



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8581st meeting

Friday, 19 July 2019, 10.20 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Popolizio Bardales (Peru)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Hunter

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/2019/530)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2019/530)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): 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 warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/530, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ruiz Massieu.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to present to the Council the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2019/530). I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the presence of Mr. Néstor Popolizio Bardales, Minister for Foreign Relations of Peru and President of the Security Council; Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia; and Mr. Emilio Archila, Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation.

(spoke in English)

During their visit to Colombia last week, Council members were able to appreciate the achievements of

the peace process since their last visit two years ago, as well as the remaining challenges. The visit was a timely reaffirmation of the international community's strong support for this process. It was well received by the Government, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), political parties from across the spectrum, the heads of the transitional justice system, civil society organizations, local authorities and community leaders with whom the Council met in the department of Cauca.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, and as the Council was able to observe on the ground, the assessment of the peace process is mixed. While the efforts of the Government to advance the reintegration of former Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) members have begun showing important concrete results, security in conflict-affected areas remains of grave concern.

It is also important to highlight that, despite some recent examples to the contrary, the great majority of former FARC-EP members, as well as the leadership of the FARC party, remain strongly committed to the peace process. This commitment is reflected in their participation in Congress, their preparations to take part in the upcoming elections and their efforts to reintegrate into civilian life and to build a better future for their families and communities. To cite just a few examples of what has been accomplished through the perseverance of former combatants, last week products of FARC-led cooperatives were on display at Colombia's largest agricultural fair in Bogotá, including coffee, beef products and handicrafts. In May, five former combatants and three community members, who have become rafting trainers as part of an ecotourism project, competed under the Colombian flag at the World Rafting Championships in Australia. The support of the Government, local communities and the international community, among others, has been instrumental in making this possible.

Over the past six weeks, the Government and the FARC, joined by the Mission, have undertaken visits to the ten territorial areas to discuss their future with former combatants, communities and local authorities. We commend both the Government and the FARC for their flexibility and willingness to find mutually agreeable solutions. This successful joint effort led by the Government to overcome a hurdle in implementation

through dialogue should set an example to advance in other areas.

The Government has reassured former combatants of its commitment to formalizing land arrangements for the territorial areas for training and reintegration and to maintain the monthly allowance for former combatants. It is essential to ensure the adequate resources to meet Government goals for housing, health, education and childcare.

It is urgent to increase the number of productive projects for former combatants and to provide the necessary technical assistance and access to markets in order to ensure their sustainability. Both parties have a responsibility to re-energize the process of presentation, approval and disbursement of funding for the projects. Communities, ethnic populations and women should be at the centre of these efforts.

Proper attention must also be paid to the approximately 8,000 former combatants living outside the territorial areas, including in new settlements and urban areas. All actors involved in supporting the reintegration process must recognize this changing landscape and adapt strategies accordingly with a view to providing these former combatants with reintegration options and security guarantees.

As the Council heard directly from communities in Cauca, the security situation is extremely concerning in former conflict areas. Since the Secretary-General's report was issued three weeks ago, four more former combatants have been killed, bringing the number of former FARC-EP members killed since the peace agreement was signed to 127. One of those killed was a former mid-level commander who had been active in the negotiations in Havana and was leading a productive project.

The Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General reports advances in half of the cases of killings of former combatants. This progress is key, as timely investigations are essential to combating impunity, including for the intellectual authors of these crimes. In this context, we welcome the new measures announced by President Duque Márquez to improve security and protection for former combatants. Sufficient resources should also be provided to the National Protection Unit, which provides protection for FARC members.

It is important to make every effort so that the upcoming October elections can be as peaceful as last year's presidential and legislative elections. These elections will be another important step in the political reintegration of the FARC. To date, the party has registered more than 120 candidates, approximately half of whom are former combatants. Additional steps must be taken to ensure their security, as well as that of candidates from all other political parties.

We remain gravely concerned about the situation of social leaders and human rights defenders. As was mentioned earlier, one leader from Cauca, Francia Márquez, was not able to attend the meeting with the Council after being threatened by an illegal armed group. The plight of hundreds of brave leaders under threat around the country is unacceptable. The subcommission of the National Commission on Security Guarantees recently met to receive inputs from civil society organizations, but we remain concerned that the Commission itself has not met for many months. Its mandate, which is the design and implementation of a public policy to dismantle criminal organizations, is essential to putting a stop to these killings.

It is important to note that the Government has just announced protective measures for leaders of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops. I welcome those measures, as well as recent efforts to implement a comprehensive programme to address the specific situation of women leaders. These populations are particularly vulnerable to threats from criminal armed groups and deserve the special attention they are being given.

The presence of illegal armed groups in former conflict areas affects all actors present in those areas, including members of the public security forces, whose deaths at the hands of these groups we also strongly deplore. In this context, the importance of establishing an integrated presence of the State — both security and civilian institutions — in conflict-affected areas cannot be overstated. It is not surprising that local communities and authorities have been unanimous in their desire for the territorial areas for training and reintegration to remain, as the resulting increased presence of State institutions has brought improvements in security and economic activity. The implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus should also have a positive effect in bringing much-needed investments to these areas.

The past few weeks have been marked by the increased participation of victims in the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. For instance, on 26 June the Truth Commission held its first national event on truth, focused on victims of sexual violence during the conflict. Colombia's innovative model of restorative justice is starting to deliver on its promise to ensure justice and reparations for the victims. Continued support for the comprehensive system, including adequate financial resources, is of the essence.

(spoke in Spanish)

On 15 July, President Duque enacted one of the Government's proposed constitutional reforms, which focuses on provisions of the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace for dealing with certain crimes, but clearly establishes that it applies only to future peace processes. This principle of non-retroactivity is critical to providing legal security.

We are confident that next week, when Congress begins a new term, the issues related to the implementation of the peace agreement will be discussed in conformity with the spirit and essence of the agreement and through inclusive dialogue. In that connection, allow me to reiterate the call of the Secretary-General for Colombians to focus on what unites them rather than what divides them.

Finally, I reiterate that truly sustainable peace requires parallel progress in all components of the final agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, the substitution of illicit crops, security guarantees, the reintegration of former combatants and justice and reparations for the victims.

(spoke in English)

The peace agreement has resulted in thousands of lives being saved. It has generated opportunities for victims and their families to heal and receive justice, and has enabled economic development for vast stretches of the country that were ravaged by war for decades. As was mentioned repeatedly during the visit, the Council's steadfast and unified support has been critical to those achievements, and the Colombian people and institutions are deeply grateful to the Security Council. The Colombian peace process is an outstanding example of how much support the United Nations can provide when the Council is firmly united.

Its continued commitment is needed to help Colombia secure the peace.

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

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

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I welcome you back to the Council, Mr. President, for your second day as the presiding officer. May I also welcome Foreign Minister Trujillo García to the Council, as well as a number of his colleagues who are now our firm friends after a very productive visit last week. I once again thank him and his Government for inviting and hosting the Security Council.

We just spoke about our visit in the previous meeting (see S/PV.8580), but I think it was truly invaluable for all of us to see the situation for ourselves. I believe we have all returned with a stronger understanding as a result. Lastly, may I thank Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing to the Council and, through him, his colleagues on the ground for all their hard work.

We share the assessment of the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/530) that now is a critical moment for the peace process in Colombia, because almost three years on, the Colombian peace accord continues to set a positive example to the rest of the world. In that light, we welcome the commitment of President Duque Márquez and his Government to the peace process, which he and members of his Government reaffirmed repeatedly during the Security Council's visit last week. We particularly welcomed President Duque's request, in consultation with members of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, that the Security Council should extend the United Nations Verification Mission's mandate by one year. We look forward to giving that request due consideration with our Council colleagues in the coming months.

We are pleased to see that the Truth Commission, the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed Missing in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace have all started their work. We also welcome the Government's efforts to clearly set out a plan for ending threats and attacks against community leaders, social leaders and human rights defenders. We will continue to work with the Colombian Government as it builds on these successes

to ensure lasting peace in the country. We see three key areas of focus for this work.

First, it is, clearly, crucial that rural reform efforts be accelerated, as this is one of the interlocking sets of commitments of the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace. That goes hand in hand with rural development. The Government has drawn up many promising plans for development over the past year and has approved a number of projects, but the Government itself says that the time has now come for concrete action. And while we recognize the significant political hurdles the Government faces, we fully support President Duque's efforts to build consensus. We hope that progress on the development plans with a territorial focus, land ownership and registration processes, and crop substitution initiatives can help Colombia build confidence in its commitment to peace. We know it will not happen overnight, but we know, too, that the Government is committed to achieving results soon, which we think is essential for the ongoing peace process implementation.

Secondly, the Colombian Government should give full political and financial support to the institutions that work for peace. We welcome the signing of the law governing the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as well as the beginning of work by the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed Missing. I think it is fair to say that we had an inspiring meeting with representatives of those three bodies. They face a huge task, but they are hugely impressive people. But to inspire confidence among the Colombian people, these institutions must be well resourced and given public support by the Government.

Thirdly, the intimidation and killing of social leaders, community leaders and human rights defenders continue to damage confidence in the perceived commitment of the Government to the peace agreement. After our visit, I think we all now recognize the difficulties and complexities, particularly after having seen the situation on the ground, but we believe the Colombian Government must continue its efforts to enforce the rule of law in rural areas, to prevent attacks against community leaders and to bring those responsible to justice. In many regions of Colombia, insecurity is increasing the risk that citizens might lose faith in the State's ability to provide safety. The risk is not only to this peace process, but to future ones as well.

Let me take this opportunity again to commend our Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for their valuable work, where they have a crucial role in supporting the Government in its work to build lasting and sustaining peace. Let me once again welcome the Government's plans, activities, commitment and achievements to date.

Many times during our visit, we affirmed how important it is that the inclusive Colombian peace process is being supported by all sections of Colombian society. The Colombian peace process is a bright spot on the Council's agenda and a shining example to the world. I thank all Colombians for their determination to ensure a sustained peace.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): I welcome you, Mr. President, again to the Council today. I also thank the Special Representative for his briefing today, and add my voice of welcome to Foreign Minister Trujillo García, High Counsellor Archila and your whole delegation.

The historic 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace offered a new era of hope to Colombians longing for an end to decades of violence and insecurity. The innovative approaches taken by the Colombian Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) to establish a peace accord framework has demonstrated their joint commitment to ushering in a new era of shared peace and prosperity. The United States strongly supports that ongoing joint effort to secure a lasting peace that the Colombian people deserve. The Special Representative and the staff of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia are key contributors to that process.

Despite ongoing challenges, progress has been made in implementing the peace agreement. That includes a commitment to reintegration by the Colombian Government and the FARC. It includes supporting rural populations in substituting illicit crops and laying the groundwork for transitional justice. It also includes coordination on security and social welfare for ex-guerrillas and ensuring the protection of civil society leaders.

Recent joint visits by the Government and FARC representatives to 4 of the 24 territorial areas for training and reintegration demonstrated both parties' concerns over the future status of those sites and to maintaining security and strengthening social

and economic conditions for those communities in transition. Those positive steps are historic, but Colombia and its international partners must remain vigilant in addressing ongoing barriers to lasting peace. For example, narco-traffickers and illegal armed groups are seeking to derail the peace process to profit from the resulting instability and chaos. In Colombia and elsewhere, the illicit production and trafficking of cocaine are linked to organized crime, illegal financial flows and corruption. They pose a threat to public health and safety in Colombia, throughout Latin America and around the world.

President Duque Márquez and his Administration have demonstrated their resolve to expand counter-narcotics efforts. Thanks to President Duque's aggressive eradication efforts, Colombian coca cultivation and cocaine production decreased for the first time since 2012. Colombia destroyed over 60 per cent more coca in the first four months of 2019 than during the same period in 2018, and in the first four months of 2019 alone the Colombian Government seized nearly 145 metric tons of cocaine.

The United States remains committed to working with the Duque Administration to pursue a whole-of-Government approach to counter-narcotics, rural development and rural security with the shared goal of reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production by half by the end of 2023. Those efforts directly support peace implementation. We are encouraged by the Colombian Government's efforts to extend its presence into rural conflict-affected areas, which will bring much needed justice, economic support and security to vulnerable populations.

The United States is deeply concerned by credible reports of ongoing violence against human rights defenders, members of the press and social leaders, which members of the Council heard about first-hand during our visit to Colombia last week. We renew our call on the Government to redouble its efforts to protect social leaders and members of vulnerable populations across Colombia, and we reiterate our support for Colombia's efforts to ensure that those leaders can safely accomplish their vital work in support of a just and lasting peace.

A transitional justice system that promotes peace and meets victims' demands for the pursuit of truth and justice is essential for Colombia's peace process. We view the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as vital to

addressing war crimes and human rights abuses. It is imperative that this system, so critical to a just and durable peace, operate as intended to redress serious conflict-related crimes, that it not be inappropriately used by common criminals seeking to elude the regular criminal justice system, and that its operations take into account, as appropriate, Colombia's international legal obligations. A well-functioning Special Jurisdiction for Peace will help ensure accountability for crimes committed by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and State actors and provide justice for victims, including by providing access to reparations.

As Colombia continues to implement its peace plan, it is also demonstrating regional leadership by recognizing interim President Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate leader and by supporting more than 1.5 million Venezuelans fleeing the man-made crisis in Venezuela. Colombia is supporting that vulnerable population by granting temporary residency and work permits and by facilitating access to social services.

The Venezuelan people and regional leaders know that the illegitimate Maduro regime is singularly responsible for the chaos that has enveloped the country. Maduro continues to undermine democratic institutions, oppress democratic actors, carry out systematic and violent repression of human rights, and engage in rampant and widespread corruption. While visiting a migrant centre in the border town of Cúcuta on 14 April, Secretary of State Pompeo and President Duque heard personal stories of hardship from Venezuelans who had fled their homeland owing to severe shortages of food, medicine and basic consumer goods. To date, more than 4 million Venezuelans have fled their homeland owing to Maduro's senseless cronyism and wanton violence.

The peace in Colombia provides a stark contrast to the situation in Venezuela. After more than 50 years of violence, the Colombian people have entered an auspicious new chapter in which future generations will no longer have to experience the hardships of armed conflict. The United States stands firmly with Colombia to further strengthen its peace gains.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his comprehensive briefing. I also welcome the presence among us of the Minister

for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García.

This meeting is being held one week after the Council's visit to Colombia. I would like to thank the Colombian authorities, as well as my Peruvian and British colleagues, for the excellent organization of that visit. The mission allowed us to witness the commitment of the Colombian authorities at the highest level to the peace process. It also demonstrated the importance of involving all parties, including civil society and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, to ensure the sustainability of the process over time.

I would like to emphasize three points.

First, the increasing polarization of Colombian society and the security situation continue to be sources of concern. The outcome of the peace process is extremely positive, but the uptick in violence and the lack of confidence on the part of the population and civil society are worrisome. France condemns the killings of former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders, journalists and individuals involved in crop substitution. Those are not isolated acts but recurring phenomena. It is important that this movement of political violence be combated in and of itself and that impunity be ended.

In that regard, we welcome the Colombian Government's initiatives, including those aimed at protecting former combatants who choose the path of reintegration. The implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection of Social and Community Leaders, Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which was established last year, and the recently announced pilot projects are steps in the right direction. Those efforts should be continued and strengthened, particularly in the run-up to the local elections in October, in order to ensure that Colombian democracy can flourish in a climate of trust, calm and security.

Secondly, I would like to stress the importance of the full implementation of the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace in all its aspects. The progress made in recent months must be continued and expanded. In particular, the entry into force of the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is an important milestone in the transitional justice process. Its implementation presents many challenges, including with regard to the retroactive application of certain provisions, but respect for the commitments made by all parties must

prevail. It is important that Colombia continue to build its capacity to strengthen the legitimacy, independence and sustainability of the transitional justice system. It is also important that women, who have too often been victims of violence, be able to find justice. We will remain vigilant on those subjects, because justice cannot be separated from the objective of lasting peace and national reconciliation.

The economic and social reintegration of former combatants is the main key to the success of the peace process. Long-term solutions must be found for former combatants living in the territorial areas for training and reintegration.

Another key element is the implementation of measures on rural reform. The issue of access to land cannot be separated from a sustainable economic and social development policy. The continuation of programmes illicit crop substitution programmes is also important. Finally, the deployment of State services to the areas that are most vulnerable to illegal armed groups is essential for successful socioeconomic reintegration throughout the country.

Thirdly, the support of the Council and, more generally, the international community is indispensable. Through the political courage and painful choices that it has required on the part of all stakeholders, the Colombian peace process is in many ways a source of inspiration for all, and the Council in particular. In that regard, we have a responsibility to support and sustain the historic choice made in 2016 for forward-looking national reconciliation. That collective support, which is reflected in particular in the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations country team, whose work I commend, deserves to be continued, including in the light of the forthcoming renewal of the Mission's mandate.

In my national capacity, I would also like to assure the Colombian people of France's friendly support and readiness to continue to stand by them, together with our partners in the European Union, on the demanding path of peace.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome your presence, Mr. Minister, among us today to preside over this meeting, which, given its importance, Peru decided to include in the programme of its presidency. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of

Colombia. We wish both Ministers an enjoyable stay in New York.

We join the other members of the Security Council in thanking the team represented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for the very detailed briefing that he just delivered.

As we have just heard, very recently the members of the Council had the opportunity to visit Colombia. That was a propitious occasion to get to know the diverse actors of the political scene and the civil society of the country, both in Bogotá and the department of Cauca, with whom we shared exchanges on the main challenges that stand in the way of the reconciliation process and the attainment and consolidation of peace in Colombia.

We trust, as we noted during our visit, in the political will of the Government and the entire political elite of the country, which, under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, will be inspired by the smooth coordination of efforts, promoting policies that take into account the true needs of the citizens and the positive contributions of all the officially recognized actors in the process, and that it will open the door wide to all the other actors that have not joined that peace process yet, whom we invite to heed President Duque's call to release the hostages, lay down their arms and agree on and support full and inclusive peace in the great Latin American country of Colombia.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes that the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia continues to be the foundation on which the future stability and tranquillity of the Colombian people is based. As Special Representative Massieu noted, the agreement is an example to countries around the world that negotiated solutions are possible. In that regard, we note with regret the climate of polarization that persists around certain elements of the agreement, despite the Government's commitment to establishing all the mechanisms necessary to ensure its implementation, such as its "peace with legality" policy.

We therefore urge the parties, especially the political forces, to work together to facilitate the process through inclusive dialogue based on mutual respect. In that context, we strongly support President Duque's request to the Security Council during its recent visit

to Colombia for the one-year renewal of the United Nations Verification Mission. It is imperative that the Mission continue the excellent work that it is carrying out, which is widely recognized by all the Colombian people, until the obstacles that continue to impede the full and comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement are completely eliminated.

We are pleased to note the positive progress made by the Government in ensuring the social and economic reintegration of former members of the Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), engaged in carrying out various agro-pastoral projects. We also hope that the objectives of the reintegration process will be met within the established deadlines and that the process will be accelerated by providing security guarantees to former members of the FARC-EP, fully aware of the many challenges facing the implementation of the peace agreement.

We welcome the approval by Congress of the national development plan, which will facilitate the stabilization road map undertaken by the Government on peace-related activities. We also note the spirit of cooperation between the Government and indigenous peoples, which is equally important for the peace process in Colombia.

The existence of a legal framework that works independently and autonomously is paramount for transitional justice. In that regard, we welcome the enactment of the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. As we approach the local and regional elections in October, the cooperation and commitment of institutions, essential sectors of the State and the people in general are indispensable to preventing violence from hindering the elections.

Before concluding, I must express our concern over the violent acts to which the social leaders, activists and parties to the peace agreement are being subjected. We call on the competent parties to take the measures necessary to guarantee the complete safety and security of those people and the affected areas through the effective and active presence of Government officials.

Lastly, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea reiterates its full support for the authorities and the people of Colombia in the implementation of the peace agreement and places its full trust in the team of the United Nations Verification Mission to achieve the objectives of that process. We also commend and thank Peru and the United Kingdom for their successful leadership of

the visit to Colombia, the Verification Mission for the excellent and professional manner in which it prepared that visit and President Duque, his Government and all the political and civil society actors for their hospitality and full availability during the Security Council's visit. The success of the peace process in Colombia will be a major victory for all Colombians.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes your presence, Mr. Minister, and His Excellency Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, which raises the profile of this briefing on the peace process in his country. We also commend Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his informative briefing.

The Security Council's recent visit to Colombia has enabled Member States to better understand the challenges and opportunities associated with the peace process and to reaffirm their support for the authorities, as well as other relevant stakeholders. My delegation takes this opportunity to express its deep gratitude to the Colombian authorities for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to the Council during its visit.

In signing the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace on 24 November 2016, the Colombian parties expressed their shared aspiration to peace and stability, and their commitment to ending 50 years of conflict, working to restore the territorial unity of Colombia, strengthening security and promoting investments for the development of rural areas. More than two years after its signing, my country notes the slow but clearly promising progress that has been made in the implementation of the Agreement. Côte d'Ivoire therefore expresses its support for President Iván Duque Márquez's call for unity and urges all stakeholders to work harder to implement their commitments.

In that regard, my country welcomes the involvement of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) in the political process, the activities of the Congress and transitional justice issues. Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the Government's measures to promote economic recovery and socioeconomic reintegration, including the approval of the national development plan, the launch of 500 projects and the public investment plan geared towards the compensation of victims and the reintegration of ex-combatants, and the creation of

viable alternative livelihoods for workers cultivating illicit crops.

Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the efforts of the Colombian Government that enabled the operationalization of the mechanisms responsible for the implementation of the peace agreement, namely, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition. My delegation is of the opinion that, in addition to the authorities' proposals to improve the multipurpose land cadastre, the June promulgation of the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace was a significant step in guiding the peace process. It is therefore important that meaningful resources be allocated to ensure its effectiveness and independence.

In view of the forthcoming regional and municipal elections, it is imperative that the Colombian parties overcome their differences in order to maintain the gains achieved so far and pursue the shared task of restoring peace and stability in the country. Such efforts should also focus on improving collective security, including the protection of human rights defenders and former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. Moreover, the fight against the informal economy must remain a priority for the Government, which must also strengthen its presence and step up the provision of social services in rural areas in order to redress imbalances in that area.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its call on bilateral and multilateral partners to support the peace process by supporting the initiatives of the Government and other stakeholders to foster restoring lasting peace and development in Colombia. My country also expresses its support for the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and encourages him to pursue his efforts in the fulfilment of his mandate.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We once again welcome you, Minister Popolizio Bardales, to the Security Council. I take this opportunity to commend Ambassadors Meza-Cuadra and Allen for Council's successful visit to Colombia. We welcome the presence of Minister Holmes Trujillo García. It is always an honour to have him among us. We also thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

Since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting

Peace in 2016, Colombia has taken important steps and become a source of inspiration and an important reference for world peace. I say to Minister Holmes Trujillo García that, as Latin Americans, we feel deeply proud. We reiterate our support for the implementation of the agreement and welcome Colombia's commitment to implementing it. We also recognize the efforts and progress made by the Government in the process of reintegrating former combatants into civilian life and in providing guarantees for their safety.

However, the peace agreement continues to present significant challenges. In particular, we should like to mention two specific situations: first, the political management of the agreement and, secondly, the latter's security ramifications.

With regard to political management, we have no doubt that the Government is continuing to work to achieve national consensus on polarizing issues. We stress the importance of strengthening inclusive and coordinated dialogue. Furthermore, with regard to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, we urge the parties to continue to use the constitutionally established channels to ensure its effective functioning. We emphasize the need to preserve the independence and autonomy of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and other transitional justice mechanisms.

With regard to the security situation, despite improvements we are concerned about the killings of former combatants, community leaders and women. We are also saddened by the acts of violence and intimidation putatively carried out by organized criminal groups.

In the Dominican Republic's view, if no one is held responsible, then everyone should be held responsible. We therefore stress that diluting responsibility for atrocity crimes by having them shouldered by one generic, non-specific group jeopardizes social cohesion and non-repetition. In name of the victims, those who mourn them and Colombian men and women, we urge the authorities to spare no effort in identifying those responsible and punishing them as soon as possible so as to eliminate impunity once and for all, discourage violence and guarantee improved protection.

We commend the pact for life signed between the Government of Colombia and civil society organizations. It is also time to call for greater focus on the more than 7,000 ex-combatants outside the territorial areas for

training and reintegration, to ensure the holding of peaceful regional elections scheduled for October.

We underscore the commitment of the Government to developing an action plan on youth, peace and security to catalyse the potential of young people and their contributions to the implementation of the peace agreement. In that regard, we congratulate Mr. Ruiz Massieu and his team for their excellent work and recognition by all Council members and those who participated in this week's briefing on youth, peace and security (see S/PV.8577), highlighting as a best practice the strategy of the Colombian Verification Mission to implement resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018).

Lastly, we call on international organizations to support Colombia's peacebuilding efforts with a view to the future. We urge Colombians to work for their future and to leave their past behind.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are delighted to see you, Mr. Minister, preside over the Security Council. We are also pleased to see Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Counsellor Archila and the entire Colombian delegation among us today. We thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary General (S/2019/530) and for his detailed briefing on the Mission's work and developments in the country over the past three months.

Everyone with whom we spoke during the visit underscored the important role played by the Verification Mission and the need for its presence in the country as an important factor in ensuring the implementation of the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace.

The report of the Secretary-General prepared us very well for a successful mission to the country, which took place from 11 to 14 July. We thank the Government of Colombia and the Verification Mission for the excellent organization of the visit. At today's meeting, we will base our statement on our impressions we took back from the visit, because it is better to see things once than hear about them 100 times. We were able to see the situation with our own eyes and to understand at first-hand the country's delicate social fabric and the difficulties and successes in implementing the peace agreement.

A notable part of our visit was learning about an incredible fruit called the “tree tomato”, which has great consumer appeal. The representative of the United Kingdom cannot even imagine how well he hit the nail on the head, because when he mentioned Russia as a prospective export market for that fruit I was searching the Internet for places to buy it in New York. I do not believe that Russia is the only potential export market for it. Perhaps even the European Union might want to be involved, in particular Germany, as I seem to recall that my friend Mr. Heusgen also quite enjoyed the product.

Turning now to serious matters, I would like to begin by confirming that Colombia is a fine example of effective international assistance for stabilization in any country. That support was possible because Colombians themselves brokered the life-changing final peace agreement. Over the past two and a half years since it was signed, a great deal has been done in the country. In 2017, the process of the handover of weapons by former combatants was concluded and, very recently, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace fully began its work. Those positive steps ensure that the Colombian peace process enjoys the support of the Secretary-General and the Security Council. We welcome the commitment of the Government to its obligations under the peace agreement. We again received assurances of that during our visit to Colombia. That commitment needs to be continued and put into practice, although we understand that that is not always easy.

The most striking example of such commitment in the past three months was the signing by President Iván Duque Márquez on 6 June of the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. It is no secret to anyone that disagreements surrounding that document had polarized the society for quite some time, in spite of the fact that it is stipulated in the final peace agreement. Many such difficult but necessary decisions will have to be taken in the future. That is why we fully agree with the Secretary-General that the impending constitutional reforms in Colombia require broad internal dialogue. At this critical stage, the Government’s most important task should be that of unifying society.

However, apart from that much remains to be done along the long road to genuine stabilization. During our visit, we heard criticisms about the stalled agrarian reform and the insufficient funding of Government programmes. We heard concerns about the future fate of the territorial areas for reintegration, which are key

for people returning to a normal peaceful life. Former combatants who laid down their arms must become full-fledged members of Colombian society, with the same political and socioeconomic rights and opportunities.

One important aspect of which many have spoken is ensuring security in areas that have been liberated from the internal armed conflict. As we see in the report of the Secretary-General, the absence of the State in vast areas is leading to an increased risk of insecurity for the civilian population, including for disarmed former combatants. Their lives are threatened by illegal armed formations attempting to gain control over territory. We heard a great deal of testimony to that effect during the mission. We very well understand that people do not have many options when it comes to ensuring their security. They can either rely on the protection of the Government or they can take up arms themselves. The dangers inherent in the second option need no explanation.

The same goes for agrarian reform. People do not just need to protect themselves; they also need to feed themselves. If the Government does not keep its promises, people will start growing the crops that are best able to feed them. Simply put, a failure to resolve issues of security and employment will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of dissidents. We have long followed with concern media reports that some former combatants are leaving Government programmes and rearming.

During the mission, we often asked our interlocutors what, in their view, would be the key to a successful stabilization process in the country and they told us something interesting. In addition to reintegrating former combatants and ensuring security and programmes for socioeconomic development, many civil society representatives told us that genuine peace in the country will not be possible without inclusive work with absolutely all players within Colombia, including the National Liberation Army. It is hard not to agree with that. We believe that the Government should also listen to its people’s opinion on the issue. In that context, we were pleased to see the letter sent to the Secretary-General on 26 May, underscoring readiness to find a political solution to disagreements with the Government.

In conclusion, I reiterate that here in the Council, we have repeatedly said that Colombia is a showcase of effective international support, and today it should

become a showcase for national ownership over the fate of the country. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia stands ready to continue to provide support to the Colombian peace process so long as the Government remains committed to fully implementing the final peace agreement.

Today, a reference was made to the situation concerning migrants from Venezuela, a large number of whom are in Colombia. I would like to say that the resolution to Colombia's domestic issues depends not on the situation in Venezuela, but first and foremost on Colombians themselves. We trust that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, in which Russian representatives also work, will continue to play a significant role in supporting the reintegration of the former members of armed groups into peaceful civilian life and political activity.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by welcoming you, Mr. President, and thanking you for presiding over today's meeting.

I would also like to welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, to the Council. I would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his comprehensive and valuable briefing on the most significant achievements and challenges to peace in Colombia.

I would like to commend the measures taken by the Government of President Iván Duque Márquez and its commitment to continuing to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. I must also thank the delegations of Peru and the United Kingdom for organizing the visit to Colombia. I thank the Government for facilitating the mission and everyone who participated in its success.

Colombians have proven to the world that Colombia can overcome the past, after signing the peace agreement to end the conflict and build peace, along with continued efforts to implement the historic agreement. The agreement has ended a conflict that lasted for more than half a century, claimed many lives, injured a great number and left many missing. It is an example for the whole world on how to end conflicts through diplomacy and negotiation. One of the most important challenges facing the implementation of the agreement is the socioeconomic reintegration of former

members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

Given what we saw during our mission, we agree with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/530) that the most important challenge is the lack of adequate, timely funding to implement all aspects of the transition and the dearth of opportunities to gain access to land through legal means. However, we highly appreciate the Government's efforts to facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of former FARC-EP members through various initiatives, plans and projects that have been adopted by the National Council on Economic and Social Policy.

We look forward to achieving the objectives of the reintegration process through the efforts of the Government and local communities and authorities and gradual transition processes involving the provision of food and basic services until long-term measures for regional training and reintegration efforts are formulated after August 15. We underscore the importance of the illicit crop substitution programme, providing legal and security guarantees to former members of the FARC-EP, and overcoming all challenges to implementing all aspects of the peace agreement.

Unfortunately, the killings of and threats against community leaders, including women and indigenous leaders, and human rights defenders are continuing. It has been confirmed that nearly 230 killings have taken place since the signing of the peace agreement, as Mr. Ruiz Massieu mentioned.

In addition to a number of prevention and protection initiatives, we commend the measures taken by the Government to revitalize the Comprehensive Programme on Guarantees for Women Human Rights Defenders and Leaders. We also applaud all the Government's efforts to re-establish its authority over all territories and to hold all criminals accountable. We hope that the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which was adopted on 6 June, will serve as the main pillar to help build the confidence necessary to create a conducive security and political environment. We look forward to peaceful elections with a large turnout in October, as well as to the completed implementation of all aspects of the peace agreement.

Finally, we commend ongoing efforts to promote the peace process through the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

and in cooperation with national and local authorities, civil society, international organizations and the private sector. We also commend the Mission's efforts to involve young people and youth organizations. I must also emphasize the important role played by women in implementing the peace agreement, as well as in development, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): Let me thank the presidency of Peru for having put the issue of Colombia on the agenda. Your presence here today, Mr. President, is a sign of the importance that you attach to this agenda item. The visit to Colombia was, for me personally, an eye-opener. I think it was a very important trip; it showed the unity of the Security Council.

I can only echo what my friend Ambassador Nebenzia said about friendly competition with regard to the tree tomatoes. Ambassador Nebenzia actually gave the tree tomatoes to the wonderful pilots of the helicopter. I took them home and gave them to my children, who loved them. He is indeed right that it is very difficult to buy them in New York, but if Ambassador Nebenzia is ready to support Colombian products, I am happy to show him where he can buy Colombian avocados in New York. I could tell him now, but we are probably not allowed to do any product placement here in the Security Council.

I would also like to thank Colombia and the Colombian Government for their wonderful hospitality. Foreign Minister Trujillo García spent two days with us there. I do not know how much how much work or pleasure there was for him in this visit, but for us it was a pleasure and I would like to thank him, as well as the Counsellor and the Ambassador. When we were there, it was very clear how important this peace process is for the country, the Government and the people. When he mentioned that this struggle endured for 50 years, it made me think of how it has gone on for longer than the division of Germany. We saw how deep this conflict runs and how difficult it is to overcome, with its many wounds, the many victims and the distrust. Therefore, I would like to highlight two things.

First, the current situation in Colombia really serves as a source of inspiration to all of those around the world who are still coping with conflict, proving that even long-lasting conflicts can be overcome. I believe that this is what Ambassador Ndong Mba said earlier; he also gave a very impressive speech when we were at the territorial area in Cauca.

Secondly, I would also commend the Colombian Government. Of course, we know that in the election campaign for the presidential elections, then-candidate Duque Márquez was perhaps not the most enthusiastic about the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. But having met with him, I must commend him for his political leadership, because he has clearly demonstrated that now, as a President, he is fully committed to the agreement. The fact that, during our trip, he gave the presidency a letter asking for the continuation of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia is a clear indication of his political commitment. Moreover, the fact that the Colombian Government has decided to prolong financial support for the reintegration of former combatants is another indicator of their commitment to the peace agreement.

I would also like to reiterate our strong support for the Verification Mission. While we were there, we saw how popular Special Representative Ruiz Massieu is in the country. I do not know who is more popular — Mr. Ruiz Massieu or footballer Mr. James Rodríguez — but in any case he does a very important job and we wish to thank him and his team, as well as the United Nations country team.

I do not want to speak for a long time, but I would like to echo a point that Special Representative Ruiz Massieu made. The implementation of the agreement is very important. The former combatants that are not in the territorial areas now need to be included. We saw how committed the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) fighters in the territorial areas are and how engaged they are in their work. The way in which this community has been established among former FARC-EP fighters and indigenous populations is truly exemplary. However, many of them remain on the outside. Therefore, including them and including women — both former women FARC-EP fighters and women and children in general — is really important. Here I would like to commend the Mission for its youth, peace and security strategy.

Everyone around the table has spoken about the killing of former FARC-EP fighters, social leaders and human rights defenders. This something that we are all concerned about, including the Government. We can only encourage the Government to do its utmost to fight impunity and fight for accountability. I know how difficult that is. Colombia is a huge country, but I think

that no effort can be spared to enlarge the presence of the State in all regions. Ensuring the presence of the Administration, security and also some very basic infrastructure, such as schooling for children, is extremely important.

I would also like to highlight one part of our very full, rich programme — our Peruvian friends did not allow us one minute of free time. We had a meeting with the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Unit for the Search for Persons deemed Missing in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict. I was really impressed by their commitment, professionalism and willingness to really contribute to the reconciliation of the Colombian people. I would urge the Government to continue adequate financial support for these institutions. Given regional activity in the wake of the new provisions, one should not raise uncertainty about the legal status of former FARC-EP fighters.

I would like to echo what my American colleague said with regard to coca production and counter-narcotics. The figures are indeed alarming. Germany fully supports the eradication programme and call for them to be conducted on a voluntary basis. I know it is very cumbersome, but the voluntary programmes linked with the new cadastres that are being established for the distribution of land are, I think, the only way. Germany is opposed to the forced eradication and forced aerial spraying of coca crops. I know it is an easy solution and some are in favour of it, but we believe that it is not good for the environment, it is bad for people's health and it does not serve its purpose. There are statistics according to which voluntary eradication sees 1 per cent of people going back to grow coca again, while with forced eradication that rises to 40 per cent. We therefore call for the continuation of the voluntary programmes only.

Germany will continue to support Colombia bilaterally. We have had wonderful, long-term relations with the country since the era of Alexander von Humboldt. We know the burden it is bearing due to the refugees from Venezuela and we support it bilaterally as well as through the post-conflict multi-partner trust fund for Colombia. We also support the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, which we discussed yesterday in our meetings on transitions (see S/PV.8579), as we know how important it is for Colombia, too.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buyswerwe (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and Foreign Minister Trujillo García for his presence today in the Security Council.

I would also like to thank the delegations of Peru and the United Kingdom, as well as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the Colombian authorities for organizing our trip last week. As all my colleagues who preceded me have said, it was a valuable opportunity for the Council to express its support for the peace process and to better understand the challenges facing Colombia in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

Belgium welcomes the strong commitment expressed by all parties during the visit. From President Duque Márquez, leaders of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), heads of peace-agreement institutions, representatives of civil society organizations and former combatants from Santa Rosa to Cauca and the communities with which the latter live, the main message we heard was the need and desire to make the peace agreement work. I personally left Colombia convinced that, despite the considerable challenges, the country continues to set a shining example to the regions of the world in conflict that need inspiration.

The request to extend the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia is a clear sign of this commitment. We also recognize the progress made in the reintegration of ex-combatants, the pursuit of a pragmatic solution for the 24 concentration areas, the approval of national and regional development plans and the proposal to strengthen the land registry. It is now important to bolster these reintegration and rural-reform efforts.

The October elections will be an important stage in the political reintegration of the FARC. We urge the authorities to protect social leaders, human rights defenders, candidates and FARC politicians in the run-up to the elections. Women leaders, in particular, are vulnerable. It is deeply worrying to note that, since the signing of the peace agreement, the murders of 123 former combatants and several hundred social leaders have been confirmed. Too often, the perpetrators have not been held to account. Security guarantees are therefore needed, especially in the context of a broader

extension of the full presence of the State into former conflict areas.

Belgium welcomes the adoption of the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which is consolidating its autonomy and independence and is the cornerstone of the restorative-justice model in Colombia. I also commend the work of the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed Missing in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict. These transitional-justice institutions must be given adequate resources to carry out their mandate. While recognizing that the vast majority of former FARC combatants are honouring their commitments under the peace agreement, I stress that it is crucial that all FARC leaders set an example and actively contribute to telling the truth in all the cases being considered by the Special Jurisdiction. The actions of a small minority of detractors of the agreement must not be instrumentalized by others to undermine the implementation of the agreement, which requires the continuous courage of all political actors.

Belgium is monitoring, in particular, the situation of children in armed conflict. We encourage the Government to prioritize the protection of children, and I commend the Colombian Family Welfare Institute for its work. We remain very concerned about the sharp increase in the recruitment and use of children, primarily by non-State armed groups.

We regret the persistent polarized atmosphere around elements of the peace agreement, which demonstrates the need for inclusive dialogue among all political actors. Everyone must overcome mistrust and unite behind peace.

There is no doubt that the historic decision to end the armed conflict was the right one, despite the current challenges. This morning, we spoke at length about the now-famous tomatoes (see S/PV.8580), and it is true that to see these ex-combatants, who for years lived with weapons in their hands, today devoting their energy to growing tomatoes is a powerful image.

I assure all parties of Belgium's unwavering support for the peace process.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his informative briefing. I also thank Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García for his presence in the Council today. Let me also

extend my gratitude to the Government of Colombia, the personnel of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the Secretariat and the leads of the Security Council visiting mission, in particular Peru and the United Kingdom, for all the efforts they undertook to prepare a very successful and important visit to Colombia. Briefings by Government officials and sincere dialogue with former members of guerrilla groups, social leaders and inhabitants of territorial areas for training and reintegration, vastly improved our knowledge about the struggles with the reconciliation process and obstacles to a full implementation of the peace agreement.

Despite the numerous challenges, the signing of the peace agreement between Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the implementation process that followed is rightly being considered a success story and a great example for others to follow. That puts additional pressure on the signatories of the agreement and the Security Council so as to ensure that the progress achieved does not vanish. We have to recall the message of President Duque Márquez — to focus on what unites rather than divides Colombians.

We are pleased to see that the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the last missing piece of the legal framework for Colombia's restorative model of transitional justice, is finally in place. It gives the tribunal a solid legal framework to work autonomously and independently. We hope that all components of this comprehensive legal system will have the necessary resources to carry out its critical functions.

Despite the efforts of the Government, there is still need for greater guarantees of protection for human rights defenders and social leaders. The National Commission on Security Guarantees has a clear role to play to safeguard the focus of its action plans. This is particularly important in the run-up to October's local and regional elections, where acts of aggression and intimidation of the candidates could occur even more frequently.

It is deeply concerning that during the reporting period, 14 additional former members of FARC-EP were killed. Taking into consideration that this correlates with the growing presence of criminal armed groups in areas vacated by the FARC-EP, the State must urgently act to establish an effective presence and control in those areas.

Full political, legal and socioeconomic reintegration of former FARC-EP members is necessary to create trust and confidence in the peace process. In this context, I would also like to emphasize the role of women, whose participation is crucial. We are satisfied to recall the mission's observation that the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común are strongly committed to this issue. Their respective leaders are now responsible for providing sustainable economic opportunities for their people.

We welcome the approval of the Government's national development plan with its road map for stabilization aimed at expanding public investments in conflict-affected regions of the country. Furthermore, we note that the 16 development programmes with a territorial focus have finally begun. These plans can give much needed hope to people in the neglected areas.

We understand the complicated situation of the legal status of the 24 territorial areas for training and reintegration that are authorized until 15 August and hope that the necessary arrangements agreed with the FARC will soon be in place. The views of local communities should also be taken into account, as they express fear that the departure of the territorial areas for training and reintegration will negatively impact their security, social and economic conditions.

According to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/530), roughly 1 in 10 former combatants have disabilities stemming from the armed conflict. This is an area in which we have not done enough. Ground-breaking resolution 2475 (2019), which was adopted unanimously in June, is a significant first step towards mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities across the United Nations, including in the peace and security context.

In conclusion, let me underline Poland's support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations country team.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Like others, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing. We warmly recall our visit to Colombia and appreciate his help and that of his team in facilitating that very important trip. Let me also welcome Foreign Minister Carlos Trujillo García to the Security Council and thank him for the warm hospitality that was accorded to us in Colombia. I would also like to thank Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra and his able team for their excellent arrangements. I need to

mention that in the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, who is presiding over this meeting. I thank them once again.

From the briefing and the Council's visit to Colombia, I would like to address several key issues. First, Indonesia welcomes the many positive developments that have occurred in fulfilling the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially the strong commitment to the reintegration process by the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC).

We also welcome the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which was enacted in June, which was the last missing piece in the legal framework for Colombia's restorative model of transitional justice. It will provide the tribunal with a solid legal framework to work independently and autonomously.

We strongly commend the people of Colombia for their courage and resolve to achieve peace and stability in their own country. Their commitment to the peace process is exemplary. I certainly concur with my colleague, the representative of the Russian Federation, who mentioned the importance of a nationally led Colombian peace process.

Secondly, we acknowledge the very timely mission of the Security Council to Colombia last week. It gave us the unique opportunity to witness first-hand the accomplishments achieved thus far, as well as the challenges in implementing the peace agreement. We were able to demonstrate the unified solidarity of the international community with the Government and the people of Colombia in their effort to restore peace, stability and security. Our presence was a positive affirmation and sign of support for the determination of the Government and the FARC in a peace process that benefits all Colombians. Many at this table and in other contexts during our visit to Colombia have mentioned requests for continued assistance from the Council and the United Nations, including the continuation of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, a request that I believe the Council will certainly grant.

Thirdly, like others, we are concerned about the ongoing attacks on and killings of former combatants, community leaders and human rights defenders. But, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/530) also noted, we are very much encouraged by the intention, expressed by President Duque Márquez, to respond

swiftly to ensure that all responsible individuals are brought to justice. We had a very open discussion on the intention to provide protection, which is a very positive sign when it comes from the President himself.

We believe that the Colombian Government has the capacity and capability to resolve all issues on the ground. However, it cannot undertake that enormous task alone. Indonesia calls upon the international community to mobilize adequate resources in that regard and also to assist in bringing peace to Colombia. We have always stood ready to assist, including by sharing our experiences and best practices on reintegration and reconciliation and with illicit-drug crops, with which we have also had experience in the past. We share the plight of the Colombian Government, as well as a programme on crops for peace, including palm oil.

We concur with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu on the need to redouble efforts to reintegrate former combatants and to implement development programmes and additional projects to substitute for the cultivation of illicit drugs. My colleagues have mentioned only tomatoes — I do not know why tomatoes are so important — but especially since we have also seen other projects, involving, namely, local handicrafts. I believe we improved the economy of the wives of former combatants by buying all of their nice bags and caps. I bought one myself and I know the representative of the United States did so as well. I think many other projects of this type have to be carried out.

During our trip, we heard a great deal about challenges, difficulties and obstacles, but in our open discussion with the former combatants on coca, there was a plea by the wife of a former combatant and a member of a women's non-governmental organization on the need to also prioritize the inclusion of women in the peace process. And I certainly concur with the representative of Poland on the need to focus on the plight of women combatants, which is an important point that I would like to underline once again.

Lastly, we must not lose the existing positive momentum as we encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to implement the peace agreement. The Security Council should also continue to effectively assist the Government with its peacemaking efforts. Let Colombia continue to be a success story for the Council — a nationally led story of peace.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): At the outset, let me start by thanking and congratulating the delegations of Peru and the United Kingdom, as President of the Council and penholder on Colombia, respectively, for leading a very successful mission to the country last week. The visit by the Council was aimed at improving its understanding of the status of the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the challenges faced by the country. South Africa agrees that the mission was successful.

I would also like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Colombia, Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, to today's meeting. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his informative briefing and the good work he and his team are doing in the country.

The consolidation of peace after decades of conflict and mistrust is not an easy task. We wish to commend the Government of Colombia for its efforts aimed at implementing the peace agreement. South Africa's position is informed by its principled stance that the only viable sustainable solution for the conflict lies in a negotiated and inclusive political settlement that is in the interests of and nationally led by the people of Colombia. South Africa therefore fully supports the final peace agreement that was signed between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in 2016 and believes that it must be implemented in its entirety and in a comprehensive manner, ensuring the inclusion of youth, women and civil society and the protection of their interests.

South Africa has also noted the progress made on the demobilization and reintegration process of members of the FARC-EP, which should be commended. In this regard, we call on all political parties to fully respect and remain committed to the agreement and continue to desist from any actions that may undermine its comprehensive implementation. In this context, South Africa also welcomes the recent positive steps taken by the Government in enacting the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and approving the national development plan. This plan lays the foundation for the Government to continue its initiative to integrate the former members of the FARC-EP and ensure that they have decent lives.

South Africa also agrees with the Secretary-General's observation that the integration of Colombian society means that even historically excluded areas in Colombia need to be brought into the fold in order to ensure a smooth transition into the new era. The new plan can be used as a basis for identifying peace-related activities within a broader set of public investments in all the regions affected by the conflict. In this regard, South Africa agrees with the Secretary-General's assessment that such efforts, especially the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, are the last missing pieces of the legal framework for Colombia's transitional-justice model. Although there is a lot of work to be done going forward, the country is on a positive trajectory towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

It is important to deepen efforts to de-escalate tensions and advance the reintegration process. We remain concerned about the security of all stakeholders. It should be noted that integration cannot be achieved if all parties to the peace process are not guaranteed their personal security. South Africa is concerned about the increased killing of FARC-EP members and social and community leaders. We urge all parties to refrain from any actions that could undermine the building of the much-needed trust among all communities and to make positive efforts in this regard, which can be achieved only with the cooperation of all communities — particularly the youth and women in these communities, who are most disproportionately affected by the conflict — the Government, former combatants and institutional mechanisms and frameworks designed to prevent future violence and tensions.

It is our responsibility as the international community and, in particular, the United Nations through the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to support full compliance with the agreements reached between the parties concerning the monitoring and verification of the bilateral and definitive ceasefire, as well as the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms. It became increasingly visible during the visit of the Security Council that the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia is important and invaluable for the peace process and the implementation of the peace agreement.

It is encouraging that the Government has taken a flexible approach in relation to the FARC-EP with respect to the arrangements on the future of the 24 territorial areas for training and reintegration when the reintegration status ends on 15 August. It is

encouraging that the Government has extended the date to clarify the status of these territorial areas for training and reintegration because it is a positive step towards addressing the security concerns of these communities. However, to ensure that the former combatants have adequate access to economic opportunities, the Government must swiftly approve plans for the disbursement of funding for economic activities and initiatives.

South Africa's own experience with its Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed that its process was crucial for achieving national unity. Hearing the different views and versions of events of all communities in Colombia will ensure that the road to peace is based on an inclusive political process. A lasting comprehensive peace can be achieved only with the involvement of all stakeholders. It is also important for the Government to speak with one voice in an effort to consolidate national unity and reconciliation. South Africa therefore calls on all parties to respect the constitutionally mandated mechanisms and frameworks established to assist the political and judicial transition.

Let me conclude by stating that South Africa urges States Members of the United Nations and international partners to support and encourage the people of Colombia to preserve and fully implement the final peace agreement in a comprehensive manner, address the concerns and rights of victims to truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition, as well as inclusive dialogue and a peaceful settlement. We also support and look forward to the extension of the Verification Mission for a period of one year.

For Foreign Minister Trujillo García and his delegation, I would like to note that a Nelson Mandela peace bench was unveiled yesterday by the South African, Norway and the Nobel Peace communities to mark the one-hundred-first anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. This bench, which is located at the visitor's entrance of the building in which we sit today, has a simple quotation from Nelson Mandela inscribed on it: "The best weapon is to sit down and talk". We hope that the people of Colombia will continue to sit down, talk and negotiate, because we believe that by doing so lasting peace will return to their country.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Foreign Minister Popolizio Bardales as he presides over today's meeting and thanks Foreign Minister Trujillo García for his participation. I also

thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

We just heard the briefing on the Security Council's visit to Colombia (see S/PV.8580). China welcomes the positive results of the visit and also wishes to thank the Government of Colombia for its cooperation and hospitality.

The Colombian peace process is essential for achieving comprehensive peace and stability in Colombia. It is also of great value for regional peace and security and development. In the recent period, the Colombian Government has continued to advance the peace process and make progress, particularly in such aspects as strengthening national institution-building, promoting economic and rural development, developing crop substitutions and facilitating the reintegration of former combatants. China commends these achievements.

At the same time, Colombia is still facing challenges in fully implementing the peace agreement. In some regions, the security situation remains fragile. All parties should continue making efforts to enhance mutual trust, provide assistance for the social and economic reintegration of former combatants, take practical measures to guarantee the security of former combatants and their communities, promote development in former-conflict areas and strengthen support for remote areas.

Recent differences in views among the relevant parties in Colombia on such issues as the statutory law of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace have been resolved through legal channels, with the joint efforts of all parties. China welcomes this achievement and hopes that the parties in Colombia will advance the peace process as a top priority, persevere in the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement, strengthen inclusive political dialogue and accelerate economic and social reconstruction. We hope that the Colombian Government will continue to hold peace talks with the parties concerned and create favourable conditions for the realization of comprehensive peace, stability and development in Colombia as soon as possible.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia have made important contributions to promoting the Colombian peace process and enhancing the country's security, stability and economic and social development. China commends them for their

efforts. We hope that the Mission will continue on the basis of respect for the the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Colombia, to strengthen communication with the Colombian parties, increase trust and resolve suspicions, and advance the national peace process with a view towards making further achievements.

China stands ready to work with other members of the Security Council to help advance the Colombian peace process and achieve comprehensive peace, stability and development in Colombia as soon as possible.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

We would like to 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. I also wish to specially commend the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, in today's meeting and, through him, convey to President Iván Duque Márquez and his Government our profound gratitude for having invited and received members of the Security Council in his country. We consider that our visit allowed us to gain a more precise understanding of the situation in Colombia, in particular with regard to the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the challenges it entails, as well as the efforts, progress and unwavering commitment of the Government and the people of Colombia to achieve peace.

That there is no turning back in bringing about peace in Colombia is the message that has resonated loud and clear, and we trust that the Security Council will echo this message and stand united, together with the international community, in supporting this process, which is an example for the world. We highlight the efforts of the "peace with legality" plan to comprehensively address the implementation of the relevant agreements, such as those related to comprehensive rural reform, crop-substitution programmes, the strengthening of State presence so as to improve access to services and security, and the social and economic reintegration of former combatants. In particular, we commend the notable progress made in the area of the reintegration process, for example, through the territorial areas for

training and reintegration that we saw first-hand and which play a fundamental role in constructive collective and individual projects, access to land and the effective integration within local communities.

We acknowledge the outstanding work and the enormous resources that are being dedicated to the creation and development of job opportunities, disbursing monthly incomes, setting up a health-care and pension system and reinforcing security measures both inside and outside the territorial areas. These efforts reaffirm the Government's commitment to and the former combatants' confidence in reaffirming their decision that violence cannot be the way forward. In this regard, we underline the measures adopted by the Government, such as the Action Plan for the Protection of Social and Community Leaders, Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, to improve the security of communities, social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants confronted by the threat of criminal groups exploiting the vulnerability of rural areas. Together with the Government, the Security Council and the Colombian people as a whole, Peru is concerned about the killings of social leaders and ex-combatants whose only crime is their commitment to peace, and we express our full support for the Government's efforts to address that situation, in particular through stepped-up cooperation between the security forces and local authorities on the ground.

We are well aware of the need to redouble our efforts in combating illicit drug trafficking and illegal mining, which threaten the peace and sustainable development of our countries. In this regard, in the light of our positive experiences in Peru, we stress the importance of crop-substitution programmes as an alternative source for providing economic and commercial opportunities to rural areas with the participation of local communities. In this regard, the peace agreement contains an important human component that takes into account the specific needs of rural communities, indigenous and ethnic groups and women and young people, who are called upon to play a fundamental role in the implementation of the agreement and to promote and strengthen the reconciliation of the Colombian people.

As part of the reconciliation process, we must pay tribute to the victims whose commitment also made it possible to achieve peace. There is a moral duty owed to the victims beyond civil reparations, and we believe that the components of the Comprehensive System

of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition are helping achieve this purpose.

Finally, I acknowledge and welcome the role played by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and thank its outstanding team for the dedication, professionalism and excellence with which they are carrying out their mandate. We fully support the efforts of the Mission in Colombia and welcome the request of President Iván Duque Márquez on behalf of the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común to extend its mandate for another year.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming in the Security Council the commitment of Peru to the peace process in Colombia, which — we will never tire of saying it — serves as an example and model not only for Latin America, but for the whole world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Trujillo García (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/530), which covers the period from 27 March to 26 June. I also thank the members of the Security Council for their valuable and constructive visit to Colombia last week.

For Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia plays a major role in the process of implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace through forward-looking reforms for its implementation based on consensus and institutional mechanisms, which is part of the mandate that the Colombian people conferred upon President Iván Duque Márquez to provide all Colombians peace with legality and legality with security. For this reason, the President has requested the Security Council and the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the Mission for another year.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General acknowledges in his report the commitment of the national Government to the implementation of the Final Agreement through actions and the adoption of concrete measures, some of which go beyond the initial

obligations in the strictest sense and have enabled us to achieve the significant progress described in the report in all areas of the Mission's mandate. We also appreciate the acknowledgement that these efforts have gone beyond the implementation of the Final Agreement and are now part of a broader Government agenda aimed at the positive transformation of territories and the living conditions and opportunities of their inhabitants as embodied by the national development plan, entitled "Pact for Colombia, pact for equity".

Legality, the strengthening of institutions and the full application of the rule of law in Colombia are one of the pillars on which the national development plan has been drafted. These same principles guide the Government's position on the institutions established in the Final Agreement, including, of course, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the importance of which has been acknowledged and reiterated at every turn.

The objections raised by the President of the Republic to the draft statutory law on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, motivated by a legitimate concern shared by a large number of citizens, were dealt with through the procedure provided for in the Constitution, with the involvement of the Congress of the Republic and the Constitutional Court, in the full exercise of their powers. Once this procedure was completed, this law was enacted on 6 June and is already in force, which shows that the institutional path was a safe and properly planned path, as the Council was informed on several occasions.

We will continue to support the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition in order to fulfil the lofty purposes for which it was established and to meet the expectations of all Colombians, in particular the victims. For the same reasons and through institutional channels, we will also continue to promote the changes and reforms we consider appropriate so as to ensure peace without impunity, such as the initiative that establishes that, in future, sexual crimes against children will be adjudicated within the ordinary justice system. In this regard, the constitutional reform set forth in Legislative Act 02 of 2019, approved by a large majority of Colombia's Congress and promulgated on 15 July, should be understood to provide that neither kidnapping nor drug trafficking can be considered political or related crimes and therefore cannot be amnestied or pardoned. These are some of the reforms that have been planned and will be planned in future.

Let me turn now to a key aspect of the Mission's mandate: the reintegration of members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). As the Secretary-General's report highlights, my country's Government will continue with complete determination to honour its commitment to ensuring the successful reintegration of more than 10,500 ex-combatants who continue to participate in the process and genuinely remain on the right side of the law. We are pleased to see that, like the Government, the vast majority of ex-combatants comply with what has been agreed, and we remain optimistic about their future civilian life.

However, I must mention an event that occurred subsequent to the publication of the report before us today, which is causing enormous consternation to the Government and in broad sectors of Colombian society, namely, the decision by one of the leaders of the FARC-EP, Seuxis Paucias Hernández Solarte, also known as Jesús Santrich, to abandon his protection scheme on 30 June, when he was in a territorial area for training and reintegration close to the border with Venezuela. By taking such a decision, Santrich sought to evade justice, as he was due to appear before the Supreme Court of Justice on 9 June in a preliminary investigation into his alleged involvement in drug-trafficking crimes after the signing of the Final Agreement, not to mention the breach of his obligations under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We deplore the fact that a person in a leadership position within his organization — to such an extent that on 11 June he took office as a Member of Congress, as the report points out — evades justice, shirks his obligations to the victims and takes advantage of the good faith of all Colombians. We are also concerned about the fact that various FARC-EP leaders do not honour their commitments, which is why non-compliance cases should be opened. Several names should be mentioned here but, for the purposes of today's meeting, I will simply say that 16 per cent of the leadership of the former guerrilla group have not disclosed the truth or attended hearings, show very little interest in reparations to victims and have not made a genuine commitment to the guarantees for non-repetition, as their current whereabouts are unknown.

We welcome the fact that the political party Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) has rejected Santrich's behaviour and distanced itself from statements and actions that imply non-compliance

with the responsibilities under the Final Agreement. The conduct of Mr. Hernández Solarte and some of his associates, such as Luciano Marín Arango, also known as Ivan Márquez, Hernán Velásquez Saldarriaga, also known as El Paisa, and Henry Castellanos Garzón, also known as Romaña, deserves the repudiation of all of society, but in particular, of the FARC political party, as a sign of its commitment to complying with the obligations that the Final Agreement imposes on each of the parties. One of these obligations, which the Government continues to make progress in fulfilling, is to strengthen security conditions for FARC political party candidates ahead of the regional and local elections to be held in October, as a further step towards the political reintegration of former combatants. On 8 July, President Iván Duque Márquez presented a transparency and security plan for territorial elections, which includes specific measures for the FARC political party, in terms of institutional support, security and protection, in addition to the general measures adopted for all candidates in the national electoral-guarantees plan.

Progress has also been made in the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants. The report gives an account of 24 approved productive collective projects. Another five are being evaluated. Some 216 individual productive projects have also been approved. In total, 2,181 ex-combatants have benefited directly through the projects, which also has a positive impact on their families and, naturally, on their surroundings. Work is also being done in this area to regulate access to land for reintegration purposes, and progress has been made in employing ex-combatants, in the public and private sectors alike, thereby enabling 1,380 ex-combatants to gain access to formal employment in various sectors of the economy.

The national Government's commitment to the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants has been translated into concrete actions, to ensure the efficiency and sustainability of the economy. The institutional offer to guarantee attention in this area is maintained and strengthened both for the more than 3,000 ex-combatants in the territorial areas for training and reintegration and for the more than 8,000 who preferred to reintegrate into civil life outside those areas. I would like to reiterate that, although the term for the territorial areas for training and reintegration will expire in August, the national Government will not abandon to their fate those who are in them. As the

report acknowledges, the Government is committed to the orderly management of the transition of those areas, which from the beginning, were meant to be temporary.

I would now like to address the second main component of the Mission's mandate: security guarantees. In his report, the Secretary-General expresses concern about the assassinations of former FARC-EP members since the signing of the Final Agreement — a concern shared by the national Government. The Colombian State and society have emphatically expressed their rejection of such developments, and the President of Colombia himself has ordered the adoption of measures to improve the safety of ex-combatants by ensuring their protection in a comprehensive manner. Similarly, the competent authorities work with the utmost diligence to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the crimes, while focusing their efforts on the regions with the highest incidence of threats to the lives of ex-combatants, so as to ensure that perpetrators do not go unpunished.

As a result of all of the foregoing actions, according to reports from the elite corps of the police, the number of murders of ex-combatants decreased from 32 in the first half of 2018 to 17 in the same period of 2019. In addition, the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the State is reflected in the fact that no murders of ex-combatants who are being reintegrated in the territorial areas for training and reintegration or who have requested protection from the State have been recorded. The greatest challenge in this area is the security situation of the former combatants who are proceeding with the reintegration process outside the territorial areas. They are dispersed throughout the national territory, and many of them are in areas where the presence of various criminal economies stimulates the activity of organized illegal armed groups.

For that reason, in addition to the specific measures adopted to protect former combatants, military and police operations are being deployed to contain the threats posed by organized illegal armed groups, and efforts are being stepped up to impede criminal economies. Currently, those two elements jointly constitute the main challenge of implementing the Final Agreement and the efforts to stabilize and consolidate a peaceful coexistence in Colombia — as expressly stated in the report on the Verification Mission. They are also the main source of threats to the security of former combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders.

The measures that have been adopted to protect the latter have led to a reduction in the number of killings since May 2019. These results, while positive, are far from satisfactory. The national Government will not be satisfied until better security conditions are in place for social leaders, communicators and human rights defenders to carry out their work and continue to positively contribute to the institutional, economic and social life of their communities. In this regard, I must mention that the Special Investigation Unit of the country's Attorney General has stated that it has solved the crimes in more than half the reported cases and in 60 per cent of the killings of social leaders, which is testament to the progress the corresponding authorities have been making on that front.

On the other hand, it is important to note — since it was mentioned — the mechanisms to fight the world drug problem, especially in relation to areas where illicit crops are cultivated. President of Duque Márquez's Government's policy is to avail itself of the whole gamut of potential mechanisms to respond to this challenge. President Duque Márquez's Government received some 206,000 hectares of illicit crops. With great effort, these numbers are beginning to decrease, which is why President Duque Márquez's Government's actions are aimed at making as many tools as possible available, including forced eradication, voluntary eradication, agreements with communities, and low-altitude spraying with all required safety and security measures, which is an opportunity that has arisen from a decision taken by the constitutional court yesterday. This court decision will make it possible to eliminate all the potential risks and make progress in that area as one of the necessary mechanisms to respond to the world drug problem in Colombia. It is very important that the Council be crystal clear in understanding that

the task of peacebuilding in the country will be much more difficult with coca, which is why fighting it constitutes effective action for guaranteeing peace and security in Colombia.

I would like to thank the Verification Mission for its support for the Government's efforts to implement the Final Agreement with forward-looking reforms through consensus and institutional mechanisms. Its work is also essential in the promotion and verification of compliance with the obligations of the FARC-EP, under the Agreement, in areas to which its contribution is key in the achievement of tangible progress, such as demining, the delivery of goods as reparations for victims, and the effective reintegration of formerly recruited children and adolescents.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the gratitude of my Government and my compatriots to all the members of the Council for its recent visit to Colombia, during which its members were able to experience first-hand the results of President Iván Duque Márquez's Government's commitment to this process, as well as the magnitude of the challenges that we face. Rather than trying to evade those challenges, we are taking them on in a committed and responsible manner. We are encouraged by our conviction that peace with legality is not only desirable but possible and necessary. We espouse the concerns of all Colombians: those of former combatants who are committed to legality, victims who are concerned about truth and just reparation, a society that calls for non-repetition, individuals that have legitimate expectations for the implementation process, and people who call for greater consensus so that the process has more legitimacy and better serves the purpose that inspires it.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.