



Security Council

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Letter dated 23 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (on behalf of the A3+1 — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “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)” convened on Wednesday, 21 April 2021. A statement was also delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and these statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia,
Carlos Ruiz Massieu**

[Original: English and Spanish]

I thank you for this opportunity to present to you the latest report (S/2021/298) of the Secretary-General on Colombia and to brief the Security Council on important developments since the issuance of the report.

It is an honour to share this meeting with Foreign Minister Claudia Blum de Barberi, and I take this opportunity to thank her and her team for the usual support extended to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Victims are at the centre of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed between the Government of Colombia and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Their participation during the negotiation phase was crucial to ensuring that their perspectives were taken into account, and today they are a fundamental pillar of peacebuilding and the pursuit of reconciliation. Their courage and generosity should be a source of inspiration for the signatory parties to continue working to fulfil the commitments enshrined in the Final Agreement and for all actors in Colombian society to support them in this task.

On 9 April, Colombia commemorated the National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims. On that occasion, I had the opportunity to talk to representatives of victims of crimes committed by both the former FARC-EP and State agents. Certainly, these conversations are an important reminder that, regardless of the source of the pain, guaranteeing truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition is the best way to repair the damage and prevent more victims in Colombia.

To do so, it is necessary to guarantee the inclusion, effective participation and security of all victims. Likewise, it is essential that all actors involved in the conflict give concrete signs of their commitment so that the expectations of the victims can be met and to consolidate the foundations for closing the wounds left by conflict.

The meeting held between President Iván Duque Márquez and the leader of the Comunes party, Rodrigo Londoño, is undoubtedly a very encouraging development. Its constructive spirit provides a solid basis for the parties to continue working together despite their different visions. Having different political positions should not, in any way, translate into affecting the superior interest, which is the implementation of the peace agreement. I encourage the parties to continue to move forward in defining the road map for implementation agreed at that meeting.

Now into the fifth year of implementation, it is also essential that the parties remain committed to building on the achievements made and resolving pending challenges, and thereby move forward — with the support of all actors in Colombian society — in solving structural problems, particularly considering the challenges of overcoming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Protecting life is the fundamental purpose of any peace process. In the case of Colombia, the importance of carrying out appropriate actions to achieve this is even more evident in the light of the violence facing communities, social leaders and former FARC-EP members. Since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General, acts of violence against social leaders and communities have been registered in different departments, one of them being the Cauca department, where yesterday the indigenous Governor, Sandra Liliana Peña Chocué, was killed, and where four

more former combatants have also been killed, for a total of 266 since the signing of the Final Agreement.

On 9 April, authorities reported the arrest of the alleged perpetrator of the killings of a social leader and two former combatants. This is a positive result that highlights the importance of redoubling the efforts by State entities involved in the fight against impunity and of ensuring them appropriate financial and technical resources. It is urgent that the policies and measures taken by the State, including the recent strategic security plan, translate into better results, especially in the 25 municipalities where most of the violence is concentrated. I hope that by the end of 2021 we will be able to report that the trend of these deplorable crimes has finally been reversed.

Similarly, the sustained presence of security forces, accompanied by the growing deployment of public entities and services, is essential to guaranteeing effective control of the territory and improving the protection of communities by the State, as well as to allow for the consolidation of development opportunities and the rule of law.

The Final Agreement establishes that a stable and lasting peace requires the effective reintegration of former FARC-EP members into social, economic and political life. Progress made by the parties in this regard has been notable. In this period, progress by the Government in the purchase of land for former territorial areas for training and reintegration, including two additional purchases since the issuance of the report, is encouraging. Thanks to the Government's commitment and to concerted work with former combatants, seven of the 24 former territorial areas for training and reintegration now have land.

An example of the opportunities for reconciliation generated by the peace agreement was the recent donation by Álvaro Zora — a businessman who in the past suffered the kidnapping of his father by an illegal armed group — of land in Quibdó, Chocó, for nearly 50 former combatants to carry out their fish-farming projects and build their homes. This act of generosity provides certainty and rootedness to dozens of families of former combatants committed to building a better country, a new country, especially in a department that has been so hard-hit by the conflict and poverty.

Two additional collective projects were recently approved in the National Reintegration Council (NRC), for a total of 90. In that regard, it is noteworthy that we are close to 50 per cent of former combatants participating in collective and individual projects. Similarly, the parties have agreed to create a technical working group on housing within the framework of the NRC, which I hope will lead to solutions to advance access to housing for former combatants and their families.

These advances show the potential of collaborative work undertaken by the State, former combatants, victims and communities to transform the conflict-affected territories. The Government's efforts to respond to the needs of communities in conflict-affected areas, and their interest in participating in the implementation of initiatives, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus, should be noted, although they still need to be complemented with other fundamental aspects of the agreement, such as the coordinated implementation of the national sectoral plans of comprehensive rural reform. It is also necessary to take concrete steps to bring sustainable productive opportunities to more families in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, a programme that has shown its potential to change conditions in areas where illegal crops are grown and to strengthen communities' trust in the State.

As progress is made in this direction, it will be necessary for the parties to accelerate the implementation of the gender measures in the agreement, and for all actors to enhance the role of women's organizations in peacebuilding. Women's participation is imperative for peace to be inclusive and sustainable.

It has been more than a year since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Colombia. My heart goes out to all those who have lost loved ones to the disease. The Government, local authorities and the public have made significant efforts to overcome the pandemic and restore normalcy, and while the road to recovery is long and challenging, I am convinced that the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement will help the country to move gradually in that direction.

The Mission has also progressively returned to its normal functioning, including field activities where our presence is most needed. I have visited several regions, among them Valle del Cauca department, where I met political and religious authorities, former combatants and leaders of the communities who recounted the difficulties facing thousands of civilians — especially of Afro-Colombian origin — due to clashes between armed groups, the presence of illicit economies and limited socioeconomic opportunities.

In this complex context, and to help advance the pandemic recovery efforts, allow me to renew the calls of the Secretary-General and the Security Council for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We have seen the positive impact that these gestures can have on the lives of vulnerable communities in conflict-affected regions.

The progress by the three components of the transitional justice system created by the agreement is encouraging. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace continues to make key decisions to deliver justice for crimes committed during the conflict; the Truth Commission is holding important acts of reconciliation while preparing its report; and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing is moving forward with its noble task.

In conclusion, I would like to express once again my gratitude to the Security Council for its constant and decisive support to the Colombian peace process.

Annex II**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: Chinese]

China welcomes Foreign Minister Claudia Blum de Barberi to the meeting and thanks Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

I would like to make the following five points.

First, we are worried about the intensification of violence in some parts of Colombia, which has lasted for some time. We call on all parties to strengthen security capacity-building and to continue to improve the security situation. We support the Colombian Government in building up its security forces and strengthen security deployment in high-risk areas so as to step up the fight against violence and drug-related crimes, and especially to protect the security and rights of former combatants.

Secondly, we commend the Colombian Government for actively helping former combatants obtain land and participate in productive projects. We encourage Colombia to increase development input, continue to promote rural reform and narrow the gap between urban and rural areas so as to rectify economic and social weaknesses. Only in this way can the process of reintegrating former combatants be deepened continuously, and the hard-won peace be lasting.

Thirdly, we welcome the meeting between the leaders of the Colombian Government and the Comunes party and appreciate the agreement between them on designing a road map for the follow-up and implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. We hope that the two parties will effectively leverage existing mechanisms, including the tripartite mechanism between the Government, the Comunes party and the United Nations, so as to strengthen consultations and work together to implement the agreement.

Fourthly, China supports the work of Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and encourages the Mission and the United Nations country team to divide the work rationally, strengthen coordination, complement each other's efforts and work in synergy.

Regarding Colombia's request for the mandate of the Verification Mission to be expanded, China will treat it positively in general. At the same time, we hope that the Secretariat will make greater efforts to maximize the use of existing resources while making reasonable and diversified financing arrangements for the newly added resources.

Fifthly, China commends the Colombian Government for actively carrying out the vaccination campaign against the coronavirus disease. We have already provided three batches of vaccines to Colombia. China will continue to work with the international community to support Colombia in its fight against the pandemic, support the Colombian peace process and support Colombia's accelerated development.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations**

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing today. I would like to express Estonia's strong support to the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We warmly welcome Her Excellency Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

We fully recognize that handling the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic takes a lot of attention. At the same time, it is crucial to stay on the course and continue the efforts in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in its entirety.

We welcome the progress made during the last reporting period, especially with regard to the transitional justice system that provides truth, justice and reconciliation for the victims. The first indictment by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace against eight former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo for war crimes and crimes against humanity is an important step forward. This paves the way towards the end of impunity. The victims' rights need to be respected. A lot still remains to be done, especially with regards to the victims' participation in the transitional justice system. Therefore, Estonia supports expanding the mandate of the Verification Mission to support the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

We welcome the continued commitment by both parties — the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común — in implementing the peace agreement. The constructive meeting held between President Duque Márquez and the President of Comunes, Rodrigo Londoño, on 10 March was a remarkable sign of it.

However, challenges remain and threaten the success of implementing the peace agreement. We are deeply concerned about the continuation of grave violations. In the first quarter of 2021, the security situation has significantly deteriorated in several key areas of the country, including the Pacific region.

The killings of former combatants, social and indigenous leaders and human rights defenders have continued. The alarming number of killings needs to be curbed urgently by rebuilding trust and State authority. We condemn all sexual and gender-based violence and underline the importance of access to comprehensive services by all survivors without discrimination.

We condemn the continued recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. All children must be released. We encourage the Government to strengthen child protection measures and allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of necessary programmes, particularly at the local level and in vulnerable areas of the country. The spiral of hate generates displacement and insecurity and must be ended.

Finally, building peace takes time, effort and active commitment by all parties. Estonia strongly supports the continued dedication to implementing the Final Agreement.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and assure him of our full support in implementing his mandate. I also welcome the presence among us of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Blum de Barberi.

Building peace is a long and painstaking undertaking. Much progress has been achieved by the people and the Government of Colombia. We must welcome that progress but also take a clear-eyed look at the remaining challenges. More than four years since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the implementation of several of its provisions is still lacking. I shall focus on four aspects in particular.

First, we regret the continuation of violence in Colombia. It impacts children, young people, former combatants, civil society actors, ethnic community leaders, human rights defenders and journalists. It must stop, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. The solution in the long term will require strengthened State presence in the most isolated areas. The policy of dismantling armed groups must also be implemented and finalized.

Secondly, we recognize the significant efforts devoted to reintegrating former combatants. These efforts must continue, with a focus on former combatants residing outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

Thirdly, the Comprehensive Rural Reform must be fully implemented. In this regard, it is important to continue land purchases. Achieving peace means providing fair and viable socioeconomic opportunities for all. The grip of drug-trafficking must be loosened once and for all by strengthening the illicit crop-substitution programme. The chapters of the agreement on ethnic and gender issues must also receive specific attention, as must those relating to political reform, where progress is slow.

My fourth point is perhaps the most important: we must commend the consistent progress made by the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-repetition. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first indictment in Case 01. Many former combatants have contributed to the process of establishing the truth. It is necessary to continue on this path and to ensure that all parties to the conflict commit to the process in good faith. Finally, I express my hope that the Security Council will promptly adopt a draft resolution extending the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a long-term process, and challenges remain. That is why France, together with the European Union, will continue supporting all those working every day to build peace in Colombia.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Nagaraj Naidu Kakanur**

I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his comprehensive briefing on the peace process and on the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia towards the implementation of its mandate.

The overall progress over the past three months towards the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace has been positive. The signatory parties have remained faithful to the agreement. The President of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez, and the President of the Comunes political party, Rodrigo Londoño, met last month and agreed to work jointly on the implementation road map by strengthening reintegration and security guarantees for former combatants. The Government has also held the first of the seven territorial sessions of the National Reintegration Council, as agreed with the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC).

The FARC, now the Comunes party, has continued to put faith in the democratic process and started preparing for the 2022 elections. The transitional justice process has advanced, with the first indictment by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The announcements made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace reflect its autonomy and independence. These are all encouraging developments, which we welcome.

The year 2021, the fifth year of implementation of the peace agreement, is crucial. The focused implementation of the five priorities proposed by the Secretary-General to reinforce the implementation of the agreement in 2021 will be important. In this context, I have the following observations to make.

The concentration of violence in some regions is mainly due to the limited State presence, which is being exploited by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations fighting over illicit economies. The recently approved national policy for the dismantling of illegal armed groups is a positive step to augment the presence of State institutions, including the deployment of security forces. The integrated and enhanced presence of State authorities throughout the country is fundamental to lasting and durable peace.

The expeditious implementation of rural reforms, the reintegration of ex-combatants, including in non-territorial areas for training and reintegration across the country, and the provision of land and the effective implementation of illicit crop-substitution programmes are essential to reduce violence. It is important to ensure that the great majority of former combatants be involved in income-generating activities. In this regard, land allocation, housing and creating enabling infrastructure will be important.

The strengthening of protection and security for former combatants is an important element of the peace process. Regular dialogue between former combatants and public security forces, including in the context of the Tripartite Mechanism for Security and Protection, could help provide timely and more effective responses to the problem. There have been steps in this direction, including filling vacancies at the National Protection Unit and strengthening of institutional capacity with respect to gender, which could be expedited. The authorities also need to strengthen security outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration and implement a specific protection strategy for women former combatants.

The Government has begun implementing its coronavirus disease-vaccination drive, which is a positive step in the fight against the pandemic. It must be ensured

that the population targeted by peace-related programming, including former combatants, have access to vaccines and medicines.

Strengthening judicial capacity, particularly in the regions most affected by violence, is also significant. The Special Investigations Unit of the Attorney-General's Office should be provided with resources to strengthen the campaign against impunity.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia is a good example of the United Nations capacity to bring about positive change in both security and development aspects in post-conflict settings. It has helped and strengthened the efforts of national authorities to bring together communities and institutions to advance peace, development and the rule of law, especially in areas historically affected by the conflict. In this context, we support the request for an expansion of the Mission's mandate to support the verification of compliance with restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the special relationship India shares with Colombia. In 2019, India and Colombia celebrated 60 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Over the years, the relationship has only strengthened and diversified in various areas of mutual interest — political, cultural and commercial. This is evidenced by growing trade and investments from India and the increasing presence of Indian companies in Colombia. In 2018, the Indian Space Research Organization successfully launched FACSAT 1, the first-ever Colombian Air Force nanosatellite. India offers more than 100 training slots to Colombian officials annually under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. Also, every year, thousands of Colombians visit India for tourism, nature therapy and learning yoga. As Colombia marches ahead on its journey towards peace, progress and prosperity, we are confident that it will successfully overcome all outstanding challenges to the peace process and emerge stronger as a major economy in Latin America, and, in this journey, India, as Colombia's long-standing partner, will continue to support it.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I want to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his continued hard work and that of his team.

It is also great to see Minister Blum de Barberi with us again. I want to pay tribute to the tireless efforts that her Government and the people of Colombia are making to build peace. We know this requires determination and persistence right across society and the political system. We are heartened by the considerable progress made. We reiterate our strong support to all parties as they work towards the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. I would like to make three points this afternoon.

First, we share the concerns expressed at the persistent levels of violence in some parts of the country. Over the reporting period, the number of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders killed worryingly increased further. We recognize the concerted efforts the Government is making to protect those targeted. But the urgency of curbing this violence, including that faced by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, cannot be overstated. We urge the Colombian Government to work in key affected municipalities to establish its presence and build trust with communities.

Reports of child recruitment by illegal organizations and recent reports of children killed in crossfire are also of deep concern. Holding those responsible for violence to account is critical in building trust and sustaining peace.

While we note the progress recorded in the implementation of the gender chapters of the agreement, more work needs to be done to ensure the full implementation of gender and ethnic provisions across all chapters.

We reiterate our support to the Special Forum on Gender and all entities working to secure justice and equality. We also encourage continuing efforts to combat gender-based violence.

My second point is the crucial role constructive dialogue plays in building trust and maintaining momentum, particularly at this critical juncture. That is why the recent meeting between President Duque Márquez and Rodrigo Londoño, which Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz helped facilitate, was so important — such a positive development.

We encourage both parties to continue working together on the proposed implementation road map. We also urge that the progress in the meeting carry through to the important platform for dialogue and partnership provided by the Commission for the Follow-Up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

My final point relates to transitional justice and the proposed expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Investment in peace is not just a financial or administrative concern; the most vital investment in peace is belief: it is trust. Transitional justice, centred on victims and with the full participation of women, is the bedrock for Colombia's own future. The year 2021 is decisive for both Colombia's transitional justice system and the Truth Commission. We have already seen important progress in the Special Jurisdiction for Peace on Cases 01 and 03.

It is now crucial that former combatants, members of the public security forces and third parties to the conflict provide exhaustive and truthful accounts

of crimes committed, that they recognize their responsibilities and contribute to reparations. The Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-repetition provides the framework needed. It is a real demonstration of this precious and innovative peace agreement in action. All those who engage with the System need to be protected.

Ireland welcomes the proposed expansion of the Mission's mandate and looks forward to the Council adopting a corresponding draft resolution as soon as possible. The United Nations independent verification of the restorative sentences can help bolster trust in the system for victims.

As I conclude, I wish to take a moment to applaud the decision by the Colombian Government to grant temporary protection status to Venezuelan refugees and migrants, a response based on common humanity and deep respect for human rights. The generosity of Colombia serves as an example to the world and demonstrates to us all that we really do — as the Irish-language proverb says — live in each other's shelter.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for the briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/298) on the situation in Colombia and for the work he and the team of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia carry out. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi.

Mexico welcomes the recent meeting between the President of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez, and the President of the Communes political party, Rodrigo Londoño, facilitated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as their commitment to working together on a road map to continue the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and to strengthen efforts to protect ex-combatants. As we have articulated previously, political dialogue is the best road map towards genuine stabilization in Colombia.

We take note of the progress in the cases under consideration by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Likewise, we should like to underscore that the Special Jurisdiction plays an essential role in transitional justice by putting victims at the centre in upholding their rights, making reparation for harms and ensuring non-repetition. In our view, this is the path that will lead to ultimate reconciliation.

We recognize the value of the request by the Government of Colombia and the Communes political party for the United Nations Verification Mission to support this process through the verification of sentences. We reiterate that the support of the Mission to the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is consistent with the letter and spirit of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Mexico consequently supports the request of the Colombian Government to extend the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia with the purpose of reviewing the sanctions issued by the Jurisdiction; compliance with those judgments will bolster the efforts to achieve peace in Colombia.

On the other hand, we reiterate our concern about the levels of violence that continue to prevail in certain parts of the country and what that represents for women, mainly Afro-Colombian women, indigenous women and their respective communities, which have been disproportionately affected. Addressing the situation of insecurity requires mandatory consultations with women in the communities affected in order not only to learn about their needs first-hand but also to invite them to participate more actively in making decisions that ensure their safety.

Preventing violence against women human rights defenders requires adequate funding from the authorities. Effective steps towards peace requires resources and technical assistance for Afro-descendant and indigenous organizations. The challenges posed by insecurity and lack of resources must be overcome in order to achieve more meaningful access for Afro-descendant and indigenous women, who are, regrettably, frequently victims of the transitional justice system.

We commend the Government's efforts to support ex-combatants in participating in productive projects, which contributes to providing them with economic stability and a life goal. We would urge that more women also be provided the opportunity to participate in such programmes and that they receive the help necessary to overcome the structural obstacles that prevent their full participation.

Last year the International Committee of the Red Cross registered 389 victims of explosives — the highest number in the past four years — including 226 civilians. That situation requires the creation of a more rigorous framework for the management of small arms and light weapons in order to prevent their trafficking, as well as more effective international cooperation in that undertaking.

Finally, Mexico agrees with and supports the recommendations issued by the Secretary-General on the way in which the Mission will carry out the verification of the Special Jurisdiction's judgments, in accordance with the request made by the Colombian Government.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Trine Heimerback**

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu for another informative briefing. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/298) and fully support the recommendations made.

I would like to start by congratulating President Iván Duque Márquez and Rodrigo Londoño, leader of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), for their commitment to the peace process, as demonstrated by their meeting in March. The fact that both of them recognized the need for a comprehensive and integral implementation was encouraging and timely. Norway firmly believes that a continued dialogue between the parties will significantly enhance implementation, reduce polarization and build confidence.

We strongly urge the parties to make better use of the formal and informal spaces established in the institutional architecture of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Indeed, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion, and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement remains the principal mechanism for resolving challenges and obstacles to implementation, including on security issues.

We encourage the parties to conduct more meetings of the National Reintegration Council, and Norway welcomes the progress made in the tripartite working group on mines. We also urge the parties and the United Nations to re-establish the tripartite mechanism regarding conflict-related assets.

Today, more than any other issue, the targeted threats and violence against and killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders, including women leaders and representatives of ethnic communities, represent a serious threat to the peace agreement. It is with great regret that we now count 265 ex-combatants signatories to the peace agreement killed since it entered into force, along with the 24 human rights defenders and social leaders killed just during this last reporting period. In some regions, communities also suffer from forced displacements, the deployment of anti-personnel mines and increased recruitment of children by armed groups.

In that light, State presence in all parts of the country and a comprehensive implementation of the agreement are essential to overcoming the conditions underpinning violence and to ensuring the protection of civilians. While we recognize the efforts being made by the authorities to improve the security situation, the numbers speak for themselves.

More needs to be done to prevent, protect and ensure accountability for those horrific crimes. It is urgent to implement the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, including Decree 660, on community protection, and to provide sufficient support to the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General.

Gender-based violence also continues to hamper the reintegration of women ex-combatants and disrupts the vital work of women leaders and human rights defenders. To guarantee their security and their equal and meaningful participation, it is crucial that the gender provisions in the agreement be fully implemented, together with the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

We must take seriously the reports to the effect that victims and alleged perpetrators do not feel that they can contribute to the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition without risking their lives. That is concerning and may jeopardize victims' access to truth and reparations. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has ordered governmental agencies to ensure the protection of those appearing before the court.

Compliance is essential for the implementation of article 3.4 of the agreement and to meet the demands of victims.

The progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace on Cases 01 and 03 represent a milestone in the implementation of the peace agreement. Norway urges all actors to contribute fully to the Comprehensive System, to recognize their responsibilities and to tell the whole truth. The importance of the System being able to carry out its work independently, without political interference, and without risking the lives of those who contribute, cannot be overstated.

In conclusion, let there be no doubt that Norway remains committed to working with the Colombian people and parties in their efforts towards lasting peace.

Annex IX**Statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy**

[Original: Russian]

We thank the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/298) on the situation in that country.

Unfortunately, the report confirms the lack of progress in the implementation of the key provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which the Security Council mandated the Mission to monitor. That is cause for growing concern, especially in view of the pending electoral cycle.

Let me recall that the agreement put an end to the half-century-long internal armed conflict and could receive broad international support owing to the fact that it was the outcome of a painstaking direct dialogue and the concrete agreements reached by the Colombian parties, with the United Nations Mission there to observe their implementation. That historic document should not be perceived as a unilateral statement of intention, and therefore its implementation must be accompanied by a continual dialogue among its signatories.

In that context, we welcome the meeting between President Duque Márquez and the leader of the Comunes party, Rodrigo Londoño, on 10 March, as well as the decision to extend the mandate of the trilateral Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We call on the Colombian sides to maintain constructive contacts at all levels in order to ensure transparency at all steps and their compliance with the letter and spirit of the agreement. Unilateral measures that have not been agreed on cannot advance the peace process.

That point is valid for each out of five priority tracks that the Secretary-General highlighted in his report and that cover almost all aspects of the settlement. We agree with the statement in the report to the effect that the progress made on those five tracks is insufficient. We are counting on Bogotá to make additional efforts within its obligations under the agreement to improve the situation.

One of the most urgent issues is ensuring the safety and security of civilians, including participants in the peace process, their family members and representatives of civil society. We regret that murder statistics have not declined and that insufficient progress has been made in related investigations. In addition, the crime rate has increased, causing the environment to deteriorate in previously safer districts.

Security threats are so high that in January-February this year 13,500 people were forcibly displaced, as noted in the report. For comparison, that number equals as many people as all those officially enrolled in the peace process.

Members of the Security Council receive regular information on the progress that Colombia's Government achieved in carrying out those programmes that are not stipulated in the agreement. At the same time, the implementation of the agreement itself is proceeding too slowly. The same can be said about, inter alia, the comprehensive land reform under way, land allocation, crop substitution and the work of the National Reintegration Council.

We believe that Colombia's Government and society should focus primarily on the implementation of the provisions of the agreement. Failing that, the prospects of lasting peace in Colombia will remain ever more elusive.

I turn now to the report and the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

It is well known that unresolved security issues can drive people to take up arms once again. That is why we believe that it is important that report reflect the evolving number of so-called dissidents. Those figures can be indicative of the effectiveness of the peace process.

Once again, we were rather perplexed to see that the report mentions the challenges that the LGBT community faces. We do not quite understand what that information has to do with the peace process and overcoming the consequences of the internal armed conflict. The Council would derive greater benefit from receiving information about social security and the safety of families with children where the breadwinner has been the victim of the conflict or an attack. Single-parent families represent a truly vulnerable group in a post-conflict environment.

In addition, the report gives scant information on the resolution of disputes between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional with regard to the resumption of direct dialogue without preconditions. Sustainable peace cannot come to Colombia unless all key stakeholders embark on the path thereto.

As concerns the initiative to extend the mandate of the Mission and mandate it to monitor the implementation of certain separate decisions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, we took note of the information that was shared in a letter from the Secretary-General dated 25 February. The Council also discussed that issue repeatedly. We assume that at this point we have a shared understanding of the fact that such a step is needed, especially now that we have a corresponding direct dialogue between the Colombian sides.

In conclusion, the report indicates that it would be premature to state that the peace process in Colombia is irreversible. The relative peace in the country is too fragile whereas the number of factors that are negatively affecting prospects for peace are increasing. That is why the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the guarantors of Colombia's peace process are directing their efforts at the consistent implementation of the peacebuilding tasks stipulated in the Final Agreement.

International support for that historic accord involves trusting the Colombian people to strictly abide by the provisions of the agreement.

As a member of the Permanent Five, Russia is ready to render further assistance to the Colombian peace process in order to make it sustainable and irreversible.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Kenya, the Niger, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

I begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Massieu for his presentation and reaffirming our support for the efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the Colombian peace process. I also acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

In November, Colombia will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. It will be an opportune moment for all Colombians, in particular the signatories to the agreement, to reflect on the gains achieved while also recognizing the challenges and opportunities inherent in its full implementation.

The A3+1 is encouraged by the positive developments in the peace process. We are pleased with the renewed commitment by the parties, as highlighted by the 10 March engagement between President Iván Duque Márquez and Rodrigo Londoño, leader of the Comunes party. That, we believe, speaks to the dedication of the signatories and provides reassurance that they are united in fulfilling their obligations.

We urge the parties to stay the course and work more determinedly, in communion with the people, who, are also vested in the success of the agreement.

In terms of security, we take note of the proposed strategic plan for protection and are pleased with the approval of the public policy guidelines for the dismantling of illegal armed groups. We also appreciate ongoing efforts by the Government through the National Commission on Security Guarantees to strengthen the State's security apparatus.

A robust and integrated approach remains crucial to resolving lingering security challenges, especially in the most marginalized and conflict-affected areas, such as Cauca, Nariño, Antioquia, Caquetá, Norte de Santander and Catatumbo. We therefore urge the authorities to continue improving prevention and protection measures and bolster the State's presence through the deployment of public security forces in these areas.

The A3+1 also strongly condemns the incessant violence against the groups made most vulnerable, including former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo combatants, youth, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians, social leaders and human rights defenders. The recurrent acts of violence attest to how deeply the root causes of the conflict are entrenched.

Advancing on mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, together with fulfilling the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agenda, during this peacebuilding stage and in accordance with the agreement, is therefore pivotal.

Our delegations underscore the fact that the proper reintegration of former combatants into Colombian society requires full and continued access to basic services, including housing, land and economic activities. In that respect, we take note of the developments vis-à-vis access to land for former combatants. Similarly, we echo the call made by the Secretary-General for the acceleration of the approval of

productive projects so that by the end of this year the majority of former combatants are involved in income-generating activities.

We maintain that comprehensive rural reform, in accordance with the full implementation of the chapters on rural reforms and the National Comprehensive Programme for Substitution of Illicit Crops, along with the recommendations of the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples to address the issues facing former combatants of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origin, will enable a smooth reintegration into Colombian society.

Transitional justice is also critical. The A3+1 commends the progress made thus far within the Comprehensive System for Truth Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. If not set right, historic wrongs will continue to haunt many Colombians. Accordingly, we express our appreciation for the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General. We believe that progress on each component is central to the delivery of truth, justice, accountability and redress. In addition, we note the concerns expressed about the independence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and emphasize the need for this component of the Comprehensive System to be fully respected.

We again underscore the importance of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and urge the parties to avail themselves of this mechanism to settle their differences. We welcome the extension of its mandate until next year. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/298), substantive and constructive dialogue between the parties within the Commission and in other forums will strengthen implementation across the agreement in 2021 and help devise joint solutions. To that end, we remain hopeful that the parties can resolve their differences on the National Reintegration Council.

Achieving peace in Colombia is also central to preserving Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace. It would also ensure a more stable world. In that context, we encourage the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional to engage in dialogue in order to foster a more peaceful society.

Finally, the A3+1 underscores that durable peace in Colombia will not occur overnight or immediately reverse the afflictions endured over the years. It will, however, pave the way for a new Colombia and usher in a new dawn for the millions who aspire to a better life.

Kenya, the Niger, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterate their support for the Secretary-General's five priorities for the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement and remain hopeful that they can be achieved during this critical year through the constructive work of the tripartite mechanism.

Annex XI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Jonathan Allen**

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also welcome back Minister Blum de Barberi to the Council.

As the Special Representative has just outlined, there were some encouraging developments during the most recent reporting period. The United Kingdom welcomes the productive meeting last month — facilitated by the Special Representative — between President Iván Duque Márquez and Mr. Rodrigo Londoño. As we approach the milestone fifth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace this year, we welcome that both parties have committed to efforts to enhance its comprehensive implementation and to strengthen reintegration and security guarantees for former combatants.

As we have highlighted many times in the Council, the continued insecurity in conflict-affected communities is an ongoing threat to building peace. The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned that social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants continue to face deadly violence from armed groups and criminal organizations.

In that respect, we note the progress made by the National Protection Unit towards filling its vacancies and clearing the backlog of over 1,000 protection requests. We also commend the Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General for its improving track record of investigations and convictions. And we are encouraged that the Ministry of the Interior is strengthening its capacity to respond to the early warnings issued by the Ombudsman's Office. It is vital that these measures continue to be enhanced, in order to curb the violence directed at Colombians working to build a future free from conflict.

We have long called, in the Council, for a realistic long-term plan to dismantle armed groups and criminal organizations and bring State services, security and justice to all citizens. Expanding and improving State presence and security is a crucial step in stabilizing conflict-affected areas. Now that the Government has presented the guidelines of this dismantling policy, we look forward to its swift implementation.

The United Kingdom also remains extremely concerned about the continued recruitment of minors by illegal armed groups in Colombia. We call on all armed groups to immediately release all minors from their ranks. We also note with concern the tragic deaths of minors during Government operations against armed groups in Guaviare last month and welcome the Government's investigation into those deaths.

Turning now to the reintegration process, we are encouraged by the continued progress made during the reporting period, including the holding of the first session of the National Reintegration Council, and advances in land purchases for a number of territorial areas for training and reintegration. We urge the Government to ensure coordinated action in support of all former combatants, including those outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

The transitional justice system is a cornerstone of the peace agreement, and the first indictment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, on 26 January, represents an important milestone. We welcome the constructive response of six former leaders of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo to their indictment — asking victims for forgiveness and committing to answering their questions during the hearings. Acknowledging responsibility for crimes and injustices will pave the way for reconciliation and sustainable peace.

The Council has been working to respond to Colombia's request, which the United Kingdom very much welcomed, for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to support the Special Jurisdiction for Peace by ensuring compliance with its sentences. Against the backdrop of ongoing conversations, the United Kingdom hopes that we will soon be able to take action to formally add this task to the Mission's mandate.

Let me conclude by saying that the United Kingdom recognizes the important progress achieved thus far in the implementation of Colombia's historic peace agreement, as well as the significant challenges that remain. We urge the parties to remain seized of those challenges and to intensify their efforts in that regard during this crucial year. The United Kingdom remains fully committed to helping Colombia achieve a lasting peace.

Annex XII**Statement by the Acting Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs of the United States of America to the United Nations, Jeffrey DeLaurentis**

I thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to play a vital role in supporting peace in Colombia. As always, we welcome Minister Blum de Barberi to the Security Council.

We acknowledge the Government of Colombia's continuing commitment to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, particularly given the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. We also welcome President Duque Márquez's extraordinary humanitarian decision to grant protected status for 18 months to many of the 1.7 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia.

As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/298) notes, this year will be decisive for the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. For that work to be successful in upholding victims' rights and in laying the foundation for reconciliation, it is critical for former combatants, members of the public security forces and third parties to the conflict to provide exhaustive and truthful accounts of the crimes committed, to acknowledge their role in the conflict and to contribute to reparations.

As we have seen, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has already taken its first steps in the pursuit of justice for acts of kidnapping and hostage-taking committed by former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), as well as through its revelation of new information regarding the "false positive" killings by State agents. We welcome those developments and note that continued support by the international community can help ensure the success of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

The continued participation of former FARC-EP combatants in reintegration efforts stands as a significant success and is a testament to the commitment of the Colombian Government and people. Despite these great strides, however, we must be wary of the obstacles to fulfilling the accord's transformational promise.

We remain concerned about ongoing violence by non-State armed groups against human rights defenders, social leaders, former combatants and other vulnerable populations. In addition, killings of former FARC-EP combatants continue despite efforts by Colombian authorities. While national and regional authorities have provided support through evacuations, we urge the Government of Colombia to take action to implement the evacuation road map announced last year. It will also be essential to ensure that adequate security guarantees are in place so that ex-combatants can safely fulfil the sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Continued rural violence has also disproportionately affected Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, deepening long-standing inequities and accelerating displacement. We urge the Government of Colombia to continue expanding police and judicial presence in rural areas as part of an approach that protects social leaders, supports victims and promotes the full political, economic and civic participation of members of ethnic minority groups and women.

Finally, we encourage the Government of Colombia to accelerate the implementation of the rural reform provisions of the agreement and implement a holistic approach to security, rural development and counter-narcotics in strategic regions of concern. The path to sustainable peace lies in greater State involvement in rural areas and the growth of licit economies, underpinned by security, public

service delivery, infrastructure and the rule of law. A robust crop-substitution programme based on community infrastructure, rather than cash payments, would also help ensure that communities affected by armed conflict can escape the cycle of continuing violence that illicit economies often fuel.

The United States again reiterates its appreciation for the Government of Colombia's attention to these issues and to our shared objectives. The progress we have seen on this wide-ranging accord reflects the commitment and the will of the Colombian people to put more than half a century of conflict behind them.

The United States will continue its strong partnership with Colombia in service of a brighter future, and thanks one and all for their hard work to reach that goal.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dinh Quy Dang**

I would like to warmly welcome Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to this meeting. I thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his informative briefing.

Since the signing of the landmark Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, Colombia has made important progress. However, there are still many steps before the agreement can be fully implemented. As a result, as reconciliation and the reintegration progress face multiple challenges, the peace process remains fragile. In that regard, we would like to stress the following points.

First, with regard to the peace process, we commend the constructive meeting between President Duque Márquez and Mr. Rodrigo Londoño, president of the Comunes party, to discuss the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. We acknowledge the Government's commitments with regard to the reintegration process, including the provision of protection and security for former combatants. We call on all relevant parties to continue engaging in constructive dialogue at the political and technical levels in order to address the various challenges and differences in the peace process, especially through the mechanisms set forth in the agreement.

We commend the efforts made by the political parties in reviewing their programme and electoral strategy for the 2022 elections. This year will be decisive for Colombia, especially in terms of making preparations for the 2022 elections. Every effort should therefore be made to create the most favourable conditions for the organization of, and participation in, the elections. The United Nations and the international community should support Colombia's efforts towards that end, while fully respecting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Secondly, with regard to security, the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/298) gave us very worrying information on the unabated violence and attacks against Colombians, including social leaders and conflict-affected communities. Illegal armed groups, criminal organizations and their support networks have taken advantage of illicit economies to strengthen their social and territorial control.

We condemn all the violence and attacks and urge all groups concerned to immediately stop these appalling acts. We reiterate that such violence and attacks are unacceptable and that its perpetrators must be brought to justice.

In that connection, we urge the National Commission on Security Guarantees to take concrete actions to dismantle those organizations and strengthen the investigation and the application of justice. It is also important to redouble efforts to ensure security and to implement practical measures promote development in conflict-affected communities. It is through the well-being of these communities that the value of peace is upheld and maintained.

Thirdly, we commend the Government's reintegration efforts and the progress achieved so far across the socioeconomic and political fields, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. Reintegration is a long-term process that requires patience, political will and practical steps.

We look forward to the role of the National Reintegration Council, together with the United Nations, regional and international organizations, in developing a joint strategy to assist former combatants in stabilizing their lives.

In conclusion, we would like to commend and reiterate our support for the unceasing efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission and the United Nations country team in contributing to the process of peace, security, unity and development in Colombia. We fully support the draft resolution on the expansion of the United Nations Verification Mission's mandate.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Claudia Blum de Barberi**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank the President for convening this meeting and the Council members for their continued support for Colombia. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative Carlos Ruiz Massieu for the report (S/2021/298) presented today.

President Iván Duque Márquez has pointed out that peace emerges from a society's decision to build a dignified future based on truth, solidarity, adherence to legality and the rejection of all forms of violence.

Colombians and the world, in general, have not forgotten the levels of violence of the 1980s and 1990s, when criminality terrorized our population without respite and threatened our democratic institutions.

The world has seen Colombia's progress since the beginning of the century as reflected by enhanced security and more peaceful coexistence, as well as the strengthening of our institutions, economy and society.

Since 2018, the work on the implementation of the peace with legality policy, including the 2016 agreement, has been arduous, and we continue to advance in all the transformations necessary for Colombia to be an increasingly just, peaceful and inclusive society.

As recognized in the Secretary-General's reports, the downward trend in all indicators of violence has been consolidated in recent years. We have managed to reduce crime and guarantee the rule of law, thus protecting the human rights and integrity of more and more Colombians.

The 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was signed in the knowledge that the former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) were not the only perpetrators of violence in the country. It was therefore unrealistic to think that its implementation would in itself be sufficient to achieve an immediate and absolute stable and lasting peace.

Since the second half of the last century, organized illegal armed groups have remained in certain areas of the country, posing challenges to stabilization and consolidation. In their pursuit of routes for drug trafficking and other illicit economies, those criminal organizations attack the population, target social leaders, harm farmers and clash with the security forces, which ensure the rule of law. Groups involved in transnational organized crime are the enemies of all Colombians and fuel violence in the country.

In analysing compliance with the Final Agreement, the report cannot mention only the actions of the Government as one of the signatory parties. The existence of Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común dissidents should rightly be seen as non-compliance by the former guerrilla movement, now a political party. The enemies of the agreement and of peace in Colombia are the criminals, including the dissidents. Eighty per cent of the murders of former combatants are perpetrated by dissidents and drug traffickers.

With regard to the two components of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, it is important to stress that security is our greatest challenge. In that regard, we spare no effort in capacity-building. In 2020,

steady progress was made in adopting and implementing measures to strengthen the security of former combatants, promote the investigation and prosecution of crimes against them, achieving high rates of success, and enhance the efforts of the security forces to dismantle criminal structures in the territories.

The Technical Committee on Security and Protection, which brings together 15 State bodies, set out the security measures for former combatants and members of their political party, which has adopted the name Comunes. The Committee has met 64 times and its technical subcommittees 110 times. That is a top priority of President Duque Márquez.

Coordinated actions have contributed to the reduction in homicides and victimization of former combatants. In 2020, homicides decreased by 10.8 per cent as compared to 2019. To date in 2021, the number of total victimizations has fallen by 51 per cent as compared to the same period last year. We will continue to act with determination to protect their lives and safety.

As the report (S/2021/298) acknowledges, there is clear progress in the political, economic and social reintegration of the more than 13,000 former combatants who remain in the legal system. The Mission has verified that the political participation of former guerrilla members is a reality. The party created by former combatants participated in the 2018 parliamentary elections and in the 2019 departmental and municipal elections. Its political headquarters and members are protected, and a robust campaign against political violence is under way. Likewise, in economic matters, 100 per cent of the individual productive projects of former combatants and 97 per cent of the collective ones have been developed and approved during the current Government.

We have ensured the sustainability of their access to basic services and social security. Their monthly allowance, equivalent to 90 per cent of the minimum wage, has been maintained, which has meant a disbursement of \$67.7 million. That benefit was due to expire in August 2019 but was extended by the Government of President Duque Márquez for 10 years. Likewise, 98.6 per cent of former combatants are affiliated to the health system, and a high percentage are enrolled in training schools and use banks.

We extended the term of the former territorial areas for training and reintegration and we are implementing the acquisition of land for the reintegration of the 2,974 former combatants who remain in them. The Government has acquired land for seven of those former areas and is in the process of purchasing land for 12 more areas. It is important to clarify that that provision was not in the agreement and that it reflects the political will of President Duque Márquez to ensure dignified conditions for those who have demonstrated their commitment to legality.

The report presented by the Mission focuses on five priorities that the Secretary-General has sought to define as a path to fulfilling the commitments under the agreement. However, it is necessary to remember that those priorities, as in all public policy, reflect the platform endorsed by the citizens at the ballot box when they elected the Government. For the current Administration, the priorities are established in the National Development Plan 2018-2022, the peace with legality policy and the framework plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement, initiated by the previous Government, which addresses all aspects of the agreement and the competent entities to develop them. Our Government reaffirms that the guidelines, emphasis and implementation policy are the responsibility of the Colombian State, as our Constitutional Court has noted.

The priorities of President Duque Márquez are clearly described in the peace with legality policy. They are the effective reintegration of former combatants;

comprehensive reparations for the more than 9 million victims of violence; support for the nearly 100,000 families who have joined the illicit crop substitution programmes and who have demonstrated their commitment to that process; the formulation and implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus; and continued progress in comprehensive rural development.

Colombia therefore maintains a long-term vision of priorities and resource allocation. Our efforts have resulted in public works, opportunities and development, benefiting former combatants, victims, rural communities and other vulnerable populations. With that comprehensive vision, consolidation and stabilization are advancing and violence is being reduced. That is one of the strengths of the Colombian peace process, and priorities will continue to be set in that way.

The Colombian Government has been open to scrutiny. We therefore continuously transmit to the Verification Mission complete and updated information on the two components of its mandate and the results of the comprehensive implementation of the agreement. That should reduce the margin for interpretation or value judgments on issues that are verifiable and is a fundamental aspect of ensuring confidence in the Colombian peace process, both nationally and internationally.

Meanwhile, the Colombian Government has guaranteed the independence of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We have also ensured its adequate funding. In 2020, funds to the tune of \$142 million were allocated to the three entities of the system, and in 2021 a budget of almost \$160 million was allocated.

As Council members are aware, in line with the agreement and with the will to ensure that the transitional justice system has the expected effect on the reconciliation process in my country, President Duque Márquez asked the Security Council to add to the mandate of the Verification Mission.

The implementation of the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and gender approaches related to peace implementation have been a priority for us.

The Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement has had five meetings with the Special Forum on Gender. Its technical secretariat has held 52 working meetings with the Gender Committee of the National Reintegration Council and 19 meetings with the Special Women's Body. It has also held five meetings with the Special High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples. As a result, we have made concrete progress on the 51 gender indicators included in the framework plan for the implementation of the Final Agreement.

I highlight that, in the rural development strategy alone, a total of 837,000 women have benefited from land restitution and formalization programmes, comprehensive land subsidies and the delivery of new housing. Colombia will continue to reaffirm women as key actors and agents in the peace with legality policy.

Peacebuilding in our country has been a complex process and the current Government is committed to its achievement. Those who want to mislead Colombians about such efforts are mistaken. Those who want to confuse mislead international community about the achievements and progress made are mistaken, but those who seek to mislead the Security Council about the reality in my country and the region are even more mistaken.

The Government has developed a judicious 15-year planning process to achieve genuine change through the development and implementation of irreversible paths, in addition to honouring the victims and extending a hand to those who have the true will to renounce crime and live in legality.

I do not want to end without mentioning that, following the visits of the Security Council in 2017 and 2019, we believe it to be of the utmost importance to convey a standing invitation to the Security Council to come to our country this year, when public health conditions permit, so that it can see the road travelled and the challenges ahead.
