once, years ago, considered to be a moderate modern politician.

The most recent measure is Serbia’s foreign policy alignment with Russia. Serbia has undertaken this shift since the full Russian invasion of Ukraine, just as Russia is committing the worst atrocities imaginable. When all of us were in New York only a few weeks ago, for the high-level week at the General Assembly, we saw the President of Ukraine Zelenskyy get a standing ovation for his powerful statement to the United Nations and for defending core principles of the United Nations against an evil aggressor (see A/77/PV.7).

At that time, here in New York, Serbia signed an agreement on alignment of foreign policy with the exact aggressor of that war, Russia. Mr. Selaković, sitting in this Chamber today, was the signer for Serbia. Not only is this simply outrageous, but it is also a disgrace for Serbia. Nobody in this room could think that Mr. Putin would consult with his proxy Mr. Vučić

about Russia's foreign policy decisions; rather, it is the other way around. This agreement constitutes Serbia's de facto submission to Kremlin rule, which in itself has tremendous repercussions. Since Serbia is dominated by Russia in its foreign policy, the EU, NATO and Kosovo will have to take into account that no major foreign policy decision is made by Belgrade without asking Big Brother in Moscow for permission. Serbia made itself a Russian asset. We in the West will have to reconsider what that means across all arenas of foreign policy.

Fortunately, the situation in the Balkans and in Kosovo is different compared to the 1990s. We are better protected against an aggressive neighbour. In Kosovo, we feel threatened but safe. The recent deployment of additional United States troops to Kosovo was an important step towards strengthening peace and stability in the region. From my discussions, I know that it is not only Kosovo but also our neighbours who are very relieved and grateful for that important commitment by NATO and the United States. From a position of strength, we can talk and try to resolve the challenges and mitigate tensions.

A few days ago, when the Head of the Serbian Orthodox Church asked to visit our country and meet the faithful, I, in my capacity as Foreign Minister, granted permission for the visit. This is just another example of our not being interested in tensions but in normal exchange, and of our respect for the followers of all religions in our country.

We gave permission for the visit to take place despite the leading role of the politically powerful Serbian Orthodox Church in creating the ideology of Serb supremacy, its constant activities, role in destabilizing neighbouring countries and historic guilt in justifying and glorifying the brutal campaigns and genocide against Serbia's neighbours, including the Republic of Kosovo. We gave that permission in the hope that, someday, the surely difficult but necessary exchange, addressing the severe issues that stand between the victims of violence and genocide and the Serbian Orthodox Church, might begin. Of course, there is no easy way to address responsibility for the past, but it remains an obligation for everyone to seek a way for truth and reconciliation, wherever possible.

When we talk about dialogue, we mean real dialogue. A dialogue must have a goal. The goal cannot be empty talk. It was Kosovo that was the key to restarting the dialogue after years of interruption.

It was Kosovo that came up with a series of concrete steps to resolve issues of mutual interest. Kosovo wants to have a real dialogue. However, in order to have a real dialogue, we must put the key question at its centre — mutual recognition. Everyone already knows that Kosovo's independence is a done deal. Finally, Serbia will also have to recognize reality. It will have to recognize Kosovo, as most of Serbia's neighbours and so many others have already done.

It is a question of mutual recognition. That is what President Biden said. That is what Chancellor Scholz and other European leaders say. We must talk about that reality. Kosovo is ready and prepared for a real dialogue.

Kosovo is a small but very special country. We speak from a position of modesty and strength. We are a truly European country, with people of many backgrounds and unbreakable tolerance and pride. Kosovo is a country that literally emerged from genocide. Serbia and Milošević, together with Mr. Vučić and other aides, wanted to wipe us off the map. With our courageous defenders, the Kosovo Liberation Army, and the help of NATO, which came to our rescue, the heroism of women, children and the elderly in those darkest times, we survived.

We saw how they protected their children, families and loved ones, when brutal Serb forces burned down our villages, raped our women and tortured and killed our young men. We saw how they kept their dignity when they were forced to flee for their lives to the mountains. We saw how they never gave up when they were expelled and forced out of their country, in the hundreds of thousands, and forced to live in tents. It was that spirit that made the miracle possible: after the liberation of Kosovo, our people did not wait, but flooded home, searched for survivors, started to rebuild houses and property and restarted their life. It is a miracle — a miracle of victory, humanity and civilization over cruelty and barbarians.

That miracle continues, and we will make our people proud and our country shine. There is no other country that is more pro-EU or more pro-NATO than Kosovo. Between 88 per cent and 92 per cent of our citizens are in favour of the EU and NATO. Yes, we know that there is still much to do — we are far from being perfect — if we want to achieve our goals. However, we have proved that we can. We have overcome even the most severe difficulties and never lost faith. Our people are an example for the world.

An example of resilience, dignity and openness, Kosovo is a great place and an asset to Europe and the world. We are glad and proud to have many friends all over the world. That is why our people are looking to the future, full of optimism and hope. In that spirit, we are ready to engage with our friends, and even our foes, in order to help to make the world a better place.

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

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh for her briefing, and her leadership in delivering on the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2022/739).

Norway supports Kosovo and the other Western Balkan countries in their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. We are concerned to note, however, that the report of the Secretary-General describes heightened rhetoric between Belgrade and Pristina and the escalation of tensions on the ground, which have affected the progress towards the normalization of relations.

We encourage the parties to strengthen their dialogue and engage constructively, based on the Brussels Agreement. In that connection, we welcome the energy road map agreed in June with Serbia and the agreement on identification cards, reached in August, under the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). The latter has improved free movement between Kosovo and Serbia and hopefully settled problems that have sparked considerable tensions.

In the same spirit, we hope that the parties will step up the dialogue to find a permanent solution to the licence-plate issue. We do, however, strongly regret the increased tensions in northern Kosovo, ahead of the agreement on identification cards and call on the parties to refrain from any unilateral actions that may cause further tensions in the area.

We are also disappointed by the continued lack of cooperation within the Belgrade-Pristina working group on missing persons. Progress towards discovering the fate of those who went missing during the events in Kosovo from 1998 to 2000 is necessary, including as part of reconciliation efforts.

Let me touch on another topic that requires attention. Those responsible for conflict-related sexual

violence must be held to account. Greater accountability is vital for reconciliation and peacebuilding in Kosovo. We applaud the work done thus far by the Kosovo Government commission to verify and recognize the status of the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We commend UNMIK for its support to that process. It is an important step forward for the rule of law and for reversing the climate of discrimination and impunity.

Similarly, we positively note the Government's recent approval of stricter legislation related to rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. We look forward to further updates on the implementation of the five-year strategy for protection against domestic violence and violence against women.

Finally, let me underscore that full integration in Euro-Atlantic structures will not be possible for either Kosovo or Serbia without a comprehensive agreement on the full normalization of relations. Overall progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue continues to be slow. Both Kosovo and Serbia should intensify their efforts to improve relations, be more pragmatic and refrain from actions and rhetoric that may set back dialogue or increase tensions leading to incidents.

The current status quo cannot be an option, and we urge all actors to fully engage. There is no alternative to the EU-led process, dialogue or compromise. Norway will continue to make its contribution to the normalization process.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing today. I would also like to welcome the representatives of Kosovo and Serbia to the Chamber.

I want to begin by welcoming the 27 August agreement on free movement between Kosovo and Serbia, following high-level talks in Brussels. This agreement is a positive step in the right direction and will deliver concrete results for citizens. It is proof that acceptable, pragmatic solutions are possible when leaders engage openly and constructively in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. That European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue, mandated by the United Nations, is the channel through which issues and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia can and should be resolved. We encourage both sides to continue their engagement to resolve all outstanding issues, including the issue of licence plates, as well as to preserve the integrity

of the dialogue by respecting and implementing past agreements.

Both sides have a responsibility to refrain from divisive rhetoric or action. The events of 31 July in northern Kosovo and the heightened tensions between Belgrade and Pristina throughout the reporting period remind us that hard-won gains can be quickly undone. Although calm prevailed, the importance of restraint and commitment to dialogue to resolve disagreements cannot be overstated.

Against the current backdrop of multiple and intersecting global challenges, finding practical modes of economic cooperation between Belgrade, Pristina and the other countries of the region takes on new urgency. In that regard, Ireland reiterates its view that a comprehensive, final and legally binding normalization agreement is essential for the European perspective of both Serbia and Kosovo and for ensuring wider stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans.

We know from experience in my country that achieving lasting peace is not possible without building a more equal and inclusive society. Peace cannot be sustained and political processes cannot be successful where women are not fully included and at the table and where the voices of young people and civil society are not heeded. Ireland welcomes Kosovo's commitment to gender equality, and we value the work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to advance the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas. And we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her updates today on that work. Though steps have been taken to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, we share the concerns of the Secretary-General that more must be done to ensure effective protection and support for victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

We know that the people of Kosovo aspire to join the EU, and we welcome the fact that the Government of Kosovo has made progress in advancing the EU reform agenda. We take this opportunity to echo the European Commission's report on its 2022 Enlargement Package on Kosovo and encourage Kosovo to continue along its EU path and to intensify its efforts to strengthen democracy, public administration and the rule of law. In that context, I also want to underline Ireland's continued support for the Kosovo Specialist

Chambers. Countering impunity for past crimes is essential to preventing future violations. It is vital that the authorities in Kosovo adhere to their commitments to the Specialist Chambers. Ireland will also continue to support the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

The United Nations has proved itself to be a trusted partner of all communities in Kosovo. UNMIK plays an important role by bringing people together, promoting inter-ethnic cooperation and supporting vulnerable and marginalized communities. We particularly value UNMIK's work on missing persons and the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of displaced persons. Advancing both of those issues is an essential part of the reconciliation process and can help to build confidence between Kosovo and Serbia. We know, again from our national experience, that peace is a process and not a moment. It takes courage to overcome conflict and the divisions it causes, but these are steps that need to be taken and are worth taking.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): We thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her briefing, and we welcome the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo to the Security Council.

The United Kingdom welcomes the continued progress made by the Government of Kosovo on a number of important issues, including its continued commitment to reform, notably through its important work on the rule of law and in tackling organized crime and corruption; its efforts to improve support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence and the integration of the Istanbul Convention into its Constitution; and its work on transitional justice, not least for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the work of the Government Commission for Missing Persons.

Recent reports from both the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also show good progress on countering terrorism, public administration reform, the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organized crime, and the protection of human and fundamental rights. We welcome the Government's increased engagement with minority communities. Dialogue between communities is vital for the stability of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic state, and we encourage the Kosovan Government to continue that engagement. In particular, we encourage

greater outreach to Kosovo Serb political leaders and representatives to resolve outstanding issues.

The normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia remains vital. We reiterate our full support for the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. Now is the moment for both parties to engage in the dialogue in good faith, honour their dialogue commitments and avoid actions and rhetoric that could reduce the prospects for reaching a comprehensive and sustainable normalization agreement that benefits the people of both countries.

The progress referred to in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/739), for example on the adoption of an energy agreement road map, is encouraging. But we were concerned when we saw the rise in tensions on 31 July over the implementation of Government decisions regarding car licence plates and identification cards. Such decisions should not be used as an excuse for blockades or violence. We therefore welcome the resolution of the disagreement over identification cards, facilitated through the determined efforts of the EU Special Representative and international partners. It is a clear example of what can be achieved when both parties approach the process with pragmatism.

Finally, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has played a vital role in the incredible progress that Kosovo has made since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999). Conditions on the ground are of course unrecognizable from 1999, and now would be the right time to undertake a thorough review of UNMIK's shape and role, and of the Council processes that we have around it. In the meantime, the United Kingdom would like to reiterate its gratitude to the Special Representative and the Mission for all of their work and for their professional implementation of their mandate.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her valuable briefing to the Security Council and for her tireless efforts alongside the team of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo in today's meeting.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of intensifying efforts to encourage dialogue and prevent the exacerbation of disagreements among the communities in Kosovo, as well as between Kosovo

and Serbia, especially considering the current turbulent situation in Europe.

With regard to the relations between Kosovo and Serbia we have witnessed some positive developments, and we encourage both parties to build on them in order to sustainably improve their relations by continuing their European Union-facilitated dialogue while refraining from taking any unilateral measures that might lead to further tensions. We also look forward to seeing them exercise flexibility in working to return to the negotiating table with a view to reaching a comprehensive solution. We commend both parties' efforts to resolve certain outstanding issues and ensure citizens' freedom of movement between Kosovo and Serbia through the use of identity cards issued by Belgrade or Pristina.

As for the developments within Kosovo, we stress the need to continue working to reduce tensions in the northern part of the country in order to prevent any escalation there. In that regard, we commend the ongoing efforts to strengthen the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all segments of the society in Kosovo. Those efforts are particularly important considering recent alarming incidents such as the desecration of religious sites and cemeteries and the spread of extremism and hate speech on social media. In that context, we want to express our continued support for the efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and its effective role in advancing the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, especially by focusing on young people as future leaders who play a vital role in conflict prevention and resolution. Those efforts include designing youth programmes that include every segment of Kosovan society, enabling young people to express their opinions and concerns, raising their awareness of society's various strata and demonstrating the importance of strengthening communication among them. That in turn will contribute to promoting social cohesion in Kosovo. In addition, the role that regional organizations and civil-society institutions have played in this area has had positive feedback in Kosovo, and we urge for continuing all efforts to strengthen social bonds.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of supporting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all ongoing dialogues aimed at resolving disagreements between Kosovo's communities, as well as in all dialogues between Serbia and Kosovo. We

refer in particular to the recommendations emerging from the ninth United Nations Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo, including for promoting the role of women in building sustainable peace and creating a safe and inclusive environment that encourages women's participation in State institutions. The participation of President Osmani-Sadriu of Kosovo in the conference reflects the Government's interest in women's issues. We also commend the developments made in the area of women's empowerment in Kosovo, including their representation of 36 per cent at the parliamentary level, and we hope to build on those achievements.

In conclusion, my country stresses the importance of promoting constructive dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. That is the only way to resolve all outstanding issues and to achieve security and stability for the two countries and the wider region.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her briefing and to welcome Foreign Minister Selaković to this meeting. We also took note of the statement by Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Mexico regrets that no significant progress has been made in normalizing the political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, owing among other things to tensions arising from disagreements over freedom of movement and the voting process that took place in the Kosovo region during the Serbian elections. We are particularly concerned about the violence in the north of the region at the end of July, which resulted specifically from the restrictions on movement. That has also had a negative impact on the implementation of the energy agreements. We acknowledge the efforts of the European Union and the United States to reduce tensions. I will briefly discuss recent developments on four issues that Mexico sees as priorities.

First, regarding the issue of minorities, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/739), Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Kosovans continue to face major social and economic obstacles. We call for efforts to combat the inequality affecting those communities and address their specific issues, including through contributions to the United Nations fund in their support.

Secondly, on the issue of sexual and gender-based violence, it is essential that the provincial authorities strengthen measures to eradicate that scourge. The alleged rape of a child in Pristina last month is

shocking. We call on the authorities to conduct an investigation of the case so that those responsible are brought to justice, and to ensure protection and support for victims. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has noted that while incidents of sexual violence, particularly those involving minors, are often reported, reparations have been provided in only a few cases. We urge the implementation of EULEX recommendations on the handling of sexual violence cases in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

Thirdly, with regard to cultural heritage, we call on the authorities in Pristina to mobilize the necessary resources for the preservation of Kosovo's medieval monuments, particularly the Visoki Dečani monastery, which UNESCO has designated an endangered heritage site. We call for urgent action to prevent its deterioration and implement decisions for its protection and preservation.

Fourthly, with regard to the case of missing persons, we regret that the working group addressing the issue has not met in a year and a half. We urge the parties to resume work on the matter, which will enable progress to be made on reconciliation between communities.

In conclusion, I call on the parties to avoid rhetoric that could escalate tensions and to engage constructively in dialogue so that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for which we reiterate our support, can continue to fulfil its mandate to promote security, stability and human rights in the region, in close coordination with the Kosovo Force, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her briefing on the situation in the province. We welcome the participation of Mr. Nikola Selaković, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and we listened to the opinions of Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz. We would advise Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz to refrain from philosophizing and attempts at cultural and geopolitical analysis. To be frank, her efforts today were not very successful. She would have done better to concentrate on the situation in Kosovo rather than distracting the Council with her deep musings on the international situation and Serbia's foreign policy, which like everything else all over the world is apparently being

run from and by Moscow. But while we thank her for her flattering remarks, I would now like to correct her erroneous views and provide the Council with a real assessment of the situation in Kosovo rather than a rosy one.

Kosovo remains the main hotbed of tension in the Balkans, undermining efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region. The security situation in the province is also steadily deteriorating and requires close attention from the international community and the Security Council. The process of systematic violations of the rights of the Serbian population began in 1999, and what amounts to a creeping process of ethnic cleansing has been going on ever since. In the course of a period of more than 20 years, the number of Serbs south of the Ibar River has drastically decreased, leaving only small enclaves of Serbians who cannot stand up for their rights. For example, there were about 40,000 Serbs living in Pristina before the conflict. Today there are barely 100. The only region where Serbs are still in the majority is northern Kosovo, but the Pristina authorities, headed by Albin Kurti, are trying to take their oppression of Serbs to a new level. Everything suggests that creating intolerable living conditions for the indigenous Serb population seems to be job number 1. Acts of intimidation continue in Serb-populated areas and the threshold for the use of force against the people living there is getting lower.

Since the beginning of 2022, more than 100 cases of attacks against Serbs and their property, cemeteries and holy sites have been registered in Kosovo. That is almost double the number from the year before. There is provocative and unjustified patrolling of Kosovo's water reservoir in Gazivode, an area adjacent to central Serbia. The use by Serbs of neutral vehicle licence plates has been banned, under the threat of confiscation of the vehicles. At the end of July, Pristina's decision brought the situation close to a boiling point and almost led to bloodshed. The next dangerous milestone will be on 31 October, which is the deadline for replacing license plates.

The problems associated with returning Serbian real estate to its rightful owners are still unresolved. For years, there have been violations of the property rights of the land adjacent to the Visoki Dečani monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The pace of return of non-Albanian refugees to the province has remained unsatisfactory, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/739). The local

authorities do nothing to protect them. On the contrary, the atmosphere of hatred towards Serbs is being encouraged. Under the pretext of providing security, Kosovo police bases are being built in the north, often on Serbian-owned private territory.

Already in 2013, in the framework of the negotiations under the aegis of Brussels, an agreement was made to establish a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. That was not ideal, but nonetheless could ensure, in an acceptable way, the rights of Serbs living in Kosovo. However, Pristina refused to implement the agreement, alleging that the Serbs were the most protected national minority in Europe.

In reality, no one ever even tried to compel the Kosovo authorities to implement the agreement, including the European Union, which acted as mediator. At present we can state that those mediation attempts totally failed. The long-standing inability of Brussels to compel Pristina to, if not implement the agreements, then at least to show that they are minimally capable of negotiations doomed the contacts to failure.

At the United States' bidding, the official narrative of the European Union now has the infamous idea of mutual recognition. That is being promoted not only by the leading European politicians but is also reflected in yet another resolution passed by the European Parliament on Kosovo. And that is a glaring example that the status-neutral position of Brussels has been revised.

At the same time, and in violation of resolution 1244 (1999), the Kosovo army is being created. We are also witnessing the deep involvement of major NATO players in that endeavour, and London is at the forefront, as it is training the personnel.

Pristina continues to demand military assistance from the West. It is trying to obtain yet another American base there, electronic warfare complexes and artillery with a range of more than 10 kilometres. Kosovo's military budget has reached a record level and exceeds €100 million this year, which shows that Prime Minister Kurti's intentions are far from peaceful. There is also an aspiration to involve Albania. In August, it was proposed that Albania sign a mutual defence treaty.

Western countries act as though resolution 1244 (1999) does not exist. They continue to cook up so-called "alternative options" for a settlement that favours Pristina. A glaring example of that legal nihilism was a French-German project presented in September. It

was designed to force Belgrade to agree with Kosovo's statehood. And that is not the only such example recently. Washington and Brussels are concentrating their efforts on making Serbs yield their national interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are resorting to threats, blackmail and ultimatums.

There are several other points to which we would like to draw attention. On the basis of resolution 1244 (1999), there is a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Kosovo — the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We fully support the Mission, as it is the most important guarantor of security in the province. We also understand how difficult the circumstances in which it must operate are. At the same time, we expect UNMIK to make realistic rather than neutral rosy assessments of the situation in the province.

In May 2019, Kosovo Albanian police used force against a Russian staff member of UNMIK, Mikhail Krasnoshchekov, who was severely beaten, and two other members of the Mission. The perpetrators of that crime have not been punished. And that took place in the province which boasts about its commitment to the rule of law.

A serious violation of international legal norms took place on the 31 December 2021, when a UNMIK staff member, Mr. Antonov, was declared *persona non grata*.

Furthermore, the Kosovo authorities made a number of decisions aimed at basically forcing the personnel of the Pristina office of the Russian Embassy in Serbia, as well as our staff in UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo, to leave the province. We have informed the Secretary-General and Special Representative Ziadeh about that outrageous overreach, and we expect the actions by the Kosovo authorities to be revised.

We call upon UNMIK not to ignore those outrageous cases of arbitrary conduct and to inform the Council about such acts on a regular basis in their reports. The absence of appropriate reactions by the Secretariat creates a feeling of permissiveness with the *de facto* authorities.

In conclusion, let me underscore that the Russian position on Kosovo remains unchanged. We advocate attaining a viable, mutually acceptable solution between Belgrade and Pristina, based on resolution 1244 (1999),

in accordance with international law and endorsed by the Security Council.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her briefing. I would also like to thank Foreign Minister Selaković and Foreign Minister Gërvalla-Schwarz for participating in this meeting.

I want to begin by reaffirming our commitment to safeguarding stability in the Western Balkans, especially during this time of greater tensions in Europe caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The United States will continue to work closely with our European partners to foster peaceful and prosperous multi-ethnic societies, in addition to strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

The United States reaffirms its support for Kosovo's path towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and the European paths of all countries in the Western Balkans.

Serious and urgent engagement between the sides in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) is needed in order to achieve comprehensive normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, centred on mutual recognition. I want to commend EU Special Representative Lajčák's engagement with the two parties. The United States will remain closely engaged with him and our European partners in support of the dialogue.

Through the EU-facilitated dialogue, Serbia and Kosovo adopted an energy road map and peacefully resolved the issues of exit and entrance documents at their borders. We hope that a similar consensus will be reached regarding the issuance and recognition of licence plates. We likewise encourage the implementation of steps outlined in the energy road map and serious discussion on the potential establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities.

We cannot stress enough the need for stability in the Western Balkans. The EU-facilitated dialogue is a key component of that. We strongly encourage Serbia and Kosovo to keep tensions low by focusing on dialogue progress and avoiding inflammatory rhetoric. We urge both sides to work with the United States and European partners to implement the agreed energy road map and to avoid tensions over licence plates.

The EU-facilitated dialogue continues to be the principal mechanism for reconciling issues between the

two neighbours, which has made the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the region increasingly redundant.

As we have said in this Chamber many times before, UNMIK has long fulfilled its purpose as outlined in the original mandate. Make no mistake: UNMIK played a critical and important role in maintaining peace in the past. However, Kosovo, with the aid of its European partners, has developed and strengthened its institutions to take on much of the responsibilities once under UNMIK jurisdiction. These briefings no longer need to be held on a six-month basis and should be reduced to annual meetings.

We are disappointed that the Council has not moved toward sunseting UNMIK, including by developing a plan to close the Mission. The Council has far more pressing priorities to address, and its resources are limited. We urge the Council to take steps that will allow for a more productive and relevant role for the United Nations in Kosovo and will facilitate the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and thereby help advance stability in the Western Balkans.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Special Representative Caroline Ziadeh for her briefing. I also recognize the participation of Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz in this meeting.

The need for sustained stability in Kosovo has gained more urgency as Europe is dealing with significant security challenges. That demands that the parties remain committed and consistent in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999).

We are concerned about the persistent rhetoric between Belgrade and Pristina and the resultant tensions on the ground. If this situation continues, any progress in the normalization of their relations will be undermined. We therefore reiterate the need to strengthen efforts to counter the use of divisive rhetoric and hate speech and to create a space that is conducive to dialogue.

The rule of law is a critical component in the management of diversity. Indeed, genuine reconciliation and enduring peace stand a better chance of being achieved in an environment with a strong rule of law and responsive and inclusive institutions to promptly prosecute and resolve disputes. Kenya commends the United Nations Interim Administration

Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for its support for the integration of the judiciary and the administration of justice in the north of Kosovo, focusing on improving case management.

We also welcome UNMIK's confidence- and trust-building efforts, including through the promotion of cross-community engagement; the promotion of gender equality in Kosovo, including through the women and peace and security agenda; and engagement with young people through the youth, peace and security agenda and programme. We call for enhanced support for such trust- and confidence-building measures, particularly those that strengthen the participation of women, young people and civil society in decision-making processes and cross-community dialogue.

Finally, Kenya reiterates its full support for sustained dialogue aimed at the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, we welcome the continued consultative efforts and urge the parties to uphold the commitments made in the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue and to engage in negotiations.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I thank Special Representative Caroline Ziadeh for her briefing.

The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2022/739) confirms the important role played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in preventing the resentments from the past and hate speech today from resulting in a new wave of violence in Kosovo. The risks of escalation are real, as proved by the 31 July incidents. All actors must show the necessary restraint and avoid unilateral measures that could jeopardize advances made over years of efforts towards peace and reconciliation.

The impasse over vehicle license plates and the lack of progress since June in implementing the electric-power agreements are particularly worrisome. We encourage decision-makers to demonstrate flexibility and seek solutions that take into account local sensitivities and contribute to trust-building efforts.

We welcome the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties. The joint visit of President Aleksandar Vučić and Mr. Albin Kurti to Brussels in August and the visit of Prime Minister Ana Brnabić to Kosovo in September were both important signs of commitment to the path of reconciliation. We believe that frequent high-level meetings should be encouraged

in order to foster dialogue and ensure lasting peace and harmonious coexistence.

Brazil commends UNMIK for its initiatives to strengthen institutions and promote the rule of law. We are aware that Kosovo continues to face challenges in the fight against corruption and organized crime, as well as in the protection of vulnerable groups and minorities, and we reiterate our support for the Organization's efforts in that regard. We also emphasize the need for progress in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement, especially with regard to the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

We take note of the organization of the ninth United Nations Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, held in Kosovo in June. Brazil strongly supports the recommendations resulting from the event, which will help to ensure greater participation by women in decision-making processes and to combat harassment.

Brazil reiterates its commitment to the principles of annex 2 of resolution 1244 (1999) as a basis for building a future in peace and prosperity for the region. We strongly support the continuity of UNMIK and the efforts by regional actors, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to mediate conflicts and strengthen Kosovo's institutions.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. My delegation is also grateful to Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for her comprehensive briefing. We welcome her committed leadership of UNMIK in the performance of its stabilization mandate, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). We also take note of the contribution of Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz in this meeting.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/739) highlights continuing political tensions between the Kosovo region and Serbia, which have stalled the further implementation of the agreements reached in the framework of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations. We note with concern the unresolved issues pertaining to the freedom of movement, energy-supply challenges

in northern Kosovo and the agitations regarding in-Kosovo voting during Serbia's general elections held in April.

Despite those contentions, we believe that dialogue at the highest political level, backed by the genuine commitment of the leaders to work through their differences, will positively impact the efforts for a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the long-standing issues. It is in that context that we welcome the discussions held on 18 August between the representatives of the two sides at the highest level and note the commitments made towards the de-escalation of tensions.

We urge restraint from rhetoric and actions that are unhelpful to the course of peace and reiterate our call on both sides to recommit to the full implementation of their respective obligations under previous and future agreements to be reached in the context of the EU-facilitated dialogue. The flexibility of the parties and their readiness to make necessary compromises would be valuable to making progress in that regard.

In the immediate term, the parties must resume the implementation of the energy road map in order to ensure the continued supply of energy for heating during the winter season, which is already upon us. The impasse on vehicle license plates must equally be addressed through practical measures.

Ghana firmly believes that any normalization efforts and the pursuit of the legitimate aspirations of the two sides must be founded solely on the principles of international law, the values and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the path for a political solution set out in resolution 1244 (1999). To do otherwise, as the international community has become acutely aware, would upend the rules and norms of our international system that are critical to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In our view, UNMIK's mandate to promote security, stability and respect for human rights remains relevant as long as Kosovo is divided along ethnic lines. We appreciate the Mission's efforts to build trust and social cohesion among the several ethnic communities in Kosovo and encourage open, transparent and inclusive engagement with all sectors of society as a means to ensure the durability of agreements reached in the political sphere. We also welcome the important initiatives under the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas that seek to

enhance the capacity of women and young people to meaningfully participate in the processes.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our support for the collective efforts of the Security Council geared towards normalization between the two sides and the objective of peace in the region.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I would like to join other speakers in thanking Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for her briefing to the Security Council. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, at today's meeting.

Let me begin by reiterating India's principled position of supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. We believe that all outstanding issues need to be resolved through peaceful negotiations.

In that regard, we take note of the meetings held between Serbia and the authorities in Pristina under the auspices of the European Union (EU). It is important that meetings be held without any preconditions and in good faith. The implementation of signed agreements, including on the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities, will remain fundamental. We welcome the signing of the 21 June agreement with regard to an energy road map, and we urge all sides to proceed with its full implementation.

We are of the view that both sides need to find common ground to overcome mutual concerns, including political and ethnic issues, and avoid rhetoric that may heighten tensions. We welcome the ongoing efforts, including those of the Quint members and the EU, towards a dialogue. We welcome the 18 August EU-facilitated meeting between both sides, especially the commitment made with regard to holding regular meetings in the future towards the normalization of relations.

Given its humanitarian nature, the issue of missing persons needs to be resolved as a priority. We hope that, with the support of UNMIK, the authorities will be able to determine the fate of persons who remain missing. The voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons from other countries in the region is also essential as a confidence-building measure. Together with the other international presence, UNMIK should

continue to encourage the Pristina authorities to address the problems of all communities.

We have taken note of the activities of the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo during the reporting period. Furthermore, as part of an international cooperation effort, we are happy to note that the Kosovo Force troops have continued to effectively fulfil their mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). Both missions need to adhere to their respective mandates and maintain neutrality.

In conclusion, we note with appreciation UNMIK's important role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. We call on all sides to fully cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK and facilitate its work.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for her briefing and welcome her presence in the Chamber. I also welcome the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia to this meeting.

We carefully read the report of the Secretary-General on UNMIK that covers the past six months (S/2022/739). It reflects important developments in an ever-strengthening democratic country, an important player in regional frameworks and a member of various regional and international organizations, working closely with United Nations funds, programmes and agencies and aspiring to join the European Union (EU) and NATO, with a clear vision of its foreign policy's orientation. I would like to commend the Republic of Kosovo and its authorities for the progress registered over the past six months.

Nevertheless, we find it surprising that the war in Ukraine and its multifaceted impact is not mentioned in the report, including Kosovo's unequivocal condemnation of the aggression, which is further testimony to its strong commitment to international law and human rights. We applaud its alignment with EU foreign policy, including sanctions, and the generosity in receiving refugees and displaced persons from Ukraine, just as it did with refugees from Afghanistan.

The sustained efforts to fight against corruption and the enforcement of the rule of law in Kosovo deserve

due recognition, and rightly so. They demonstrate the resolve of the Government to build a country for the citizens by the citizens. The Freedom House report *Nations in Transit 2022*, published recently, highlights an increase in democratic governance, the judicial framework and independence. We encourage the Government to continue on that path.

Despite what I just said, for 23 years now, a peacekeeping mission has remained stuck there by a frozen Security Council resolution — a relic of bygone times and realities and at odds with the current domestic and regional political contexts. In that regard, let me reiterate our position: the situation in Kosovo is no longer a matter of peace and security. Keeping it as an issue under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations is baseless, and speaking of peacekeeping there is meaningless. Our region has moved ahead and has transformed, much more than polemics sometimes tend to show. In our view, UNMIK has had its day. We join the United Kingdom and the United States in the call for a thorough review in order to ensure that UNMIK's work and role do not evolve in inertia, but reflect the tremendous change through which Kosovo and its population have gone.

I will briefly look at the mandates of the international presences in Kosovo, which show many overlapping areas regarding priorities, especially between UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. They of course represent different constituencies, but looking for synergies, in close cooperation with the Government, would make the investment more impactful. We remain convinced that it would be better to invest some of the \$42 million spent yearly for UNMIK in areas where Kosovo has genuine and acute needs. After all, the United Nations can make an impact anywhere only if it aligns with the needs and priorities of the host country.

I have said it before, and I would like to reiterate it again: the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has our full and unreserved support, and we call on the parties to accelerate it. We welcome the latest meeting in Brussels, restoring high-level contacts between the parties, which led, among other things, to an agreement on the freedom of movement. We also expect the road map on the energy agreement, as well as that on the issue of car licence plates, to be implemented as soon as possible. Those agreements not only have a direct impact on citizens, but they are also important steps for increased confidence-building

in tackling the core issue: a comprehensive agreement on the full normalization of relations, leading to mutual recognition.

Albania highly appreciates the very active role of the EU Special Representative, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and the United States Special Envoy and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Gabriel Escobar, as well as the involvement of the foreign and security policy advisers of the President of France and the German Chancellor. That is an impressive high-level line-up of support, which cannot, and should not, be wasted. It should serve as a catalyst to accelerate talks on core issues, make history and change the Western Balkans once and forever.

Finding the right and just solutions to challenging situations requires wisdom and creativity, sustained and genuine efforts, courage and vision. That is what leaders are called on to do — lead, rather than follow, and, if needed, take risks for the greater good.

In that respect, we think that it is time to reduce the Security Council meetings to only one a year in recognition of the progress made, as well as encouragement for the parties to pursue dialogue with more determination. The parties would achieve more, as they have done, by sitting, talking and agreeing in Brussels, rather than disagreeing in New York.

The rule of law is fundamental to every society. We support the Government in its efforts to exert its lawful authority throughout its territory. No one should be allowed to disrespect the law, create tensions and incite violence. In that respect, we strongly condemn the consecutive attacks against Kosovo police in April in two municipalities, and we commend the firm position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh in that respect.

I will not tire of mentioning the new environment that we have created in the Western Balkans, where we look at each other with hope, and not suspicion, and where we come together in joint efforts and common projects, looking for shared benefits, and not taking undue advantage of our neighbours. That is the foundation of our current relations with everyone, particularly Serbia, where we also share in our respective efforts on the path to European integration and regional cooperation, including through open Balkans.

All Western Balkan countries seek and pursue European integration. We know that we can achieve it

only by building a democratic, developed and prosperous society and by developing regional integration, with justice and accountability, respect for human rights and freedoms for all citizens, in particular through exemplary respect for national minorities, not only as a substantial element of European integration and human rights values, but also as an important lesson learned from the past. Serbia has the right to ask for high standards for the Serb minority in Kosovo, and we encourage the Kosovo authorities to keep the issue as high as possible on their development agenda and support them to that end. For the sake of truth, we must recognize that Kosovo's legal framework on minorities is one of the best and should serve as an example elsewhere in the region, including in Serbia. I say this very generally, referring to allegations and complaints by ethnic Albanians living in the Preshevo Valley in southern Serbia in relation to the "passivization" by Serbia of their residential addresses.

We know it very well: where there are grievances, there are problems, and the best way to deal with problems is to address them up front. The treatment of minorities should be the mirror in which we see the true progress we have made in building open and just societies for all.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the Serbian Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Selaković, to today's meeting. I have listened carefully to the briefings by the Special Representative Ziadeh and Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Since June 2022, the Kosovo authorities have taken unilateral actions on such issues as identity documents and vehicle licence plates, which has led to a severe escalation in tensions in northern Kosovo, disrupting the process of normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia and affecting security and stability in the Balkans and South-East Europe. China expresses its concern.

Under the good offices of the relevant parties, the two sides have finally reached an agreement on the issue of identity documents. China welcomes this development, and, in particular, China commends the constructive attitude demonstrated by Serbia. At present, the issue of licence plates is still pending. Pristina's demand is that the conversion of licence plates be complete by the end of this month. This may once again trigger protests and even clashes and aggravate tensions between the two sides. Such a situation must be avoided.

We support the two sides engaging with each other through the mediation under the auspices of the European Union (EU) in order to continue consultations on the licence-plate issue. We call upon both sides, and the Kosovo authorities in particular, to exercise restraint, actively cooperate with the good offices of the EU, bearing in mind the overall interest of maintaining security and stability in Europe, and refrain from once again taking unilateral actions.

Dialogue and consultation are the right way to address the Kosovo issue. We are pleased to see that the August meeting in Brussels this year between Serbia and Kosovo produced positive results. Under the auspices of the EU, the Serbian and Kosovo sides arrived at a road map for the implementation of the energy agreement. China encourages both sides to continue to engage with each other pragmatically and constructively and to implement the outcomes of the previous negotiations.

In accordance with the provisions of the Brussels Agreement, Kosovo should advance the establishment of an association of Serb municipalities. Harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability in Kosovo. For many years now, the unity and mutual trust of all communities in the Kosovo region have been in a fragile state. Recently there have been a number of incidents targeting ethnic minorities and their places of worship in Kosovo, including thefts and attacks. China hopes the Kosovo authorities will take effective measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents so as to guarantee the security and legitimate rights and interests of all ethnic groups in Kosovo, including Serbs.

The presence of the United Nations is a strong guarantee towards the settlement of the Kosovo issue, which is sensitive and complex. In recent years, there have been persistent tensions, which have also escalated, posing a potential risk to European security. Under such circumstances, the Security Council should sustain its focus and attention on the Kosovo issue. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should continue to work actively in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), effectively carry out its mandates and play a constructive role in maintaining regional stability, promoting national reconciliation and facilitating dialogue between the two sides.

China's position on the Kosovo issue has been consistent and clear. We support the sides concerned in working with each other within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) in order to reach a mutually acceptable political solution through sincere dialogue. In this process, Serbia's sovereignty, independence and integrity should be fully respected.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in France*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing, and I welcome the presence among us of the Foreign Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo.

The incidents that took place in northern Kosovo on 31 July are worrying and remind us that there is no other way forward for either Serbia or Kosovo than to reach a comprehensive, final and legally binding agreement to resolve the dispute between the two countries in a sustainable manner. In this regard, France welcomes the agreement on freedom of movement that was reached between Serbia and Kosovo on 27 August within the framework of the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. This agreement illustrates the European Union's continued commitment to dialogue, and France commends the efforts of its Special Representative, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák.

France encourages Serbia and Kosovo to fully normalize their relations in a spirit of compromise. The high-level dialogue meeting facilitated by the European Union held in Brussels on 18 August showed that there is a commitment by the parties to a comprehensive agreement. The conclusion of such an agreement is a condition essential for the European prospects of Kosovo and Serbia, prospects in which both parties have a mutual interest, and to which France reiterates its commitment.

We call on both parties to implement, without restrictions, the agreements already reached and to refrain from any unilateral measure that could fuel tensions. We encourage Kosovo and Serbia to work constructively to find solutions on current issues, such as those of converting licence plates or of supplying electricity to northern Kosovo. It is also essential that progress be made in the Working Group on Missing Persons and on the issue of the return of displaced persons.

We express our support for the reform efforts being undertaken by the Government of Kosovo, in particular with regard to the fight against corruption,

the rule of law, and economic and social development. These efforts, which must continue, are also essential for European rapprochement, as is the mobilization for the full, equal and effective participation of women in political and social life and for the respect of human rights. We call for the continuation of the fight against impunity for the perpetrators of serious crimes and for cooperation with the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office.

We fully support the work of Ms. Caroline Ziadeh as Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to promote security, stability and the strengthening of the rule of law and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region. UNMIK can count on the joint action of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. We particularly welcome UNMIK's efforts in conjunction with the municipalities to support intercommunal dialogue. In this regard, we support the proposal to establish a centre for dialogue and contact in Pristina.

France, like the European Union, remains committed to the stabilization of the Western Balkans and to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Their common European future depends on it.

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

I welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, for her briefing, and we have listened carefully to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

The process of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has not made moved forward, especially on technical aspects that have an impact on community life in Kosovo. An urgent solution must be found for the issue of freedom of movement, in particular that of licence plates, at the risk of fuelling more tension.

Incidents and violence targeting minority communities in Kosovo are one of the expressions of communal tensions that are likely to be permanent sources of antagonism. These tensions cannot be resolved through unilateral initiatives but through dialogue and addressing their root causes, in order to

build a sustainable peace. That goal can be achieved only by implementing existing agreements, such as the Brussels Agreement. Recent meetings between the parties, mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, failed to advance the normalization process. Increasing sources of tensions, altercations between communities and police and other decisions that limit the free movement of people and goods within Kosovo are clearly detrimental to peacebuilding.

In addition to the free movement of people, there is the controversial issue of the return of displaced persons belonging to minority communities. The pace of those returns, which remains below expectations, must be accelerated in order to enable those people to return to their region of origin, without fear or pressure. We encourage the initiatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and local authorities to coordinate the return of displaced persons and call on them to accelerate the pace of those returns. In that regard, I would like to stress the need for the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), as well as for the parties' respect for international law in order to put in place all guarantees for peace and security for the people in Kosovo.

The issue of missing persons is of crucial interest. The fact that the working group on missing persons did not hold any meetings during the reporting period delays the administration of cases of persons still missing since the events of 1998 and 1999. We encourage UNMIK to continue its efforts in that regard. To that end, my country welcomes and encourages all initiatives that promote coexistence and integration among communities.

Another pending challenging issue is that of peaceful coexistence among the followers of different religions. In that regard, the 2016 decision of the Constitutional Court to register the lands of the Visoki Dečani monastery must be implemented. We also urge the Kosovo authorities to adopt legislation that protects freedom of religion and guarantees protection against domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence.

We underscore the need to increase the role of young people and women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. In cooperation with UN-Women, UNMIK activities to combat harassment against women and for greater participation by women in political processes are to

be commended. The same goes for cultural and sports activities to encourage the participation of young people.

There are still several challenges in the area of justice. We welcome and encourage the role played by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to advance reforms in that area. We note UNMIK efforts to operationalize justice and combat impunity. We welcome the fact that proceedings have been initiated in war crimes cases and that the considerable delays in the administration of justice have been reduced.

My country calls on the parties to work constructively towards stability in the region. To that end, it is essential that the parties refrain from any unilateral policy and that they be committed, in good faith, to the quest for a diplomatic solution.

In conclusion, we encourage Special Representative Ziadeh to continue interaction with the parties. We commend UNMIK for its efforts to build intercommunal trust and foster integration among all communities.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Selaković (Serbia): I must respond, as we heard a plethora of blatant lies from Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz during her statement. I would like to respond to just some of them.

One of those lies was that she represents the youngest democracy in Europe. Have you ever heard of a democracy where people are banned from voting in elections? Twice this year, Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija were not allowed to vote.

Another blatant lie was that 90 per cent of Serbian licence plates have been registered. I repeat, 90 per cent. There are more than 9,000 people who own vehicles in the northern part of Kosovo and Metohija. I repeat, more than 9,000. Only two of them registered their plates. Is that 90 per cent? Perhaps that is the best example of the blatant lies.

From Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz's statement, we can see that she is obsessed with our President, Aleksandar Vučić. She mentioned his name nine times in her statement. She said that he was preparing for an act of aggression but, at the same time, she made no mention of what Pristina is doing. For the past eight

months, we heard continuous, systematic and repeated lies about President Vučić preparing for aggression, Belgrade preparing for aggression; that there will be an escalation of conflict on the ground and that Serbia is behaving like someone's proxy or puppet.

At the same time, Pristina was constructing four — I said, four — new special police troops bases in the Serb-majority municipalities. What is the reason for that? Is that not in preparation for aggression and to push what is left of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija out of Kosovo and Metohija? That is the only reason, and that is the real truth.

Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz said that President Vučić promotes Nazi ideology of a so-called Serb world. First of all, we would never hear President Vučić saying that. Secondly, I will tell the Council who is promoting Nazi ideas. Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz can say if this is true or not. The so-called Kosovo Government has been preparing to renovate Xhafer Deva's house. I will tell the Council who Xhafer Deva is.

Xhafer Deva was a very famous Nazi collaborator during the Second World War. The Kosovo Government is working on a project renovate Xhafer Deva's house in Kosovska Mitrovica. It has even been cheating the European Union, in getting its support for the project to renovate the house of a Nazi collaborator who was decorated by Hitler himself. That is clear evidence of the promotion of Nazi ideology and Nazi ideas.

I will not even mention SS Skanderbeg, which was one of the very best and most brutal of Hitler's units during the Second World War. However, Albin Kurti is the one promoting Nazi ideology. I will tell the Council how. I will quote him. He was interviewed by a journalist from *Euronews* on 16 February. The journalist asked,

"You once said that you would support a great union with Albania. Is [that] still the case?"

He said,

"I believe that full independence implies also, independence from independence, so we could join a federation with Albania or an EU federation.

Two referendums in the future could solve this, in Albania and Kosovo ...".

The journalist asked him,

"How would you vote in that referendum?"

He said,

"I think I would vote yes".

That project existed only during the Second World War, as a Nazi proxy State — so that concerns the promotion of Nazi ideology.

My only message for Ms. Schwarz today is that she should not so be obsessed with President Vučić in such a way. Maybe it would be best for her to submit an application to become one of his pupils. He could teach her a lot about politics, diplomacy and international public law — and about the way she found herself here, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), which defined Kosovo and Metohija as a part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

When she is speaking about crimes committed, she should not forget to remind the Council where Hashim Thaçi, her former President, as well as Kadri Veseli are right now and what they are doing in the detention unit at The Hague. They are not playing cards or the game of Risk. They are there to be tried and, I believe, sentenced for the horrifying crimes they committed against Serbs and the other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. The Council adopted three resolutions before resolution 1244 (1999): resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) and 1203 (1998). In all three of them, the activities of her fellows were named as terrorism. And the members of the Security Council adopted those resolutions unanimously.

We also heard it mentioned twice that Serbia is breaching agreements. That, of course, is not true. It has been 3,470 days since the first Brussels Agreement was signed, and Pristina has not been forming any Serb-majority municipalities. Moreover, it has loudly said that it is not going to do that. It is a matter of respect for the accords and agreements.

Finally, one very famous poet said that if someone is lying, they should lie in a way that ensures people trust them. Next time, Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz should take an approach from another angle if she really wants to have an effect other than the one she has created with her lies.

The President (*spoke in French*): Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz: I really did not want to bother the Security Council regarding these personal

attacks, but I cannot ignore them. Mr. Selaković is not even capable of calling me by my name, which is not “Schwarz” — that is the name of my husband. My last name is Gërvalla, and there are good reasons why Mr. Selaković cannot articulate that name. Because it was Belgrade that chased my father to Germany — he was a journalist, writer and musician — and he was one of the three people Belgrade’s State security service killed behind our house. That is why it is so difficult for Mr. Selaković to say the name Gërvalla — or “Dërvalla” or however it could be spelled — because there is a big hole in the collective conscience of Serbia about that name.

I could really take a lot of time to react to a lot of things that were stated, but I simply will not do that because I very much respect Council members’ time. I truly respect this body, which is dealing with war and peace, especially with its ongoing intensive efforts to end a war that is unjustified and very aggressive. I will therefore only make the following two points.

It is difficult, as someone from Kosovo who understands both our history and the present, to sit here and listen about lies and truth. I would quite simply recommend to everyone who is not very convinced at today’s meeting not to listen to Mr. Selaković. They do not even need to listen to me, the Kosovar Foreign Minister. All they need to do is read the international reports, starting with the latest Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe report and the progress

report of the European Union, and then continue reading what the international presence in Kosovo is reporting from the ground, because maybe I could be trying to fool the members of the Council — which I would never do because of the respect I have for this body — but I ask them to not to let others to fool them either. They should simply trust the sources they know will tell them the truth about the progress in Kosovo, as well as the problems, and about what has happened in the past, what is happening now and how the future can be.

From our side, our aim is to provide a better future for our citizens. For all our citizens, the right to vote in Kosovo is a guaranteed right for every citizen of the Republic — without distinction as to Albanians, Serbs, Turks and Bosniaks. The citizens of Kosovo — all of them — most recently exercised their right to vote in the national elections held in February 2021 and the municipal elections held on 21 October. The right to vote in Kosovo is therefore a very respected one, and it is guaranteed by our Constitution for every citizen of Kosovo.

Regarding everything else that has been insinuated about the about elections in Kosovo — I simply ask Council members to read the latest European Union progress report, in which they will see how free and democratic the elections are in Kosovo and how much we care about the right to vote.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.