



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

*Provisional*

**9530<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Thursday, 11 January 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

*President:* Mrs. Broadhurst Estival. . . . . (France)

*Members:*

Algeria. . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
China. . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador. . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
Guyana. . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan. . . . .	Mrs. Shino
Malta. . . . .	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique. . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea. . . . .	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation. . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone. . . . .	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia. . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland. . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. . . . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America. . . . .	Ms. Millard

## 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/2023/1033)

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2023/1033)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): 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. Yolanda Perea Mosquera, civil society representative.

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/2023/1033, 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:** I appreciate the opportunity to brief the Security Council once again, at the start of a new year that can be a decisive one for peace in Colombia.

It is a pleasure to be joined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Álvaro Leyva Durán, to whom I reiterate my appreciation for the Government's continued cooperation with the United Nations in Colombia. I also welcome today the participation in this meeting of Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera, a remarkable Afro-Colombian leader whose work on women and victims' rights and the response to conflict-related

sexual violence is a powerful example of the resilience and commitment of Colombia's civil society.

Indeed, despite the many serious challenges the country still faces in extinguishing the embers of an armed conflict that has lasted more than six decades, it is an immense privilege and opportunity for the United Nations to be in this position to assist the Colombian Government and people in their drive to consolidate peace.

As we saw recently during the commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, there are obstacles to overcome, but also ingredients for success in the case of Colombia that could be an example for conflict settings elsewhere around the world.

First, Colombia has a political negotiated peace agreement that provides a detailed road map for addressing the causes and consequences of conflict; one that remains as relevant today as the day it was signed.

Secondly, we see strong national political will expressed through the commitments of the Government, diverse institutions of State and civil society.

Thirdly, we see a region and an international community, including the Council, that has remained united in its support of the peace process, rightly inspired by the dogged commitment of Colombians to peace.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

As described in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2023/1033), the past year showed clear links between the implementation of the agreement and the dialogue initiatives with other armed actors undertaken by the Government. Recent developments also illustrate the need for coherent progress in those processes, which, holistically conceived, have the potential to address persistent challenges and extend the reach of peace.

Having laid important foundations, it is necessary to understand this stage as an opportunity to accelerate the pace and materialize the agreed commitments. Let 2024 be a year of implementation. For example, the pact for the implementation of the ethnic chapter and the priorities set by the Vice President in that regard should serve as a guide to advance this transformative component of the agreement during 2024.

It is also worth highlighting the notable increase in land acquisition and formalization of land ownership

as a result of the prioritization of comprehensive rural reform in the Government's agenda. Furthermore, I am sure that, if used as expected, the recently launched National Agrarian Reform System will contribute to deepening those results for the benefit of peasant populations, ethnic peoples and rural women.

Translating the long-awaited public policy for the dismantling of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations into concrete and forceful actions, whose results are felt by the populations in the territories, would be another fundamental step in this necessary transition between the formulation of plans and their due implementation.

Without a doubt, building on the progress made and prioritizing the areas that have been left behind will be fundamental in meeting the expectations of millions of Colombians and strengthening the legitimacy and credibility of the agreement, which are preconditions for the success of other peace efforts currently under way.

Security is undoubtedly the basis for the successful development of any peace initiative. However, there have been events in several regions of the country that give cause for concern. Regrettably, since the cut-off date of the report, four ex-combatants of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) have been murdered in Cauca, Chocó, Sucre and Meta, respectively. Crimes against social leaders, including Indigenous peoples and those laying claim to land, also continue. I want to condemn once again before the Security Council and in the strongest terms those unjustifiable attacks, which also erode the social fabric of entire communities.

The situation in areas of departments such as Cauca, which is characterized by a significant presence of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples, is particularly challenging as a result of the presence and actions of various armed actors. It is precisely in areas such as those where a comprehensive State presence is most urgently needed to curb and contain the violence.

However, there are regions where, even despite the difficulties, there is evidence that it is possible to reverse the violence. For example, according to figures of the national police, homicides decreased by 16 per cent between January and October 2023, compared to the same period in 2022, in municipalities where development plans with a territorial focus are being implemented. Those are municipalities which historically have been affected by the conflict. Notable

reductions occurred, for example, in municipalities in the departments of Arauca and Meta.

In order for those and other encouraging results to not just be one-offs and to be sustainable, it is essential that progress be made without delay in the effective implementation of key public policies for prevention and protection. Such efforts, conducted alongside and complemented by the de-escalation being sought through dialogue with various armed groups, offer a prospect of relief for civilians.

*(spoke in English)*

While facing challenges, the steady progress within Colombia's transitional justice system is a reason for optimism and hope in 2024. Its innovative and comprehensive structure, which combines both extrajudicial and judicial mechanisms, continues to further victims' rights.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) continues to investigate and prosecute grave crimes committed during the conflict by former members of the FARC-EP, members of the public security forces, other State agents and civilian third parties, while preparing for the issuance of its first restorative sentences. In December, for example, the SJP indicted eight former members of the former FARC-EP's western bloc within Case 01 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between 1993 and 2016.

Given the crucial importance of restorative sentences to be delivered by the SJP for the success of the peace process, every effort is needed to ensure that enabling conditions necessary for their implementation are in place ahead of their issuance by the SJP. That means planning in detail the activities that will be assigned to be carried out by sentenced individuals in service to victims and communities, assuring the funding and logistical support for those projects and establishing the adequate security arrangements for that work to take place, particularly as much of it is expected to occur in rural communities. All of that will require coordinated efforts between the SJP, national and local authorities in the run-up to and the implementation of the sentences.

In addition, the Unit for the Search of Persons Deemed as Missing continues with the daunting task of providing solace to the families of some 100,000 Colombian men and women deemed as missing during the conflict. Last December, a resilient woman, Gloria, was reunited with her daughter, Irene, after more than 30 years separated, when she was forced to flee their

home in Putumayo owing to threats. Irene was only 8 years old at the time. In addition to facilitating family reunifications, since its creation the Unit has recovered close to 1,200 remains of missing persons, helping families to finally find closure after years of suffering.

I remain encouraged by the continued commitment to peace of the vast majority of former FARC-EP members. Their determination to move forward despite the challenges is to be applauded. I am confident that the Government's multifaceted approach, with instruments such as the recently established Comprehensive Reintegration Programme, provides an opportunity to meet former combatants' needs and expectations. To that end, setting in motion the National Reintegration System, with the necessary engagement of all relevant entities, is of the essence.

Another positive development that I would like to highlight is the Government's and former combatants' joint work within the National Reintegration Council to identify the special collective reintegration areas. With that new designation, the parties aim to foster equal support to former combatants who opted for a collective reintegration process, whether they remained in one of the original locations where the former FARC-EP laid down their arms, known as TATRs, or moved elsewhere in the years since. Those efforts are promising and, most of all, demonstrate the great level of cooperation at this time between the parties to reach common goals.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

I must also underscore the positive progress in the talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). I welcome the agreements reached in the most recent negotiation cycle in Mexico in December and the progress in the implementation of previous agreements, including the bilateral ceasefire and the work of the National Participation Committee. I encourage the parties to persevere in resolving their differences through dialogue, despite the challenges inherent in such processes. I trust that the determination demonstrated so far will lead to further results during the next round of negotiations, to be held in Cuba, including through the extension and strengthening of the ceasefire between the parties, among other measures, with the explicit prohibition of kidnapping for ransom, thereby formalizing important commitments agreed upon in Mexico.

I also welcome the progress in the talks between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas

Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. The implementation of the ongoing bilateral ceasefire has brought about a necessary level of trust which will allow the process to continue. I encourage them to maintain their efforts with a view to consolidating them, including in the framework of the third cycle of negotiations that has just begun this week in Bogotá. We will keep the Security Council informed of the progress of those dialogues.

It is important to reiterate that the legitimate expectations for security and the enjoyment of rights by communities in conflict-affected areas remain unmet in several regions. That is mainly due to the high levels of violence generated by disputes between armed groups and the presence of criminal organizations owing to a limited reach of State institutions. In that regard, I echo the Secretary-General's call to all armed actors to show concrete signs of their genuine commitment to peace, contributing to the de-escalation of violence throughout the country by ending confrontations among them and respecting the civilian population.

At the beginning of the year, hundreds of new regional and local authorities, elected last October, were sworn in, including an Afro-Colombian ex-combatant who was elected mayor of Cumaribo, Vichada department. Those authorities have unique knowledge of the dynamics and realities of their territories, which is an invaluable asset to any peacebuilding effort. To that end, it is essential to strengthen the coordinated work of the State at the national, departmental and municipal levels. The reprehensible actions that have taken place in recent days, such as the attempt on the life of the mayor of Tumaco, illustrate the risks faced by local authorities. Such actions also highlight the need to guarantee their protection, and the effective use of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, provided for in the agreement, remains essential to that end. I also condemn the kidnapping of the registrar of Chocó department.

I take this opportunity to wish every success to Mr. Otty Patiño and Ms. Vera Grabe in their important work as the new High Commissioner for Peace and Head of the team negotiating with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), respectively. Vera Grabe is the first woman to hold that position in the long history of peace efforts in Colombia. Both roles are undoubtedly key to concretizing and bringing to fruition the efforts undertaken thus far. The creation of the presidential council dedicated to the implementation of the 2016

agreement, announced by President Petro Urrego last year, is also of particular importance.

I would like to conclude by highlighting that, in order to consolidate the aforementioned progress in a lasting manner, the implementation of the agreement must be strengthened and continued progress must be made in initiatives for dialogue with other armed actors. Continuing to work on both tasks with the awareness that they reinforce each other can generate a virtuous circle that makes it possible to seize opportunities and mitigate risks. The Council's voice of encouragement and active participation will continue to be very important sources of support and part of the foundation — as I said at the beginning — for success. The Council's upcoming visit to Colombia will be another milestone in the history of its commitment to peace in Colombia.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Perea Mosquera.

**Ms. Perea Mosquera** (*spoke in Spanish*): I extend my greetings to Minister for Foreign Affairs Leyva Durán and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

My name is Yolanda Perea, and I am originally from Riosucio, Chocó, in Colombia. I was a victim and survivor of sexual violence during the armed conflict. I suffered an abortion and the murder of my mother when I was just 11 years old. Today I speak to the Council not as a victim, but as someone with rights, to briefly explain the lived experience of the more than 38,145 victims of sexual violence in the country. As an Afro-Colombian leader and activist, and a defender of human rights, life, peace and land, I thank the Security Council for this invitation.

I want to highlight that being a social leader in Colombia is one of the most dangerous possible tasks, as it is subject to constant threats and attacks. However, we always find the strength necessary to join in and propose change that is positive for our communities. The murders of human rights defenders, social leaders, ethnic authorities and peace signatories must be stopped. According to Indepaz, from the signing of the peace agreements between the Colombian State and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) to 10 January, 1,604 leaders and 410 peace signatories have been murdered. The murders continue.

Violence in the communities has not stopped. Those who have been reintegrated, in particular the boys and girls who were forced to take up arms, and who suffered sexual violence, remain at risk. They carry stigma, in the eyes of society and their families. That is why the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is fundamental, and we demand its implementation as a foundation for “total peace”, since peace is a human right of Colombians that does not depend on party or opposition affiliation.

In many areas of the country, a transformation of illegal armed groups has been taking place. Despite the signing of the peace agreements, there is still no true stable and lasting peace for the civilian population, including ethnic communities, rural inhabitants, women, young people and children, who are always the most affected. It is important to strengthen the support of guarantor and observer countries and to ensure sufficient resources to achieve comprehensive implementation, especially with regard to point 5 of the ethnic chapter, on victims, rural reform and gender provisions.

In Colombia, women continue to experience violence within and outside of the conflict, especially on the periphery, where black, Raizal, Palenquero, Indigenous and rural women are located, further limiting access to rights. The delay in implementing the measures with a gender focus contained in the peace agreement is alarming. The delay in implementing the agreement in regions such as the Colombian Pacific coast has led to continued violence against communities, especially against women and girls.

We applaud the signing of the pact between the Ministry of the Interior and the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement, with the support of Vice-President Francia Márquez, to speed up the implementation of the ethnic chapter, and we request its implementation. As a direct victim of the FARC-EP, who did not see the war on television but rather experienced it first-hand, I prefer an imperfect agreement to perpetual war. Women who are committed to peace and who are resisting all forms of violence in our communities urge its comprehensive implementation, and for that we request the following: support for the current Government to achieve total peace with the armed actors that operate in our territories, such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Estado Mayor Central; respect for the bilateral ceasefire; agreement



on a humanitarian agreement that respects human rights and international humanitarian law; and a ceasefire that covers all forms of violence, especially against ethnic communities, women and girls.

We also call on Council members to promote and support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the Colombian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in order to ensure the participation, protection and leadership of women and young people in building and sustaining peace; to ensure the full implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the comprehensive programme of security and protection for communities and organizations in the territories, including the specific needs of ethnic peoples and women and girls; to highlight the extensive efforts made by women and LGBTQI+ persons in ensuring the opening of macro-case 11 by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and in requesting guarantees with a view to truly ensuring justice, truth, reparations and non-repetition for victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; and to urge the Government to comply with the judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Jineth Bedoya Lima, a victim of sexual violence during the conflict.

Before I finish my remarks, I would like Council members to look at the cloth banner behind me, which was made by victims and survivors of sexual violence. Our goal is to make the largest quilt in the world, using this cloth, to raise awareness about violence in armed conflict and to weave hope. I would like to share with members the word *rejuntancia*, or “regathering”, which comes from my grandparents. It is the concept that two or more people are needed, both to fight a war or to build peace. And as victims of conflict, we do not want peace to cost us our lives. Regathering together is the path to peace and transformation. If not now, then when?

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

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

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing today. I am grateful to Yolanda Perea Mosquera for her powerful testimony, and I commend the vital work of women peacebuilders and women’s rights organizations working for peace and

justice in Colombia. I also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán in our meeting today.

As we mark the seventh anniversary of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the United Kingdom continues its unwavering support to the Colombian people along their path to peace. We welcome the Government’s commitment to accelerating implementation of the ethnic chapter, including initiatives on access to land and reintegration. We urge further steps to ensure that 60 per cent of the ethnic chapter is implemented by 2026, as agreed in the recent Government pact. The full implementation of the gender and ethnic provisions of the peace agreement is needed to address the drivers of inequality and to protect vulnerable groups, including Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, who are most affected by the conflict.

We remain strongly concerned about the violence against peace signatories, human rights defenders, communities, women and social leaders. That includes three reported killings of peace signatories and human rights defenders already in 2024. We strongly encourage the Government to step up efforts to protect those local leaders and participants in the peace process. Security guarantees are an essential component of the peace agreement, underpinning progress in all other chapters, including reintegration. The recently approved Comprehensive Reintegration Programme is a welcome step. We also reiterate our call for the appointment of a dedicated office within the presidency to coordinate and advance implementation of the agreement.

We welcome the Government’s commitment to expanding peace through dialogue, and we note the intention to extend the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). The ELN’s commitment to abiding by international humanitarian law, including refraining from kidnapping, must be reflected in a change of practice on the ground.

Finally, the United Kingdom remains committed to supporting broad and lasting sustainable peace in Colombia. We look forward to a visit to the country by the Security Council next month to see first-hand the progress made to date and to learn how we can contribute to supporting Colombia on this journey.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the sisterly Republic of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, and I thank the Special Representative of

the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for their briefings.

As we mark seven years since the signing of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, Ecuador recognizes and highly values Colombia's continued efforts for peace and national reconciliation. In a complex global context that is exacerbated by various conflicts, the peace process in Colombia has been an inspiring example of conflict resolution through dialogue. We commend the renewed commitment by the Government, former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and political and civil society actors to implementing the agreement. However, the persistent challenges facing Colombia cannot be ignored. The violence and threats against social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants are worrisome. It is crucial for work to continue towards strengthening institutions and guaranteeing the security and human rights of all Colombians.

From Ecuador's experience, we know that ensuring successful and comprehensive rural reform is crucial for Colombia and the region. The implementation of the reform is a crucial part of efforts to transform rural and conflict-affected areas and to strengthen the presence of the State in those areas.

Ensuring a lasting peace in Colombia depends on effective inclusion of and respect for the cultural diversity and rights of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples. The signing of the recent pact to speed up the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement is a significant step towards meeting the expectations of those communities.

The role of women and young people in the peace process is vital and must continue to be a priority. The inclusion and recognition of their voices is not only vital for ensuring justice but also enriches and sustains the peace process. We recognize the implementation of the gender-related provisions in the peace agreement and in the policy of "total peace" and stress the importance of protecting and promoting the rights of women and young people in all aspects of the peace and reconciliation process.

Furthermore, the progress made in the dialogue on and implementation of the bilateral ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional demonstrates that it is possible to end violence through dialogue. We welcome progress

achieved during the fifth round of negotiations, held in Mexico in December 2023, and look forward to the outcomes of the next round of talks, to be held in Cuba.

We will also continue to closely follow the Government's dialogue with the self-styled Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo group. We urge the parties to continue to comply with the ceasefire agreement, including the explicit promise they made to improve the protection of civilians. While acknowledging the ongoing bilateral efforts, we also join the Secretary-General in calling on all armed actors to contribute to further de-escalating violence throughout the country, including by reducing the fighting among themselves.

The eradication of kidnappings is also a necessary step towards peace and stability in Colombia. That criminal act, which afflicts communities and challenges peace efforts, can have no place in a society that seeks reconciliation and stability.

It is imperative that the international community, including the Council, continue to support Colombia on its path towards a stable and lasting peace. We therefore attach great importance to the visit that this organ will make to the country in February, where meetings will be held with all relevant actors in the peace process.

The Colombian experience is a valuable lesson in resilience and commitment for the world. Ecuador reiterates its solidarity and unwavering support for Colombia, understanding that peace in the country contributes to stability and prosperity throughout the region.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, as well as my own country, Guyana (A3+1).

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his briefing on the latest developments in Colombia and thank Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for her perspectives. We also welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, in today's meeting.

The A3+1 recognizes the determination and efforts undertaken by President Gustavo Petro Urrego, his Government and the Colombian people

in order to promote peace and stability in the country after decades of armed conflict. The information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the past three months (S/2023/1033) is encouraging and commendable, especially with regard to the Government's actions on promoting participatory dialogue through the involvement of Colombian society, including communities affected by the conflict, women's organizations, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples and former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

In that regard, we would like to salute the efforts made by the Government and former FARC-EP and civil society actors in organizing numerous forums, cultural events and meetings throughout the country to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. That shows how committed and determined Colombia is to consolidating peace.

We also congratulate the Government for having recently created the National Agrarian Reform System, led by the Ministry of Agriculture, with the aim of promoting much-needed coordination between the entities responsible for implementing rural reform as a way of complying with the provisions of the current agreement, and which held its first meeting in November 2023. We welcome the formalization of the land ownership of 16,717 hectares, which benefited peasants, Afro-Colombians and victims — almost a third of whom are women. The issue of land is a crucial element in the country's peace process.

The A3+1 also welcomes the entry into force of the ceasefire between the Government and the group of former FARC-EP that identifies itself as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, in which the parties commit themselves to the protection of civilians in respect and observance of international law.

Similarly, we welcome the holding on 29 October 2023 of the second municipal and departmental elections since the signing of the agreement, in which more than half of the voting-age population exercised their civic right, including Indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories.

The reintegration process is an aspect that deserves our utmost attention. We believe that a successful

reintegration of former combatants involves the creation of better and sustainable living conditions for them and their families. The recently adopted reintegration programme for former combatants represents important progress towards achieving peace in Colombia. In that regard, we are pleased to note that almost 80 per cent of former combatants, including more than 2,600 women, are taking part in more than 5,000 productive projects. That demonstrates that the Colombian Government is increasingly committed to complying with the agreement according to its capabilities. We therefore commend the Government's continued effort to promote institutional reforms and allocate the necessary funds for comprehensive rural reform.

Despite the aforementioned efforts made by the Colombian Government, there are still challenges in the peace process. The A3+1 regrets and condemns the persistence of armed attacks on civilians, with 24 massacres reported. Similarly, the persecution of men and women who have dedicated their efforts to defending the rights of entire communities and the implementation of the agreement continues to be worrisome, with 46 allegations of the murder of social leaders having been recorded. Although that represents a reduction in comparison to the previous quarter, such continuing loss of life is cause for concern. We encourage the Colombian Government to continue its efforts towards the cessation of hostilities and to seek ceasefire agreements with the relevant groups.

The successful implementation of the ethnic chapter and the comprehensive rural reform are fundamental for consolidating peace and resolving issues of inequality and exclusion, which mainly affect Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. We remain concerned regarding the lack of substantive progress on the ethnic chapter. We note that most efforts to advance the ethnic provisions remain in the planning phase, including the identification of more priority areas, rather than moving forward with the areas previously identified.

The security situation in Colombia continues to be of great concern. It is a potential threat to the full and successful implementation of the peace agreement. The A3+1 notes with concern the persistent security challenges, especially in regions historically affected by the limitation of the presence of the State, with a record of violence that mostly affects Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. In addition, the occurrence of crimes linked to economic dynamics and social and territorial control — such as kidnapping,



extortion, forced recruitment and conflict-related sexual violence — persists or has increased, requiring specific measures by the authorities to prevent such crimes, protect civilians and prosecute and punish perpetrators.

In the light of that worrisome situation, we urge the Colombian Government to redouble its efforts to accelerate the implementation of a vital component of the peace agreement. We also call for the progress made to manifest in concrete economic results in the lives of former combatants. The A3+1 commends and encourages the continued efforts of the Office of the Vice-President of Colombia, Her Excellency Ms. Francia Márquez, together with the Unit for the Implementation of the Final Agreement, aimed at improving the implementation of the ethnic chapter.

We reiterate our appeal to the Government to intensify the State's presence in regions with criminal incidence, while ensuring the safety and protection of the civilian population — especially Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, which are most affected — in order to reduce insecurity in the country.

In conclusion, the A3+1 commends the progress made thus far and reaffirms its full support to the Government of Colombia in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We also encourage the international community, the United Nations and partners to continue giving their political, technical and financial support to the peace consolidation and stabilization efforts of the Government of Colombia throughout the country. We reaffirm our support to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the Special Representative in their task of monitoring the fulfilment of the commitments of the peace agreement in Colombia through their constructive engagement with various actors in Colombian society.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to this meeting and thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. I also listened carefully to the statement by Ms. Perea Mosquera.

Over the past year, all parties in Colombia have worked together to translate into action their firm determination to consolidate and build peace. In implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and advancing the vision of “total peace”, more positive results have been achieved, and China welcomes this.

We are convinced that the new year will see even greater achievements for Colombia with regard to the vision of total peace, stability and development.

I would like to make the following three observations.

First, with regard to promoting new results in implementing the peace agreement, China commends the Government of Colombia, under the leadership of President Petro Urrego, on prioritizing the implementation of the peace agreement and increasing the investment in rural reform, land distribution and the reintegration of former combatants to enable the peace dividend to benefit a larger part of the population. The implementation of the peace agreement has been more than halfway completed. China hopes to see and will support further efforts by Colombia to remove obstacles and make strides in its full implementation.

Secondly, with regard to promoting renewed progress in dialogue and negotiations, China welcomes the positive outcome of the fifth round of peace talks between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and looks forward to smooth progress in the peace talks between the Government and Estado Mayor Central. We hope that all parties will faithfully observe the ceasefire agreement, decrease the level of conflict and violence, build on the achievements already made from previous rounds of peace talks and create a more enabling atmosphere and conditions for future negotiations.

Thirdly, concerning fostering future achievements in the security arena, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/1033), the people of Colombia remain exposed to security threats, and violent criminal activities continue to hinder the implementation of the peace agreement. China supports the Colombian Government in further deploying security forces in former conflict areas in the absence of effective State control and taking effective measures to protect civilians, in particular women, children, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups.

The peace process in Colombia has set an example for the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, demonstrated the prospects of sustainable development vis-à-vis lasting peace and provided a useful reference for the Security Council in addressing other hotspot issues. China remains committed to lending its firm support to the Colombian-led and Colombia-owned peace process. We appreciate the work done and the important role played by the United

Nations Verification Mission in Colombia under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and will continue to support the Mission and its international and regional partners in injecting new impetus into the peace process in the country.

Last but not least, I wish the Council every success in its visit to Colombia next month.

**Mrs. Shino** (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for their briefings. I also welcome Minister Leyva Durán, who represents the strong commitment of the Government of Colombia.

Japan fully recognizes that human security, human rights and inclusivity are essential to foster sustaining peace. All of those make up the fundamental concept of Colombia's "total peace" policy. To realize the concept, it is crucial to protect and integrate all individuals, including those in the most vulnerable situations. Establishing an environment where security, justice and equality are ensured will enable them to reach the full potential for each of their individual lives, as well as the country's development as a whole. In that context, Japan welcomes the progress in planning and design processes in several areas of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, such as the protection and reintegration process, comprehensive rural reform and the promotion of ethnic and gender equality. Now, implementation is key. We urge all stakeholders to cooperate for effective implementation. Japan commends the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for supporting the Government of Colombia's efforts, including incorporating preventive measures through a risk-management approach. Japan looks forward to further discussions during and after our upcoming visit to Colombia on how the Security Council can best play its role and cooperate.

At the core of human security lies respect for human dignity. We strongly condemn the persistent violence and kidnappings perpetrated by armed and criminal actors. Dialogue and concrete action based on the agreement can be an important step towards tackling those issues. In that vein, we welcome the fifth round of negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), held in Mexico, as well as other continuous dialogue with different armed and criminal groups. We also take positive note of the announcement by the ELN and the Estado

Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo on their decision to suspend ransom kidnappings. The announcement should be firmly upheld.

Designating Ms. Vera Grabe as the Head of the Government delegation for the peace talks with the ELN is encouraging, and we believe that it is a good decision in line with the women and peace and security agenda. We strongly hope for the extension of the ceasefire between the Government and the ELN beyond 30 January and for their agreements to be adhered to.

In conclusion, Japan reaffirms its unwavering support for Colombia's peace efforts.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his invaluable work and his briefing and Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for her statement and her bravery. I also welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Leyva Durán, and his delegation at this meeting, which demonstrates the Government's commitment to the policy of "total peace".

As a long-standing supporter of the Colombian peace process, a guarantor country for peace negotiations with the self-proclaimed Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and a supporter of negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Switzerland welcomes the continuous efforts to achieve a lasting peace through dialogue. We are pleased that the Security Council will be sending a political message of strong support for the peace efforts in Colombia through its upcoming visit.

In that regard, allow me to highlight the following three points.

First, a strategic, holistic and inter-institutional approach, in cooperation with local and regional authorities, is key to ensuring the success of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the total peace policy. In that regard, the appointments of Otty Patiño, as the new High Commissioner for Peace, and of Vera Grabe, as Head of the delegation for the negotiations with the ELN, are to be commended. We also note the efforts to accelerate the implementation of and finance the ethnic and gender provisions of the final peace agreement, the goal of which is to combat exclusion and inequality.

Secondly, ongoing talks continue to be productive. Switzerland commends the parties to the peace talks on pursuing the negotiations under way, despite the difficulties encountered, and their commitment to improving the protection of civilians. We note that ceasefire monitoring and verification have contributed to the de-escalation of bilateral hostilities. In that regard, Switzerland calls on the parties to the current ceasefire agreements, whose respective commitments will expire this month, to renew them and to consider integrating multilateral elements to strengthen their effectiveness. We continue to actively support the main players supporting the peace efforts, in particular the Episcopal Conference of Colombia.

Thirdly, the protection of civilians, guarantees of their participation in the peace process, the reintegration of former combatants and the prevention of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups must remain the core concerns for all. Switzerland contributes to those activities through, inter alia, the United Nations multi-partner trust fund. In addition, we recently renewed our support for Humanicemos Desminado Humanitario, a civilian demining organization made up of former combatants engaged in reintegration and reparation activities.

Lastly, we look forward to the finalization of Colombia's first national action plan on women and peace and security. It is important to ensure that the plan is consistent with the total peace policy and the provisions of the Final Peace Agreement. As Colombian peacebuilder Genith Quitiaquez pointed out at a high-level event that we organized on the topic in October 2023,

*(spoke in Spanish)*

“For the first time, the national action plan gives women the opportunity to use their voice in peacebuilding. It is necessary to build momentum behind it so that it reaches the territories in which the conflict occurred in order to maintain peace”.

*(spoke in French)*

Switzerland reaffirms its support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and will continue to work towards the central role of women in peace processes, the unique transitional justice mechanism, reintegration efforts and the Government's peace policy in general and the peace process in Colombia.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ruiz Massieu, and the civil society briefer, Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera, for their presentations. We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Álvaro Leyva Durán, in this meeting.

After seven years, the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace remains a solid foundation for national reconciliation and post-conflict transformation in Colombia. We note that the current Government has repeatedly, and at various levels, emphasized its commitment to the full implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We note Bogota's consistent steps towards implementing land reform, in particular the allocation of lands to victims of the decades-long internal armed conflict. We note that 73 per cent of the more than 700,000 hectares of land thus distributed will be allocated to Indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. We welcome the voluntary commitment of the authorities to implementing 60 per cent of the ethnic provisions of the Final Peace Agreement by 2026. It is clear that greater efforts are required in the area of strengthening State authority on the ground, the implementation of crop substitution programmes and the socioeconomic and political reintegration of former rebels.

In that context, we note the overall peaceful convening of municipal and regional elections in October 2023, which resulted in the election of 18 former combatants to various bodies, including the mayor of Cumaribo. Unfortunately, the overall level of violence against participants in peacebuilding efforts remains inordinately high. In the first week of 2024 alone, there have already been two murders of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. In seven years, more than 400 people have been killed. Providing adequate security guarantees for the signatories of the Final Peace Agreement must be a priority for the authorities. Without that, it is impossible to speak not only about the full implementation of the Final Peace Agreement but also about the practicability of other peace agreements.

We realize how difficult and painstaking the Government's dialogue with other rebel groups, including the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Estado Mayor Central, has been. We note that ceasefire regimes with those illegal armed groups, although fragile, are generally respected. We emphasize

the role of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in monitoring the agreements with the ELN and the establishment of contacts between the parties in accordance with the mandate received from the Security Council. We are monitoring the developments in the negotiations track with both groups.

Unfortunately, the humanitarian effect of the ceasefire in a number of regions was thwarted by ongoing violence among the armed groups and their continued crimes against civilians. Kidnapping for ransom, extortion and the forced recruitment of minors are problems that will have to be curbed. We are particularly concerned about the activation of the Gulf Clan criminal drug group, which is attempting to replace State presence in the territory under its control by introducing its own levies and regulating the movement of citizens and their labour.

We can only agree with the conclusion of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/1033) that, despite the faithful efforts of the Government, the alarming security situation in Colombia remains the main obstacle to a full implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and other peace agreements. In the light of that grave challenge, we welcome the fact that the Government of Colombia is strictly committed to the language of dialogue and has not slipped into the confrontational rhetoric or forceful acts that were typical of the previous Administration. At the same time, we note the international community's demand for greater awareness of the strategy and tactics of the "total peace" policy.

We believe that in order to increase the impact of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the broader activities of the United Nations in verifying current peace agreements, it would be useful for the Colombian authorities to submit to the Council ideas regarding the goals and objectives of their peacebuilding efforts, and, most importantly, the time frame for achieving them. Such a road map would help members of the Security Council, during their forthcoming visit to the country, to assess more comprehensively the results of the steps already taken and, if necessary, to identify possible adjustments to the modalities of the Mission's work.

Russia will continue to participate actively in international efforts to promote reconciliation in Colombia and support the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, under the leadership of Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu.

**Ms. Millard** (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his timely and informative briefing today. The United States very much looks forward to gaining an even deeper understanding of his efforts and the situation in Colombia during the Security Council's upcoming visit next month. Let me also acknowledge and welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Leyva Durán once again to the Security Council. I would especially like to thank Ms. Perea Mosquera for sharing her story with us today. Her voice matters. As with many threats to peace and security, the impacts of conflict are often acutely felt by women and girls. We reaffirm the importance of holding perpetrators accountable and of adopting a survivor-centred, trauma-informed, protection-prioritized approach.

The United States reiterates its strong support for the continued implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which is vital to Colombia's efforts to make progress towards justice for victims of the conflict, alongside its security, stability and counter-narcotics goals. To that end, we welcome the reporting of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is conducting the preparatory work to put in place the necessary conditions for the implementation of restorative sentences. We note with concern the persistent delays in the issuance of such sentences and call on all parties to make progress on that effort.

We welcome the continued dialogue between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), as well as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia's deployment of more than 100 personnel to support the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of the bilateral ceasefire. We are glad to hear reports that the Mechanism is helping to reduce the conflict.

We remain concerned about the ELN central command's limited ability to maintain the ceasefire, and we regret that violence among actors in several regions has limited the humanitarian impact of the ceasefire, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has noted. We continue to monitor discussions between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and understand that a third round of talks is slated for later this month. The United States will continue to look for more progress on those efforts



before considering a further expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to include monitoring of the ceasefire between the FARC-EP and the Colombian Government.

The ELN, the FARC-EP and Segunda Marquetalia remain designated foreign terrorist organizations under United States law, and those designations demonstrate the solidarity of the United States with Colombia's efforts to support victims as they seek truth and justice. In addition, past peace processes have made clear that a security strategy is essential to pressure illegal armed groups to negotiate in good faith and to avoid impunity for their actions and their abuses.

Before the Security Council agreed to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to include monitoring the ceasefire with the ELN, there had been multiple rounds of talks between the ELN and the Government negotiating teams. In addition, several international accompaniers and guarantors had committed to supporting the process. The Security Council was also in regular contact with the Colombian Government's negotiating team, which gave us a clearer sense of their expectations.

Despite progress in the talks between the Government and the FARC-EP, that agreement still lacks such maturity. We look forward to further updates from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Colombian Government as those talks progress.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his informative briefing and to Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for her touching and insightful briefing. I also warmly welcome Foreign Minister Leyva Durán joining us today.

As a new member of the Council and as a long-standing partner of Colombia, the Republic of Korea would like to highlight the following points.

First, we welcome and continue to support the ongoing efforts and progress made by the Government of Colombia on its comprehensive implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We also reaffirm our unwavering support for the tireless efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the peace agreement. Furthermore, we call for the continued support and further cooperation of the international community in the context of the

sustainable peacebuilding process in Colombia. In that regard, we would like to underline the chapter on rural reform in the peace agreement, and we commend the recent progress made by the Colombian National Land Agency with respect to the acquisition, formalization and distribution of land in the rural region.

The Republic of Korea is a country with our own first-hand experience in rural land reform and development, and simultaneously, we have been a key development partner for several important projects in Colombia — namely, the project on the acceleration of rural women's economic empowerment and strengthening inclusive governance mechanisms in conflict-affected regions. As discussed between the Presidents of the Republic of Korea and Colombia on the sidelines of the General Assembly general debate in September 2023, we are further committed to exploring possible ways to bolster bilateral cooperation on that important matter.

Secondly, we call for immediate and effective measures to halt persistent violence against former combatants, social leaders, women and girls, and people with diverse ethnic orientations. Security guarantees for vulnerable groups and marginalized populations are a prerequisite for the enactment of restorative sentences, as we expect the first sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

As a signatory of the Statement of Shared Commitments on Women, Peace and Security, we note with deep concern the continuing criminal violence against women and girls, including former combatants and human rights defenders. We reaffirm the importance of holding perpetrators accountable and express our support for the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace on opening gender-based violence cases. Furthermore, we are encouraged by the first Colombian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and relevant government efforts to promote inclusive dialogue, alongside the participation of women stakeholders.

Thirdly, we welcome the recent rounds of peace talks between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We also look forward to hearing meaningful outcomes from the ongoing negotiations with the group that identifies itself as the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. Ceasefires and peace negotiations can contribute significantly to reducing violence. In that vein, we

fully support the latest expansion of the mandate and the ongoing work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor and verify the ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the ELN, in addition to the constructive role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in providing good offices as the Government engages in peace talks with different armed groups.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that the Republic of Korea will continue to proactively undertake our responsible role as a Council member in relevant endeavours moving forward, with a view to realizing sustainable peace in Colombia.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I too want to first thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ruiz Massieu, for his efforts and for his briefing. I also want to thank Ms. Perea Mosquera for her courage and for teaching us how to live the powerful word that is “*rejuntancia*”. I also want to join the other Council members in extending the warmest welcome to His Excellency Mr. Leyva Durán.

At the outset, allow me to express our unequivocal support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We additionally welcome the continuous efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in providing good offices in support of the Colombian parties’ resolve to prioritize dialogue and peace.

In the commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, between the Government of Colombia and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), our overarching priority remains continuing to support its full and successful implementation to reach “total peace”. We commend the encouraging progress on the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, particularly in advancing a comprehensive rural reform. We also recognize the progress on the implementation of the agreements between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We welcome the President’s intention to establish an office within the presidency, dedicated to the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, and we look forward to its full implementation.

At the same time, we express concerns over the persistent violent attacks by armed and criminal groups that continue to have a severe impact on

communities — in particular Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities — and impede the implementation of some of the key aspects of the Final Peace Agreement, such as its ethnic chapter. We welcome the Government’s pact to implement at least 60 per cent of the ethnic chapter by 2026.

We encourage the deployment by the Government of an integrated presence of State institutions and services, including in conflict-affected areas, in order to eradicate conflict drivers and prevent violence. Particularly worrisome is the increase in the multiple forms of violence against women, some of them local actors whose active participation is pivotal to the sustainable peace process in Colombia. Effectively preventing, addressing and combating such violence, and adopting a survivor-centred approach are imperative in delivering the gender-related provisions of the Final Peace Agreement.

To that end, we laud the opening of Case 11 by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, focusing on gender-based, sexual and reproductive violence. We additionally appreciate the reactivation of the Government’s High-level Forum on Gender and the development of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women remains essential in that regard, especially in ongoing peace dialogues.

Finally, allow me to draw the Council’s attention to the intersection between conflict, peace and the environment. Deforestation resulting from the activities of armed and criminal groups, as well as widespread landmine contamination affect communities and natural ecosystems. We encourage the ongoing peace process in Colombia to be seen as an opportunity for the empowerment of conflict-affected communities through environmental protection.

Slovenia is looking forward to the Security Council visit to Colombia during the Guyana presidency next month. We are convinced that the visit will contribute to the Council’s support for the work of the Mission and the Government in its peacebuilding efforts.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I also thank Special Representative Massieu for his briefing and Ms. Perea Mosquera for her strong testimony today. I also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Leyva Durán.

Malta commends the renewed commitment of the Government to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace

and trusts that its continued implementation will yield positive results. We welcome the prioritization of the ethnic chapter, with the commitment to have at least 60 percent of its implementation completed by 2026. That is critically important in the light of the disproportionate impact of violence and child recruitment faced by Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

We also welcome the Government's progress on comprehensive rural reform and call for continued efforts to provide access to land for groups in vulnerable situations and transform conflict-affected areas. Malta commends the Government for its dedicated effort to reduce violence through dialogues with armed groups. We welcome the peace talks with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and commend the appointment of a woman as head of the Government delegation to those peace talks, underscoring the importance of women's participation in ongoing dialogues. We also welcome the agreements reached between the Government and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and urge a formal extension to the ceasefire and greater protection of civilians.

Persistent violence continues to hinder the implementation of key aspects of the Final Agreement. The lack of security guarantees in several regions of Colombia have hindered the transition of former combatants into civilian life and prevented rural reform efforts from improving the lives of entire communities. Former combatants, human rights defenders, Indigenous LGBTIQ+ and Afro-Colombian leaders continue to face violent attacks and targeted killings. Women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. Those crimes must be condemned in the strongest possible terms and those responsible brought to justice.

We deeply regret reports that crimes of kidnapping, extortion, forced recruitment and attacks on schools persist or have increased. The Government must accelerate its deployment of an integrated State presence to regions suffering insecurity and allocate the adequate resources to ensure robust security guarantees. We also call for sustained attention and resources in the search for those forcibly missing and disappeared.

Violence and insecurity also threaten Colombia's transitional justice process, obstructing the truth from coming to light. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace must be allowed to perform its critical work unimpeded and receive full support from all stakeholders. By

opening Case 11, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has rightly elevated the importance of investigating gender-based sexual and reproductive violence and other crimes against persons with diverse sexual orientation, expression and/or identity. Malta is pleased to see the progress across cases of the Special Jurisdiction For Peace as it prepares to issue its first restorative sentences. This next step is crucial to the transitional justice process and the overall implementation of the peace agreement.

In conclusion, Malta is pleased to see the strides made by Colombia on its path to peace. We stand ready, alongside the international community, to support the peace process, and we look forward to a visit by the Council next month.

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

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Ms. Yolanda Perea Mosquera for their briefings, and I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia in today's meeting.

France welcomes the Colombian Government's efforts to negotiate with the armed groups, in addition to the full implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, in order to build a lasting peace in the country. It welcomes the start of negotiations between the authorities and the self-proclaimed Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP) and the announcement of a ceasefire until 15 January. We support the continuation of negotiations between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, with the aim of extending the ceasefire signed on 3 August. Those developments should enable the affected communities to finally live in peace.

France also welcomes the role played by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in support of the implementation of the agreement. We are ready to examine an extension of the Mission's role to monitor the implementation of the commitments made following the discussions with the EMC. We also await the conclusions of the international human rights expert tasked with identifying obstacles to the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement, whose mandate was created by the Human Rights Council at Colombia's initiative.

The Security Council's mission to Colombia at the beginning of February is particularly relevant in enabling us to provide the most appropriate support for the peace efforts. We encourage the authorities to spare no effort in the areas of development, rural reform, access to land and transitional justice.

Finally, France wishes to emphasize that the issue of gender equality is one of the keys to the success of this process. It cuts across the various aspects, from access to land to transitional justice, including the reintegration of former combatants and the inclusion of all stakeholders in the reconciliation process. Despite the progress made, more needs to be done to protect women, as well as human rights and environmental activists, whose situation today gives cause for concern.

I will conclude by reiterating that peace in Colombia is not an option — the Council must continue to do its utmost to consolidate that success by ensuring the full implementation of the peace agreement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

**Mr. Leyva Durán** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before getting into the heart of the subject, I wish to particularly greet the representatives of Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia, whose Ambassadors to the United Nations have this month taken up their seats in the Security Council, which is welcoming us once again as a demonstration of its continued support for peace in Colombia.

At the outset, I wish to express to everyone gathered here the gratitude of the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro Urrego, for the decision by the Security Council to extend another year the important work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Without the participation of the Council and its verification mechanism, peace would simply have remained an illusion, and this work would have become deeply frustrating. I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Mission. He and his team have advanced a very difficult, but enriching task. He will continue to receive the support and applause of the Colombian Foreign Ministry and the staff of the Petro Urrego Administration for as long as it is necessary to fully achieve his mission. Even if it requires his utmost effort, every obstacle, every difficulty must

be overcome. The successes already achieved show that it can be done. Therefore, I receive with optimism the report presented to the Security Council just a moment ago by the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I would like to recall that the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed by the State of Colombia, represented at the time by the then-President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, was adopted as an official document of the Security Council, which is a historic precedent. It is the *sine qua non* precondition for national peace. I am referring in particular to document S/2017/272. I mention it because its content reflects the tenor of the agreements on which a unilateral State declaration was made by President Santos Calderón himself. The text of the document indicates how the declaration came into being.

We all know that a unilateral State declaration is binding for all the nations of the world. The International Court of Justice has already ruled on its binding nature and scope. Therefore, Colombia's obligation based on that unilateral declaration prevails over its domestic legal order.

On 27 November 2023, the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro Urrego, addressed an open letter to the Secretary-General in which he acknowledged that the aforementioned declaration resulted in irreducible obligations for the Colombian State and in which he informed of his "unwavering will to continue with the unalterable commitment already acquired". Therefore, he indicated,

"I will spare no effort to ensure that this commitment is fully complied with",

and

"I have resolved to take the necessary measures to ensure that this is the case."

With regard to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), whose essential rules for its existence and operation arise from the content of the Council document, I note today, from the United Nations, that indicating that it cannot undermine the rights set forth therein is not an undue interference in a domestic governmental authority, but the fulfilment of an obligation for the State to enforce what has been agreed, always recalling that the SJP is not part of the ordinary domestic jurisdiction, but is an international



jurisdiction, as it has been fostered by the Security Council itself.

The SJP must therefore respect its personal and material competence, the right to integrate the total truth, which underpins the fundamental right of the victims and the whole country, applicable in the extrajudicial restrictions which have arisen in an arbitrary manner, as they were never enshrined in the text that gave life to the institution. This situation was not imagined by the negotiating parties of the peace agreement. And it is also not possible to avoid norms related to the right to amnesty and the waving of criminal action, when applicable, nor is it possible to divide its jurisdiction. It takes precedence when it is arbitrarily so determined. Unfortunately, that is what happened.

However, the SJP can still be a model of special justice for peace. Perhaps its derailments will serve as a lesson so that, by adapting to the norms established with authority, they will grow in stature to become a beacon of justice for the entire world. That was the intention of those of us who participated in its creation. We continue to be grateful for having been given that fortunate and historic opportunity.

But the contracting parties still exist. It is a Colombian peace process, which has not yet concluded, so we meet in this Chamber every three months to learn about the progress that has been made. That means the ways to redress, by means of a special agreement enshrined in international humanitarian law, without in any way trying to open negotiation stages that have already been concluded, negative situations that have arisen beyond the will of the parties. Four years were lost in the implementation work. Since the signing of the Havana General Agreement for Ending the Armed Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, a President was elected under the banner of shattering peace. We asked for a four-year period. It would be worth thinking about recovering it.

Among contemporary peace negotiators the idea has also arisen that is worth considering a tribunal or a hybrid court to eventually develop a mechanism for final closure — a turning of the page that allows a second opportunity for those who aspire to a return of the Colombian homeland and legacy.

I am mentioning all of that because Council members are peacemakers. The world today is in turmoil, and Council members are points of reference

for agreement and understanding. Colombia has proven to be a peacemaker with the Security Council at its side. We are partners on this journey. Let us shine a light on that part of humankind, most of whom — we are certain — have not grown weary of seeking solutions. Let there be peace with history, peace now, peace for those who have yet to be born. It would seem that we are welcoming them to a demolished world without future, and that cannot be.

As Jorge Luis Borges said,

“A man sets out to draw the world. Through the years, he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, tools, stars, horses and people. Shortly before his death, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his own face.” (*Epilogue, El Hacedor, Primera ed. Vintage Español ed. Nueva York: Vintage Español. 2013*)

In that regard, what was agreed in 2016 is nothing other than the result of the hope of various men and women combatants, bureaucrats, members of civil society and citizens, regardless of their origins or status, whose true face has always been that of peace, a vision that is complemented by the total peace policy led by President Gustavo Petro Urrego. It is a face, as we have said in other scenarios, of Indigenous people, Afrodescendants, women and people of different sexual orientations and gender identities, a face that has the form of an institution that was agreed and whose implementation we must advance, and finally a figure that must be underpinned by a court of justice for peace that fearlessly complies with the norms that were established with patriotic love and dedication.

I will conclude today by reiterating the commitment to change of the Government of President Petro Urrego by building a solid, robust, resilient and just country where the voice of its citizens and the protection of life are fundamental elements, a Colombia that is a global power for life and hope, a country of beauty.

I welcome all Council members to Colombia in February. We will be waiting for them with open arms.

**The President (spoke in French):** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.*