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Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9374th meeting

Wednesday, 12 July 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Dame Barbara Woodward/Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. França Danese
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mr. Olmedo
	Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mr. Kuymizakis
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/477)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/477)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; and Ms. Diana María Salcedo López, Spokesperson for the Special Women's Instance for the follow-up of the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia and Director of the International League of Women for Peace and Freedom.

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/2023/477, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome this new opportunity to present the Secretary-General's latest report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/477) and to update the Council on developments related to the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and other peacebuilding efforts.

It is a pleasure, as always, to be with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, to whom I reiterate my gratitude for the continued collaboration of the Government of President Petro Urrego with the Mission and with the United Nations, as a whole. I am also honoured to be in the presence of Ms. Diana María Salcedo López, an outstanding leader who has worked tirelessly on the implementation of the gender provisions of the Agreement and on the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

(spoke in English)

When the Council met in July last year (see S/PV.9094), a new Administration had just been elected in Colombia amid great optimism about the prospects for peacebuilding to advance. At that time, I highlighted the enormous opportunity and responsibility that the Government of President Gustavo Petro Urrego would have in accelerating the implementation of the Agreement.

I believe that the advances registered in the Secretary-General's latest report are an indication that implementation is gaining traction across several sections of the Agreement, including those that have been lagging behind despite having the greatest potential to address the root causes of the conflict. Especially noteworthy are the numerous peace-related provisions of the National Development Plan, the increased attention given to comprehensive rural reform and the allocation of much-needed funds for the implementation of the peace agreement.

The establishment of the Ministry of Equality, led by Vice-President Francia Márquez, as well as progress by her Office in crafting ways to further the implementation of the Agreement's ethnic chapter, are important steps for improving the situation of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and other vulnerable groups.

Sound planning and coordination will be important if we are to maximize the potential of those initiatives to bring tangible peace dividends. To that end, I take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of following through on the decision to appoint a top official within the presidency dedicated to overseeing the implementation of the Final Agreement.

Congress also has a key role to play in the implementation of the Agreement. I welcome the

approval of legislation pertaining to the comprehensive rural reform and trust that all political actors will continue to find ways to build consensus to consolidate peace.

(spoke in Spanish)

The centrality of victims is a promise of the Agreement and a fundamental principle of its implementation. As the Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to move forward in its various macro-cases, including through new indictments, the voices of victims demanding truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition have resounded loudly in recent hearings of the Jurisdiction, with participants from the various parties to the conflict.

One such hearing took place in Dabeiba, Antioquia, despite death threats from those seeking to obstruct truth and justice. Public security force witnesses gave impactful testimonies acknowledging their responsibility in extrajudicial executions — crimes that illustrate the degradation of the conflict. The presence of several Government Ministers and officials at these proceedings is a significant gesture and an important step towards the imperative goal of non-repetition.

I am confident that the SJP will continue to move decisively towards the issuance of the first sanctions of its own, which will undoubtedly mark another milestone in the Colombian peace process. In addition, victims and civil society organizations have persisted in seeking justice for crimes related to sexual violence in the conflict and continue to await a final decision by the SJP with respect to the opening of Case 11 on this issue. Finally, with respect to the SJP, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my solidarity in the face of the new threats denounced yesterday by the President of the SJP, Justice Roberto Vidal.

(spoke in English)

With regard to the reintegration process, I echo the Secretary-General in commending the Government's new approach, stressing sustainability, community-based reintegration with an emphasis on reconciliation, access to land, and gender and women's empowerment. The approval by the parties of a sustainability strategy to support collective productive projects and the allocation of funding for this purpose are important actions. The approval of new collective projects, additional support for individual initiatives and for access to employment would significantly boost

thousands of former combatants' livelihoods and help anchor their transition into civilian life.

Regrettably, violence continues to hinder the realization of the full potential of the Agreement. I trust that recent actions with regard to security guarantees such as the adoption of a new security and defence policy will soon yield results and help improve the situation in conflict-affected regions. One such region is Catatumbo, where I recently had the opportunity to attend a humanitarian round table convened by local leaders and grass-roots organizations. Their pleas for an increased presence of State institutions and services, legal alternatives to illicit crops, and perseverance in resolving armed conflict through dialogue, are the same ones heard in many parts of the countryside.

As the implementation of rural reform advances, we see an increase in violence against peasant leaders and land claimants and in obstacles posed to Government officials working on land reform. Also concerning is the persistent violence against former combatants, five of whom have been killed since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General. Just last week, another reintegration area was relocated due to insecurity, as dozens of former combatants and their families moved from Vista Hermosa, Meta, to the nearby municipality of Granada. I trust that support from the Government will soon result in lasting solutions for both former combatants and host communities. Much more must be done to protect those who exercise leadership and stand up for the rights of entire communities, as well as those who have laid down their arms in good faith under the peace agreement.

(spoke in Spanish)

I would like to take this opportunity to condemn once again the recent armed attack against members of the Catholic Church in Caldon, Cauca, and to reiterate our solidarity with the Church, which is an invaluable ally in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Likewise, in view of the territorial elections in October, I call on illegal armed actors to respect the right of citizens and candidates of all political parties to participate in campaigns free of threats. I reiterate my call to the authorities to take the measures needed to ensure that the elections take place in a safe and participatory environment, with full guarantees for the participation of women in politics.

The Government's push for the implementation of key aspects of the peace agreement has been

paralleled by efforts at dialogue with armed groups of various kinds. These two strands are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The results achieved in Cuba in the third round of negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional are very encouraging. Last week, the cessation of hostilities between the parties went into effect, a step towards the full effectiveness of the bilateral, national and temporary ceasefire on 3 August. Likewise, in a few days, the National Commission on Participation, which will promote the broad involvement of society in the peace process, will be set up. I trust that the will of the parties will be maintained and that it will lead to further progress.

Moreover, and despite the challenges, the rapprochement with the group that identifies itself as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo is also noteworthy. The joint announcement made by the Government and this group on 8 July with regard to setting up a round of peace talks is positive news. I hope that the building of trust between the parties continues and that we will soon have developments with respect to the formal start of negotiations and a renewed national ceasefire. This and other dialogue initiatives are an opportunity to achieve concrete commitments to reducing the suffering of civilian victims of the conflict and in particular to reducing violence against ex-combatants and social leaders.

The dialogues also offer opportunities for the United Nations to redouble its support for peace. Colombia is going through a critical moment in which the determined will of the parties, with the support of the international community, could build on incipient peace processes. In this context, I reiterate the Secretary-General's belief that the Mission can make an important contribution through the monitoring and verification of ceasefires. Undoubtedly, the progress made during this period shows that, with the cooperation of various actors, the efforts to build peace are yielding important results.

In order for Colombia to finally see the fulfilment of its desire for non-repetition, it is essential to preserve and build on what has been achieved, decisively face the security challenges and not to falter in the search for a solution to the violence that gives priority to dialogue. We have before us a window of opportunity in which the support of the Security Council is decisive.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Salcedo López.

Ms. Salcedo López (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the opportunity given to the Women's Special Instance for the Gender Approach to Peace to bring its main reflections, analysis and recommendations on the implementation of the Final Agreement and the gender measures to the Security Council Chamber.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge and remember all the women peacebuilders, signatories of the Agreement and LGBTQI+ people, whose lives and dignity have been taken away by the war.

In the seventh year of implementation of the Agreement, we recognize the commitments made by the Government to bring the implementation to a balance point, guaranteeing the inclusion of the Agreement in the National Development Plan and in different processes such as the formulation of the Colombia's national action plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000), its feminist foreign policy and the "total peace" policy. The Government must progress from the 12 per cent of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement that have been implemented so far to achieve material, tangible and urgent results.

First, with regard to comprehensive rural reform, Colombia has been addressing the major challenges resulting from years of a lack of structure and of corruption and dispossession by taking encouraging action at the State level, for example by significantly increasing the budget of the National Land Agency and formalizing land tenure for women. However, what is particularly challenging is ensuring the role of women and LGBTQI+ persons in decision-making, as well as the systematic inclusion of a gender approach and specific measures in programmes with a territorial approach and in the national plans for comprehensive rural reform.

Secondly, with regard to political participation, the Women's Special Instance for a Gender Approach in Peace acknowledges the work of congresswomen in advancing the adoption of a bill criminalizing acts of violence against women in politics. We hope to see it implemented quickly in order to respond to such violence, especially in the context of the upcoming elections, and we also want to see measures implemented to prevent violence against women, as well

as racism and sexism, during the electoral campaigns and the election process. We are advocating for more meaningful and effective participation of women in the civil monitoring and verification activities established by the Agreement in order to ensure transparency in public management and the proper use of resources. We remain concerned about the lack of an LGBTIQ+ perspective among community members in political leadership roles. With regard to security, given the lack of guarantees ensuring that women can work in the territories, we acknowledge the Government's efforts to develop seven policies under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, in particular the Action Plan of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, which is in the process of formulating inclusive activities.

Thirdly, with regard to ending the conflict, we welcome the progress made in the areas of the "total peace" policy, the progress made within the framework of the National Commission on Security Guarantees in including a gender approach, the new defence policy and the support of the international community for the policy of reintegrating the signatories to the Final Agreement. In that regard, the Instance would like to highlight the following points.

With regard to reintegration, we would like to remind the Council that it is women who continue to sustain the process of economic reintegration and who have yet to fill decision-making positions, while shouldering the burden of caring for their families and communities — sometimes even unpaid — which diverts their time, energy and expertise from the process of political, community and economic reintegration. Similarly, we note with deep concern the increase in violence against women and girls in the territorial training areas and surrounding areas, especially violence within families, exploitation and sexual violence. We especially call for ensuring that the reintegration policy can implement and promote measures to prevent violence against women and girls and create safe environments where they can exercise their rights. We underscore the significant history of the peace signatories' willingness to work with the communities living close to the territorial training areas. The projects and processes undertaken by the signatories have often provided the municipalities with better access to education, health and work.

We urge the Government to work quickly to improve the security situation for former combatants and address

the series of murders that have left at least 12 women dead since the signing of the Final Agreement, as well as the other forms of violence against those who have decided to continue to honour the Agreement. Peace cannot come at the cost of the signatories' lives. In terms of security guarantees, the Instance emphasizes the importance of consolidating a defence and security policy under the current Government that in terms of human security addresses the obligation to sustain and safeguard lives. However, we are concerned about the central role of militarization, the use of arms in security policies and the increase in the defence budget for 2023, which continues to exceed that of the social services.

Fourthly, with regard to resolving the problem of illicit drugs, the Instance has demonstrated that thanks to measures adopted by the Government, more efforts have been made to counter trafficking networks. We nonetheless call for a speedy review and implementation of the activities of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, stepping up families and children's participation in them, overcoming structural obstacles such as the lack of visibility of LGBTIQ+ persons, and acknowledging the high levels of violence, such as feminicide, exploitation, forced prostitution, sexual violence and other crimes that are hallmarks of illegal economies.

Lastly, with regard to the victims of the armed conflict, the Instance acknowledges the activities of the committee established to follow up on and monitor the recommendations of the Truth Commission's report, which are supporting the transition agenda in Colombia. We encourage its implementation at the local level. We welcome the modest 14 per cent budget increase for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the announcement of its opening of Case 11 on sexual and gender-based violence. We underscore the need to ensure the provision of sufficient numbers of suitable personnel to optimally carry out investigations on an equal footing with other cases and urge that the hearing processes acknowledge the impact on LGBTIQ+ persons and come up with ways to guarantee reparations and reintegration for them.

With regard to the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, the Instance would like to draw attention to the removal of the gender group from its composition, which will be detrimental to constructive and mainstreaming efforts to guarantee its mission within the framework of the peace agreement. We welcome the call of the Office of the Ombudsman to advance the development of collective reparation plans

with a gender focus, in conjunction with the input of women in the territories. We recommend improving the quality of the psychosocial care system to enable physical and emotional recovery for victims, particularly those affected by sexual violence. Mental health must be one of the main priorities of the Agreement where surviving victims are concerned.

Finally, we acknowledge the Government's work in creating a "total peace" policy that integrates dialogue, negotiations and consultations with the members of illegal armed groups. We underscore the progress made in strengthening the dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. The national commission on the participation of communities must guarantee the equal participation of women and prioritize their agenda and the immediate implementation of measures related to the ceasefire, including on sexual violence in the conflict. Concerning discussions with other armed groups, the Instance urges for progress to be made in dismantling and negotiating with those groups and in analysing the structures that have been core drivers in the surge of the conflict in relation to the establishment of illegal economies and the strengthening of militant models.

The implementation of the peace agreement, especially gender-related measures, can make the difference in driving "total peace" forward and setting an example for the resolution of other conflicts around the world. Guaranteeing the lives of women and LGBTIQ+ persons and people's dignity is the path to peace today. We call on the Security Council to continue its timely, sustained and determined efforts so that we can work towards making Colombia a country where the people can live in dignity.

The President: I thank Ms. Salcedo López for her briefing.

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

I would like to start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Salcedo López for their briefings. I also welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán to this meeting.

The United Kingdom welcomes the efforts made by the Colombian Government to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We welcome the adoption of the National Development Plan, which includes an investment plan for peace. Ensuring funding to deliver

reforms and strengthen the State presence across Colombia will be essential to delivering progress in the coming years. As Ms. Salcedo López has outlined, the gender chapter is an essential element of the peace agreement. We are concerned about the fact that women leaders and female ex-combatants continue to face conflict-related sexual violence, and we encourage the Government of Colombia to continue to prioritize the full implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement. Political participation is also critical to the implementation of the Agreement. As we approach the regional elections in October, we encourage the Government to take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of peace signatories seeking to participate in the democratic process.

We strongly condemn the violence against former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders. Since the signing of the Agreement, more than 375 former FARC-EP combatants have been killed. We urge the Government to strengthen prevention and protection measures and reiterate the importance of the National Commission on Security Guarantees. The United Kingdom welcomes the announcement in June of a ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and hopes that communities will see genuine improvements in their security. We expect the ELN to approach its undertakings in good faith, and we are following closely the efforts of the Government to reach a ceasefire agreement with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General for providing the Security Council with options for an expanded United Nations role in verifying ceasefire agreements. We will share a draft resolution in the coming days for discussion with Council members.

Let me assure Minister for Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán, Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and the members of the Council that Colombia can count on the United Kingdom to continue its support along their path to peace and security for all Colombian people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make a statement.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán of Colombia to today's meeting. I also listened attentively to the statement by the civil society representative.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Government and the people of Colombia, the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace has been implemented and the total peace policy is being advanced. We welcome that, and we look forward to all the parties in Colombia consolidating the gains made and continuing to move towards the goal of achieving a comprehensive, lasting and sustainable peace.

The full implementation of the peace agreement is at the centre of the peace process in Colombia. The country's recently adopted National Development Plan has provided policy support and resource guarantees for the implementation of important elements of the peace agreement, such as rural reform, land distribution, the substitution of illicit crops and the reintegration of former combatants into society. We would like to express our appreciation for that. Development is the basis for sustainable peace. Effectively addressing the root causes of conflicts requires reducing hunger and poverty, narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, effectively improving people's livelihoods and increasing investment in development. We hope that the agencies of the United Nations system and international partners will provide active support and assistance to Colombia in its efforts to promote sustainable development, consolidate the achievements of peace process and achieve lasting peace and security in the country.

Curbing the violence of the conflict is crucial for maintaining the population's confidence in the peace process. China appreciates the Colombian Government's commitment to eliminating conflict-related violence through dialogue and negotiation. We welcome the six-month ceasefire agreement reached between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional during the third round of peace talks and hope that the agreement will be effectively respected and fully implemented. We support the Colombian Government's efforts to continue dialogue and negotiations with other armed groups, to combat illegal armed groups and violent organizations and to curb the expansion of their power and scope of

activities, which is another integral part of realizing a comprehensive peace in Colombia. We also support the Colombian Government's efforts to increase the deployment of security forces in former conflict zones that lack effective control and to strengthen security protection for ex-combatants, women, children and ethnic minorities.

China appreciates the important role played by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in support of the peace process and supports the Security Council in earnestly studying and actively considering the expansion of the Mission's mandate to participate in the monitoring and verification of the ceasefires. We believe that that would help to consolidate the positive momentum of the current dialogue and the peace talks. China is ready to work with the international community to continue to support the Colombian-led and -owned peace process and to help the Colombian people to achieve greater success on the road to comprehensive peace, stability and development.

Mr. Kuymizakis (Malta): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Salcedo López for their insightful briefings today, and I welcome the participation in today's meeting of Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán.

Malta remains encouraged by the efforts and determination of the Government of Colombia to bring about lasting and sustainable peace. Since our last meeting in April (see S/PV.9303), we have seen significant progress in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, complemented by the Government's policy of total peace. We were pleased to see the approval by Congress of the Government's National Development Plan, which includes key elements of the peace agreement. We further welcome the approval of key bills relating to comprehensive rural reform and the Government's recent purchase and formalization of land in that regard. The culmination, in Cuba, of the third round of peace talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Agreement on a six-month national bilateral ceasefire are also positive developments. Furthermore, we welcome the announcement by the Government of upcoming talks with several illegal armed actors, and we call on them to seize this opportunity and engage in good faith.

We acknowledge the request made by the Government on 14 February for a further expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and we look forward to working closely with Security Council colleagues on supporting the Government's efforts for sustainable and permanent ceasefires.

Malta is deeply concerned about the high levels of violence perpetrated by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, which continue to undermine peacebuilding efforts across Colombia. We condemn in the strongest terms any violence and threats made against judges and politicians, human rights defenders, social leaders and LGBTIQ+ persons. We are deeply concerned about reports of the forcible displacement of thousands of people in recent months, and those forcibly confined, as well as reports of the forced recruitment of children, disproportionately affecting indigenous and Afro-Colombians. We condemn the murder, violence and threats against former combatants in several regions of Colombia, particularly in areas under the social and territorial control of illegal armed groups. Government authorities must do all they can to stem violence against civilians, including by increasing the efforts to extend State presence in rural areas to protect vulnerable communities.

As was highlighted again today, we are concerned about the fact that the gender provisions of the Agreement continue to face implementation challenges. The recently approved bills to address violence against women in politics and to establish a 50 per cent quota for women's membership in public entities are important for ensuring that women can fully, meaningfully and safely participate in the political process. Ongoing and future peace initiatives must include specific measures to prevent attacks, threats, killings and conflict-related sexual violence against all women leaders and former combatants. Malta supports the progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace within Colombia's transitional justice system. We reiterate our support for women and LGBTI organizations' call to open Case 11 on sexual and gender-based violence, and for the full implementation of the Truth Commission's recommendations on reparations for victims of sexual violence.

We are encouraged by the efforts to advance the implementation of the ethnic chapter across the peace agreement and urge the Government ensure adequate funding to address historic inequalities. We also call

for sustained attention and resources in the search for those forcibly missing and disappeared.

Colombia continues to make progress towards lasting and sustainable peace. Malta reaffirms its commitment to supporting the peace process and commends the determination and resilience of the Colombia people.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing on the progress in the peace process in Colombia. I also thank Ms. Salcedo López for her insights related to the gender chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. I extend a warm welcome to Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán.

Colombia has again demonstrated its great potential to become a model of peacebuilding through its best practices. The approval of the Government's National Development Plan by Congress is another good example of that. The Plan includes commitments to the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement and a plan for rural reform, which are imperative for peacebuilding in Colombia. Japan looks forward to the effective implementation of the National Development Plan, which will enable urban-rural gaps to be addressed and promote comprehensive development. If sustaining peace is to be achieved under the Plan, we reiterate the importance of building resilient and transparent institutions and systems, as well as providing capacity-building for every citizen, with human security at its core. Furthermore, no peacebuilding effort can be effective unless it is led by a Government that has the trust of the people. In that regard, Japan underscores the importance of the peaceful and non-violent conduct of the department and municipal elections scheduled for October.

Japan commends Colombia's continued effort to achieve "total peace" through dialogue, in addition to the steady implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement. We welcome the recent agreements between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional on a six-month national bilateral ceasefire and an inclusive mechanism for involving Colombian society in the peace process. Japan also encourages other armed groups to engage constructively in dialogue with the Government to reach a ceasefire, and to refrain from resorting to violent means.

Japan appreciates the work by the United Nations Verification Mission in supporting Colombia's efforts. In that regard, we note the request by the Government for an expansion of the Mission's mandate in order to support its efforts to hold a dialogue with armed groups, particularly in the verification of ceasefires. Taking into account the Secretary-General's recommendations, Japan remains engaged in identifying how the Mission can most effectively carry out its mandate and serve the purpose of sustaining peace and stability in Colombia. Japan condemns the continuing violence, most notably in rural areas, including against former combatants, social leaders and conflict-affected communities. Creating an environment conducive to reintegration will be key to addressing insecurity in the long term, as we have seen from the example of the draft of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection for former combatants.

Long-term stability can be achieved only when the peace process is shaped by its stakeholders, with their own vision and full ownership. Reintegration should be led by community-based initiatives with an emphasis on reconciliation and the active participation of all stakeholders, including women and young people. To promote such initiatives, Council members should encourage Colombia to continue utilizing the Peacebuilding Commission.

In conclusion, Japan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting the peace process and peacebuilding efforts in Colombia.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): At the outset, I thank Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his valuable briefing and continued work in Colombia. We listened carefully to Ms. Diana Salcedo López, and I welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán in today's meeting. I would like to focus on three main points today.

First, the United Arab Emirates welcomes the Government of Colombia's continued dedication and the steps it has taken to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. That includes the recently approved National Development Plan, which embeds the peace agreement in its foundations. We are also encouraged by efforts to implement the ethnic chapter and rural reform, while also stressing the need to prioritize the implementation of the gender provisions of the Agreement. Expanding women's political participation is an important step, but it must be coupled with measures that address the

increased security risks and violence against women and girls, particularly conflict-related sexual violence. That includes using existing mechanisms, such as the various components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, to advance the protection and promotion of women and girls across Colombian society.

Secondly, we commend the approach of the National Reintegration Council to ensuring a sustainable strategy for the reintegration of former combatants. Those men and women honoured their commitment to the Final Agreement and facilitating their effective and safe reintegration into Colombian society should remain a priority. That includes implementing the security guarantees, which are crucial to the success of the Agreement.

That leads me to my third point. We remain concerned about the persistent violence against civilians, including former combatants and community leaders, which threatens efforts for peacebuilding and reconciliation. We recognize that the ongoing peace talks, including the recent six-month ceasefire agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, are another tool for tackling violence in Colombia. The Council can count on the United Arab Emirates' constructive engagement in Council discussions regarding the requested expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to support the Government in its efforts towards peace, and we reaffirm our full support for the Verification Mission under the leadership of Special Representative Ruiz Massieu.

In conclusion, the growing and continued engagement between Colombia and the Council continues to be an important process for safeguarding the peace dividends achieved so far. It is also a clear representation of the international community's commitment to peace in Colombia. That continued engagement and cooperation will provide the necessary support for Colombia to ensure long-term and sustainable security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative and Ms. Salcedo López for their briefings. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia to today's meeting.

The quest for peace must involve dialogue. That is why we welcomed the conclusion on 9 June of an agreement on a six-month national ceasefire between the

Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We hope that first step will lead to a lasting ceasefire. France welcomes the efforts made by the Colombian authorities to broker further ceasefires with several armed groups, particularly the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. We support Colombia's request for an extension of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia so that it can monitor and support the implementation of the various commitments. That is essential to reducing violence, the risk of which remains particularly worrisome ahead of local elections in October. Despite the progress that has been made, security guarantees for former combatants, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society are still lacking.

The approval by Congress of the National Development Plan is a positive step. France welcomes the Government's commitment and recent initiatives on rural reform and access to land, in particular the creation of a new agrarian jurisdiction. We also welcome the priority given to the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We encourage the Government to continue on that path with a view to offering new, viable socioeconomic opportunities to the people who have suffered because of the conflict and continue to be subjected to violence by armed and criminal groups. France welcomes the steady progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and firmly condemns the threats made against Colombian judges. The first restorative sentences will open a new chapter on the road to reconciliation.

In conclusion, the peace agreement is a historic achievement, and Colombia's willingness to build peace through dialogue is an example for the international community. We support the Colombian authorities in their efforts to fully implement the peace agreement and in the discussions that have started as part of the "total peace" policy. There is admittedly still some way to go, but Colombia is on the right track and France stands ready to provide its full support.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and my own country, Mozambique (A3).

We would like to express our profound appreciation for the hard work carried out by the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and his team in their efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Colombia. We extend our greetings and thanks to Ms. Diana María Salcedo López, for the perspective shared. We welcome, in this Chamber, the participation of His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

The report of the Secretary-General on the overall situation in Colombia during the reporting period (S/2023/477) reflects the selfless efforts and firm commitment of the Government and the people of Colombia to consolidate an integrated framework conducive to finding a lasting and sustainable peace. That occurs despite the varied and complex challenges faced by the Government and people of Colombia. The approval of the Government's National Development Plan by Congress is one clear example of the important steps taken in dealing with various peace-related matters.

In that relentless quest for peace, the A3 warmly congratulates His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia, and the leadership of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional for the successful conclusion of the third round of peace negotiations in Cuba. That remarkable achievement has culminated in a temporary six-month ceasefire that will take effect from 3 August 2023 and in the establishment of a national commission entrusted with defining the broad participation of Colombian society in the peace process. Additionally, the formation of a national commission tasked with defining the extensive participation of Colombian society in the peace process demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that the voices of all Colombians are heard and taken into account.

The A3 commends the Colombian Government's strategic approach to restoring peace through inclusive and constructive dialogue with armed groups, regardless of their classification. That demonstrates the Government's commitment to resolving conflicts while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. By promoting mutual understanding and reconciliation, the Government fosters sustainable peace and security in the country.

The A3 welcomes the Colombian Government's efforts to improve security in conflict-affected areas through the adoption of policies and strategic

plans aimed at gradually strengthening the presence of military and police forces in conflict-affected areas. We encourage the Government to expedite the implementation of those plans, using innovative and tailored approaches to dismantle criminal structures and protect vulnerable communities.

We note with satisfaction the positive developments resulting from the Government's institutional reforms and the allocation of funds for comprehensive rural reforms. In the same vein, we commend the establishment of mechanisms to expedite land acquisition for landless people. We urge swift identification and allocation to beneficiaries. To that end, we appeal to the international community to support that process with the needed resources.

The granting of property titles to former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) fighters on land previously obtained by the National Land Agency is, in our view, a positive step. We deem it vital to offer them essential technical support and financial assistance to facilitate their transition to civilian life and enable them to attain self-reliance.

To attain peace in Colombia and address the historical inequalities that are the root causes of conflicts, it is crucial to implement fair and inclusive policies for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. In that regard, the A3 welcomes the Colombian Government's consideration of indigenous and Afro-Colombians in the land distribution process.

We welcome the initiative to create a support group for the implementation of the ethnic chapter by various embassies and United Nations entities. Likewise, we welcome the announcement of the allocation of 30 per cent of the resources of the territory renewal agency for the implementation of more than 8,000 initiatives under the development programmes with a territorial focus in ethnic territories that are facing significant development challenges.

We take note of the upcoming regional elections scheduled for 29 October 2023. We emphasize the importance of ensuring representative participation, in terms of both male and female candidates, while also guaranteeing the security of women and former combatants who wish to engage in the electoral process. Doing so will foster inclusive, peaceful and fair elections.

Despite the positive developments in many fields during the reporting period, the security situation in the country deserves our attention. There are reports of clashes between armed groups and ongoing violence affecting various vulnerable groups. There is concern over the increased recruitment of children by illegal armed groups, as well as forced displacement, confinement and massacres in multiple regions. We strongly condemn those incidents, as well as the recent murder of three children forcibly recruited by the Estado Mayor Central FARC-EP in the border area of Caquetá and Putumayo.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is crucial in building peace in Colombia by investigating and holding former FARC-EP guerrillas and State agents accountable for war crimes. It provides justice, reparation and dignity to the victims. The independent and inclusive approach of the body is commended, while the threats against magistrates, lawyers and victims by armed groups are condemned.

Financial resources are vital for a successful peacebuilding process. The allocation of \$3 million by the Peacebuilding Fund to support negotiations and peacebuilding initiatives at national and local levels is welcomed. Continued financial support from the United Nations, partners and donors is encouraged for the effective implementation of the Final Agreement.

The A3 stresses the importance of ongoing dialogue and constructive collaboration among the parties involved in the conflict. We urge them to adopt an innovative mindset. The broad participation of all relevant actors, including civil society, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, women, youth and other entities, is essential for achieving a lasting peace in the country.

The A3 reiterates its support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in monitoring the implementation of the Final Agreement in Colombia.

The A3 expresses appreciation for the Government of Colombia's efforts in bringing an end to the conflict and building a stable nation where the Colombians can live in harmony, embracing their diversity and fostering an effective, long-lasting and sustainable peace.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the briefers for their statements, and I warmly welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán to the Council.

Colombia continues to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to the Final Agreement and to the expansion and consolidation of peace throughout its territory. We are delighted to recognize that the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is one of the central thrusts of the strategy of the Government of President Petro Urrego. We are seeing concrete and significant progress. As we have already emphasized, in order to build peace, the State must extend its presence to all corners of the country, in particular in areas affected by the conflict and which have historically been marginalized.

In that regard, the approval of the National Development Plan by Congress represents a significant achievement. That strategic plan increases budgetary resources allocated to and includes decisive measures for the implementation of the peace agreement and for rural reform.

Moreover, Congress has adopted two laws vital for the rural reform envisioned in the peace agreement: one establishes an agrarian jurisdiction to resolve rural conflicts and the other recognizes the rights of peasants in the Constitution. In addition, we have seen significant progress in land acquisition and registration.

Brazil supports the strategy of the Government of President Petro Urrego to achieve total peace. We recognize the importance of and need for the additional dialogues under way to expand the peace dividends throughout the country. Peacebuilding requires the full implementation of the Final Agreement and the curbing of the violence still being perpetrated by other armed groups. Those expressions of violence have a disproportionate impact on Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples, women and children and the most vulnerable populations. In that regard, Brazil reiterates its firm commitment as a guarantor country to the panel for peace between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We commend the achievements of the third round of negotiations, which took place in Havana, especially the announcement of the agreements on social participation and a ceasefire, as well as the commitments made to humanitarian relief. Brazil hopes that the registration process and the immediate results of the agreements will renew hope in the territories for the benefit of the most affected communities and reflect, in fact, a new moment in the negotiation and peacebuilding process.

Brazil believes that there are encouraging signs. While we are holding this important debate in the Security Council, the Colombian Government's panel for peace with the ELN is meeting in Havana, working on documents to assess the progress made since the signing of the agreements reached in Cuba on 9 June. Brazil is pleased to support the work of the panel for peace and will continue to be involved in the follow-up of that process, encouraging the implementation of the agreements and the furtherance of the agenda.

Brazil believes that, in this process, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia can and should play an important role, especially to ensure the success of the crucial steps planned for the coming weeks, including the establishment of the national commission on participation and the entry into force, on 3 August, of the temporary national bilateral ceasefire, which, as agreed by the parties, can be continued.

In the context of such significant developments, Brazil is ready to carefully examine and discuss the Secretary-General's recommendations on the role that the Verification Mission could play in support of the various ceasefire agreements reached with different armed groups in Colombia. In addition to the degree of progress achieved with regard to each dialogue and ceasefire agreement, it will be critical to assess impact on the ground arising from the Mission's involvement, bearing in mind that some armed groups are fighting among themselves for control of the same territories.

Due to the existing territorial disputes among the armed groups, we believe it would be beneficial to promote simultaneous progress in the different negotiations. Any setback with one particular group could have a negative impact on other processes and exacerbate conflicts. For that reason, we believe it is essential that the Council carefully assess how to optimize its contribution to jointly advance all those processes.

We welcome the reports of a notable decrease in clashes between illegal armed groups and public security forces as a result of the Colombian Government's efforts to seek ceasefire agreements with different armed groups. However, challenges remain. The violence that continues to be perpetrated by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations continues to disrupt the lives of civilians and undermine peacebuilding. That situation highlights the importance of the international community's support for the Colombian Government's

efforts to advance peace initiatives and consolidate State presence, especially in rural areas, where vulnerable communities need stronger protection.

Brazil staunchly supports Colombian society and the Government of President Petro Urrego in its political determination to address the challenges of overcoming violence and building peace. We also recall, as we have done on several occasions, that the work of the Security Council in Colombia is based on the expectations and requests formulated by the Colombian Government itself on behalf of that brotherly people.

Brazil reaffirms its commitment to work closely with Colombia so that peace, the fruit of the tireless efforts of its people, may take root and spread its transformative effects throughout its territory.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation of Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, in today's meeting. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for his assessments. We also listened to the civil society briefer, Diana Salcedo López.

Russia welcomes the agreement reached in Cuba on a six-month ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which is an extremely important step towards comprehensive peace in Colombia. Our country has consistently promoted dialogue with the group, even when the former Colombian Administration completely ignored such calls and countries guaranteeing the peace process were subjected to unprecedented pressure. We note the important role that Havana has played in discharging its duties as guarantor in good faith and establishing contact between the parties. It is very telling that its principled and consistent mediation efforts were precisely the reason that the United States added Cuba to its list of State sponsors of terrorism. As the saying goes, no further comment is necessary.

We believe that we can accommodate the request from the heads of the delegations of the Government and the ELN that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia be expanded so that it can verify and monitor the parties' implementation of the bilateral ceasefire agreement. We are willing to consider the possibility that the Mission could verify agreements with other groups once such agreements are reached. In that context, we welcome the efforts

of the Colombian authorities to engage in dialogue with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. We note that the parties issued a joint statement saying that they are ready to come to the negotiation table.

The shift in focus to new negotiation formats should not detract from the key objective that it is the job of the Security Council to monitor, that is, the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We believe that the comprehensive implementation of the Agreement's provisions is the only way to build trust among the new participants in the peace process. We acknowledge Bogotá's conscientious efforts on that front, especially the progress made on agrarian reform. However, it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure the physical safety of former combatants, social leaders and the most vulnerable sectors of society, as well as to implement crop substitution programmes and strengthen State authority on the ground. We are looking forward to the execution of the decisions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and representatives of the United Nations Mission will be following that as well.

We are concerned about the ongoing high levels of violence against ex-combatants. Just a few days ago we saw a number of high-profile cases of killings and attacks on former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, including owing to their political activities. Without security guarantees for ex-combatants, it will be impossible to reintegrate them into society and the economy. We hope the situation will improve markedly in the run-up to regional and local elections in October.

Russia, for its part, as a permanent member of the Security Council, will continue to take an active part in international efforts to support the Colombian peace process, including by extending support to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, with Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu at the helm.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, in this meeting, and I thank the Special Representative, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing. My thanks also go to Ms. Salcedo López.

Switzerland has a long-standing commitment to Colombia and continues to support the country's peace

process, particularly regarding coming to terms with the past. I would like to emphasize examples of major progress achieved recently. First, Switzerland welcomes the allocation of specific resources and the commitments stipulated in the National Development Plan aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The recent progress on enacting peace legislation is commendable, and all the parties concerned should prioritize its full implementation. We welcome the progress of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the measures taken by the Government to implement restorative sentences. The inter-institutional coordination mechanism established for the search for missing persons has also already yielded tangible initial results. Lastly, at Colombia's request, the Swiss Federal Council approved an agreement to retain a digital copy in Switzerland of the archives of the Colombian Truth Commission, and we were very pleased to see our President visit Colombia and announce that agreement.

I want to emphasize three more points. First, Switzerland remains concerned about the fact that conflict-related violence continues to affect the civilian population, and we urge all parties to respect international humanitarian law. Clashes between armed groups continue to spread throughout the country, particularly in areas that are a priority for the implementation of the Final Agreement. Security guarantees for members of political parties, social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants should remain a priority for the Government. We call on the Colombian authorities to implement adequate preventive measures for ensuring the holding of free, secure and participatory elections, especially in the run-up to the departmental and municipal elections in October.

Secondly, in its cooperation programme in Colombia, Switzerland is committed to making the impact of armed conflict on children visible, and to mitigating that impact. Given the increase in child recruitment, we encourage the Colombian Government to redouble its efforts to prevent and end grave violations of children's rights and pave the way for their effective reintegration. In that regard, I would like to quote the recommendation of young Ms. Violeta, who courageously addressed the Council last week during the recent open debate on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.9366) and urged that

(spoke in Spanish)

“children and young people belonging to those [armed] groups must be recognized both as victims of conflict and as agents of change and peacebuilding” (S/PV.9366, p.8).

(spoke in French)

Lastly, we welcome the holistic approach taken by the Colombian Government to prioritizing continued dialogue with all key actors and armed groups. The recent signing of a temporary bilateral ceasefire agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, due to enter into force on 3 August, attests to the success of that approach. We also welcome the announcement of a resumption of peace negotiations with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia as a first step towards the implementation of a ceasefire. In order to ensure full compliance by all parties with the stipulated protocols, Switzerland reiterates its full support for extending the mandate of the Verification Mission to include the monitoring and verification of ceasefires. The Council must continue to respond promptly to Colombia's calls for verifying and eventually consolidating the ceasefire agreements, which have the potential to be mutually reinforcing. Switzerland stands ready to support those efforts.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Salcedo López for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán in today's meeting.

With the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, Colombia has embarked on a transformative process for reaching “total peace” by reducing social inequalities and pursuing dialogue with armed groups. It is a process that requires vision and courage, and we commend President Petro Urrego and the Colombian Government for their resolve to press ahead with concrete measures to make total peace a reality. We applaud the approval by Congress of the Government's National Development Plan, with a specific focus on women and peace and security, and we welcome the landmark legislative deals that Congress has enacted to implement the Final Agreement. Peace cannot be separated from social justice, so we fully appreciate and support the Colombians for pursuing peace through social justice.

National dialogue and the meaningful inclusion of civil society are crucial to achieving national reconciliation. We are encouraged by the ongoing negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and urge them to continue in good faith. We are anticipating with optimism the start on 3 August of the full implementation of the bilateral, national and temporary ceasefire. In the context of the ongoing reintegration of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, we welcome the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection and commend the progress that has been made in implementing the ethnic chapter. Those are crucial steps for deepening peace, but much more needs to be done, such as ensuring a resumption of talks between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. Also, transitional justice is a critical step for lasting positive peace. We commend the enormous effort made to advance this, especially with regard to upholding victims' rights as the foundation for justice, peace and reconciliation.

Let me conclude by reiterating our strong support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, including by expanding its mandate to encompass ceasefire verification.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and his presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/477). We appreciate the vital role that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play in supporting peace in Colombia. I would also like to thank Ms. Diana María Salcedo López for sharing her perspective — not only as a representative of civil society, but more importantly, for amplifying the cross-cutting role that women's rights must continue to have in the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. That perspective is necessary and invaluable. I also welcome the participation today of Colombian Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva Durán in today's briefing.

The United States is committed to supporting Colombia as it seeks to deepen the implementation of the 2016 peace accord. The United States remains the top international donor to the 2016 peace accord, dedicating over \$1.5 billion towards its implementation since 2017. As the first international accompanier to

the ethnic chapter of the 2016 peace accord, the United States demonstrated its desire to help Colombia address inequality and political and socioeconomic exclusion, issues that have disproportionately affected indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Making tangible progress on those issues is essential for a durable peace.

The United States joins the Secretary-General in urging the Government to redouble efforts to address historic exclusion and inequality. Making full use of the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples is essential to ensuring that implementation is shaped by the views and priorities of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. As the latest report from the Secretary-General's notes, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) is making clear, through its decisions, that a commitment to upholding victims' rights is the only way forward. The United States welcomes further cooperation between the SJP and the Government and looks forward to the first restorative sentences that will bring justice to the victims.

The United States continues to closely monitor the Colombian Government's efforts to expand its total peace plan through negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the dissident groups of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). We are encouraged that the ELN agreed to a six-month ceasefire, although steps must be taken to outline the protocols to ensure that the ceasefire takes place in August, as intended. We make special mention that the ELN must halt all acts of violence, extortion, kidnapping and forced recruitment for that ceasefire to result in a genuine improvement to citizen security in Colombia. We note that the Colombian Government suspended the ceasefire with the Central General Staff of the FARC-EP in four departments in May, following the killing of four indigenous miners.

For the Security Council to consider expanding the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, negotiations must progress; ceasefires must be respected; protocols must be fully developed, financed and adhered to; and these groups must halt all criminal and terrorist activities, in particular those impacting civilian populations. Very careful consideration must be taken. The United States remain supportive of efforts to help Colombia achieve a real and lasting peace and a demonstrable reduction in violence from illegal armed groups.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán. I welcome the informative briefing of Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We listened carefully to the presentation by Ms. Diana María Salcedo López.

My delegation takes note of the recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/477). Ecuador welcomes the progress achieved in the implementation of critical aspects of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. In that connection, I highlight the approval by the Colombian Congress of the National Development Plan, the text of which includes obligations related to the implementation of the Final Agreement, with key elements for transitional justice, comprehensive rural reform, the reintegration of ex-combatants and the substitution of illicit crops. We hope for continued progress in those areas.

The approval of a bilateral, national and temporary ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, as well as the recent agreement reached with the Central General Staff of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, aimed at the approval of a bilateral ceasefire, enable progress towards the desired lasting peace. Ecuador hopes that the parties will continue to demonstrate their commitment and good faith in the implementation of the agreements already reached, as well as in the crystallization of those under discussion.

We call for a halt to conflict-related violence, especially against women, human rights defenders, social leaders and ex-combatants, mostly of Afro-Colombian and indigenous origin. Those acts must be investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice. Also of concern is the use by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations of improvised explosive devices, which continue to claim lives.

We call on the parties to promote inclusive dialogue and to make every effort to bring an end to hostilities and to reach a ceasefire. We hope that efforts will continue to extend the presence of the State in rural areas and to identify the location of landmines in order to avoid future tragedies.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to work, with a genuine commitment to the defence of victims' rights. In that regard, we hope that the close relationship and technical cooperation established between the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the International Criminal Court can contribute to advancing the Jurisdiction's work.

Undoubtedly, the experience and logistical capacity of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia can make an important contribution to the implementation of the ceasefire agreements. To that end, my delegation will contribute constructively to the process of analysing the Secretary-General's proposals on the Mission's mandate, which will enable the observation, monitoring and verification of the current and future agreements.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Ecuador's support for the full implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia, as well as for any effort that promotes dialogue, with a view to establishing a lasting peace for the benefit of all Colombians.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mr. Leyva Durán (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Every three months we meet in this Chamber to hear the briefing on the quarterly report on the progress and challenges identified by the Security Council-mandated United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia on the implementation of the Havana peace agreement signed between the Colombian State and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in 2016. I attend these meetings with the greatest pleasure as a sign of our Government's commitment to the full implementation of what was agreed and to the building of a total peace, and out of the deep conviction of the importance of the role played the international community and the verifiers. It would therefore not be coherent to discuss or question any of the findings in the most recent report (S/2023/477), when the Mission's task is to carry out a thorough and impartial verification. Those findings in the report that are less than positive should always be received as opportunities for improvement, early warnings and calls to action for the purpose of protecting what has been agreed with the FARC-EP.

Today I would like to this opportunity to refer to three fundamental issues of peace in Colombia, which now, under the leadership of President Gustavo

Petro Urrego, it is proposed, will extend beyond our borders through good relations with our neighbouring countries. These are issues to which we want to draw the attention of the international community. First, we wish to highlight that the dialogue between the parties to the 2016 peace agreement is an essential element in its implementation and that it will continue to be the backbone of our national “total peace” policy. My Government recognizes the bilateral nature of what was agreed and calls for maintaining it as a point of departure in peacebuilding. Secondly, we wish to call attention to the importance that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, while developing its mandate, which today is an example and point of reference for the justice commitments of the Colombian State, fully embraces in operation what was agreed by the high contracting parties, which gave rise to its origin. Thirdly, we wish to highlight the relationship between the implementation of the 2016 Agreement and the other dialogue initiatives that we have proposed in the framework of the total peace policy.

We will not tire of repeating that the implementation of the 2016 Agreement is a commitment of this Government. Today we recognize that this commitment must take shape in actions that affect the lives of the signatory population and the populations historically affected by the conflict. As highlighted in the Verification Mission’s report, we have worked on a series of institutional and legislative initiatives that will allow us to make progress to this end. Examples include the National Development Plan and the new security and defence policy, which emphasizes human security, the strengthening of territorial control and the dismantling of criminal organizations. But what is interesting about these national initiatives is that they have sought to maintain dialogue between the different actors, involve civil society and, in some cases, consider the requests of the signatories of the Agreement, pursuant to what was agreed. We are aware of the challenge before us to link this dialogue in an increasingly more structured manner.

With regard to political participation, I would like to highlight the dialogue with the peace representatives in parliament, promoted by the Government, to identify and promote joint legislative initiatives related to the implementation of the Agreement. The Government of Change and the representatives of the special transitory circumscriptions of peace achieved synergies in promoting specific provisions on the implementation of

the 2016 Final Agreement in the National Development Plan that had been left behind in previous legislative sessions. Likewise, the Agency for Territorial Renewal has developed permanent dialogue processes with the representatives of the transitory circumscriptions on the implementation of the development plans with a territorial focus, at the national level and in each subregion in particular, turning the representatives into guarantor actors of these processes.

With regard to ethnic issues, it is worth highlighting the dialogue processes in which the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization proposed that signatories with ethnic affiliation participate in prior ongoing consultation processes, in order to guarantee effective reintegration within their communities.

In terms of gender, I would also like to refer to our conviction that peace must include women in all their diversity and the LGBTQI+ population, recognizing the challenges imposed by intersectionality. This vision allows us to identify and generate actions to combat the multiple forms of discrimination that are deepened by armed conflict.

I should highlight that, for the first time, the National Development Plan includes the adoption of a foreign policy with a gender approach, which is a result of our dialogue with civil society, and which will be required to promote implementation of the relevant provisions of the 2016 peace agreement.

With regard to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, I would like to draw attention to the need for it to always comply with what was agreed in the 2016 Agreement. It is fundamentally restorative justice, which, like all justice, must exalt the principle of *nulla poena sine lege*. In what was agreed for this purpose by the negotiating parties of the Final Agreement, sentences were announced. It is therefore not possible to decide sentences that are different from those published and referred to in today’s Security Council document and which the State made a unilateral declaration. In this regard, it is worth highlighting something that is obvious but interesting: the peace process as such has not ended, which is why we meet quarterly to establish the progress of the implementation of what has been agreed. It means that the negotiating parties are still alive and alert. The high contracting parties — the Colombian State on the one hand and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo on the other — subscribed to what was agreed.

This indicates no more and no less than that such parties could still resort to instruments enshrined in international humanitarian law to assert principles and improve upon texts that guarantee the sought-after peace, while accelerating procedures for its full and more prompt implementation. That is the case, for example, in the effort to remove unjustified obstacles to the paramilitaries gaining access to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, in the opening of the major case on State responsibility as an actor in the armed conflict, either by commission or omission, and the possibility of improving the mechanism for selecting new magistrates to avoid the appearance of co-optation.

The high contracting parties to the Havana peace agreement may resort to the special agreements provided for under Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Incidentally, such initiative is not only provided for in that article, but it was also expressly included in the original peace text in the agreement dated 7 November 2016, III, with scope of sentences cited therein, as noted by the International Committee of the Red Cross in its commentary No. 850.

Finally, I would like to raise a point that the Verification Mission has come to understand very well thanks to its experience on the ground, which is the relationship between the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement and the other dialogue initiatives that we have proposed within the framework of the “total peace” policy. Colombia must continue to make progress in encouraging and enabling all actors in the conflict to shoulder the responsibility of achieving truth and justice for the sake of society and the victims alongside sustainable, effective and dignified reintegration processes. We want to win the peace.

The primary concern of the Council, as well as of the two signatory parties to the peace agreement, has been ensuring the security guarantees for former combatants. We can continue working to strengthen the security arrangements for the signatories by updating our institutional guidelines in the area. The Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement has spearheaded an inclusive process aimed at reconfiguring, updating and developing the Strategic Plan for Security and

Protection, which is expected to be adopted in August. However, if we are to have significant results, we need to reduce the number of violent incidents in the country and de-escalate the violent dynamics in the territories. Engaging in dialogue with the groups and actors that drive violence in the country is key to lessening that violence and guaranteeing the security of the signatories and of the civilian population as a whole. In the meantime, discussions with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional are moving in the right direction and have yielded concrete results in that regard. We are waiting for the negotiating groups to propose the protocols for the ceasefire agreed on 9 June. Similarly, expectations are high with regard to the initial outcomes of discussions with the group that calls itself Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, as the Secretary-General points out in his letter dated 13 June to the Security Council (S/2023/438) concerning the expansion of the mandate requested by Colombia.

Everything now depends on those new dialogues, especially as we move forward in terms of making concrete commitments, and the role of the international community as guarantor and overseer of what has been agreed has become vital to the success of the processes. For that reason, we have requested the Security Council's support for the verification process of the ceasefires proposed by the parties in the transition to total peace, which we are committed to realizing.

I would like to conclude by affirming that the international community and the Security Council are more than ever our key allies and guarantors in achieving our firm goal of achieving historic peace in Colombia. Colombia wants its society to move forward, no longer towards one hundred years of solitude — a phrase that has continued to haunt our national memory — but towards one hundred years of coexistence and peace. That would be a true victory.

I thank Carlos Ruiz Massieu and express my heartfelt gratitude to all in this Chamber. And, of course, I reiterate my pleasure at being with everyone here today.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.