



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8702nd meeting

Monday, 13 January 2020, 10.25 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Dang (Viet Nam)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia	Mr. Baati
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mrs. Craft

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/2019/988)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 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/2019/988)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, 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/2019/988, 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: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to introduce the most recent report of the Secretary-General on Colombia (S/2019/988) and to update the Security Council on the most recent developments. It is a pleasure to be here along with Foreign Minister Claudia Blum de Barberi and the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, Mr. Emilio Archila.

During the year that just ended Colombia continued making significant strides in its peace process, even in the face of serious challenges, particularly in terms of security for conflict-affected communities, social leaders and former combatants. Enhanced participation and improved security in the October

regional elections demonstrated the positive impact of the peace process on Colombian democracy. The Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition continued its invaluable work, with the active participation of victims. Thousands of former combatants, who only a few years ago were armed with weapons of war, continue to forge new lives through the opportunities provided by peace, despite many difficulties and security risks.

Those and many other achievements of the peace process have been possible because of the efforts of both the Colombian Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), the support of the international community, including the Council, and because Colombians around the country — social leaders, public officials, volunteers, members of the security forces, the private sector and many others — work every day to consolidate peace in their communities. Just this past Saturday, in southern Tolima, one of the regions where the conflict began a half century ago, former combatants, the armed forces and members of the community started building a bridge together for the benefit of surrounding communities. I cannot think of a more encouraging example to begin the new year than the image of former adversaries working with a local community to build a bridge together. Those hard-won gains must be protected, preserved and built upon.

The best path, as the Secretary-General again stressed in his report, is through the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. I encourage both parties to deepen their dialogue regarding any differences on the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially through the mechanisms designed by the Agreement itself, such as the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. The social mobilizations that have taken place since last November have also opened up an opportunity for constructive dialogue on peace implementation.

On 27 December 2019, in a welcome development, the reintegration road map was adopted, which establishes the framework for the long-term reintegration process. Consultations between the Government, particularly the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, and the FARC were key to the finalization of that document. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

certainly looks forward to supporting the parties in its implementation. In addition, with the approval of 12 new collective productive projects, close to 2,500 former combatants now benefit from such projects. Beyond the projects' approval and funding, it is important to ensure their long-term viability and sustainability, including through access to land, access to technical assistance and access to markets. It is also important to increase the participation of women and the involvement of local communities so that the projects help encourage development and reconciliation.

It remains necessary to continue devoting specific attention to the more than 9,000 former combatants living outside the territorial areas. They face higher security risks and additional obstacles to accessing basic services and educational, employment and productive opportunities. Former combatants with disabilities should also be given special attention. Sustained measures are also needed to provide protective environments for more than 2,000 children of former combatants.

I welcome the 128 additional accreditations for former combatants since the Secretary-General's September report as a positive first step in moving forward with this important matter. I also call upon all relevant actors to intensify efforts to resolve the situation of the former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) whose accreditations remain pending. Without proper accreditation, they are left in legal uncertainty and cannot access reintegration benefits.

The pervasive violence in conflict-affected areas continues to threaten the consolidation of peace, as illustrated by several profoundly worrying developments in the last few weeks. In his report, the Secretary-General warned of the risk of more widespread violence in the department of Chocó owing to the activities of illicit armed groups. These past two weeks, communities in Bojayá, a municipality historically affected by the conflict, denounced the fact that the illegal armed group Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia had occupied territories and confined several communities, while other communities in the area remain affected by the activities of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Last week, I met with Afro-Colombian leader Leyner Palacios from Bojayá and heard first-hand about the dire situation of those communities as well as of communities across the Pacific Coast. On 23 December, artist and social leader

Lucy Villarreal was killed in Nariño department after conducting an art workshop for children.

The killings of former FARC-EP combatants resumed on the very first day of the year, with the death, in Cauca department, of Benjamín Banguera Rosales.

The perpetrators of attacks against social leaders and former combatants must be brought swiftly to justice, including both material and intellectual authors, and more effective measures are still imperative to protect these individuals and their communities.

Peace will not be fully achieved if the brave voices of social leaders continue to be silenced through violence and if those former combatants who laid down their weapons and are committed to their reintegration continue to be killed. The announcement yesterday by the authorities that they had thwarted a planned attempt against the life of the FARC party's President, Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, alias "Timochenko", underscored the risks facing former FARC-EP members and the peace process itself and how crucially important it is to guarantee their security.

Cauca, Chocó, Nariño — the epicentres of violence remain the same, as the Secretary-General has reported repeatedly, and the underlying conditions are consistent: rural areas affected by a limited State presence and persistent poverty, and where illegal armed groups and criminal structures continue victimizing populations, especially ethnic communities, to control illicit economies.

Each of those underlying causes of violence is addressed in different parts of the peace agreement. That is yet another reason to advance urgently with its full implementation. For instance, the development programmes with a territorial focus, one of the tools envisioned in section 1 of the peace agreement, on comprehensive rural reform, are helping to bring much-needed investments for conflict-affected populations. Regarding illicit economies, the peace agreement created a crop-substitution programme to support families in transitioning away from coca cultivation to other productive endeavours. Continued support for that programme and security measures for its participants is essential. Additionally, the peace agreement provided for the development of a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal structures and their support networks through the National Commission on Security Guarantees, which met this past Wednesday. It is urgent that this policy be established and implemented

and that the Government intensify efforts to address the security situation in former conflict areas.

(spoke in Spanish)

Since 1 January, Colombia has had new local and departmental authorities, including male and female mayors, male and female governors, and members of municipal councils and departmental assemblies. These include eight former ex-combatants from the former FARC-EP who were elected to public posts.

We are encouraged by the fact that a large number of the recently elected authorities from various parties have expressed their commitment to peace and their support for the implementation of the agreement. The role of local authorities has been and remains fundamental to all peacebuilding efforts.

(spoke in English)

In conclusion, as Council members are aware, the peace agreement contains far-sighted provisions to address the multitude of challenges that have afflicted Colombia for decades. For this reason, we remain convinced that the full implementation of the peace agreement, in all its interconnected aspects, provides the best possible hope for Colombia to lay the foundations for a more peaceful and prosperous future. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations system in that country will continue to support the parties in moving forward. The support of the international community and of the Council in particular will remain key.

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

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

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Before I start on Colombia, let me thank you, Mr. President, for having arranged the two moments of silence and also used this occasion to pay tribute to His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos of Oman.

Turning to Columbia, I would like to welcome the Foreign Minister. We are very pleased to have her here and wish her all the best in her new role. I also thank the Special Representative for his report and for his briefing to the Council today. We very much share his analysis of events in Colombia over the past three months. This reflects both the achievements and the challenges of the

implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

I should also like to welcome the announcement by President Duque that he would like the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to stay in that country for the duration of his Government. That is an important indication of the Government's commitment to peace.

October saw the first local elections since the accords were reached and the first in which the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) political party took part. Despite the concerning levels of violence during the campaign, election day showed the strength and inclusivity of Colombian democracy, with more candidates from across the political spectrum competing than ever before and the highest turnout in modern times.

We were encouraged, too, by the overwhelming commitment of those elected to continue along the path to peace. The newly elected local authorities have a key role in the implementation of the peace agreement, especially through the development programmes with a territorial focus. We welcome the Government's support for these programmes, including through expanded financing, and encourage coordination between national, departmental and local authorities to ensure effective implementation.

However, there are some areas in which urgent efforts are necessary to preserve the gains of the past three years. Fortunately, the mechanisms to address them already exist; the challenge is to make more effective use of them.

First, we are deeply concerned about the persistent level of violence and threats towards human rights defenders, community leaders, including women, and former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatants. We have highlighted this point on previous occasions, but we are concerned that the situation is not improving despite the Government's stated commitment to tackling the issue. In that connection, we welcome last week's meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees and encourage full, ongoing use of that mechanism, including engagement with civil society, to further implementation. We encourage prioritization of the action plan of the Intersectoral Commission on Security, Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, which has the potential to transform departmental security conditions for the better. We

also welcome recent steps to strengthen the protection of former FARC-EP combatants and note yesterday's announcement of an operation to thwart a plan to attack FARC political party leader Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri. We encourage the Government to ensure the extension of protection measures to territorial areas for training and reintegration and informal settlement of former FARC-EP combatants.

Secondly, we urge the Colombian Government to accelerate reintegration programmes, which are crucial to maintaining the faith of ex-combatants and communities in the process. Efforts should be made to ensure legal accreditation and access to income-generating projects for former FARC-EP combatants living both inside and outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. More widely, we encourage the Government to work with all stakeholders to resolve outstanding questions about the long-term status of those areas, particularly concerning the land on which they are located.

Finally, in his report, the Special Representative emphasizes the interconnected nature of all elements of the peace process. Implementing individual components of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace may produce limited outputs, but the outcome of inclusive, stable and lasting peace in Colombia will not be possible unless all components progress simultaneously and in a coherent fashion. In that regard, we encourage the Colombian Government to take advantage of the national dialogue process it began following the recent protests to build consensus with diverse sectors and ensure that implementation continues in an effective and comprehensive manner.

The United Kingdom recognizes the important progress that has been achieved so far in Colombia. We look forward to continuing to support the Colombian Government to ensure a lasting peace enjoyed by all.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): I thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and for taking the time to be here; it is really nice to see him. I congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs on her new role; it is lovely to see her. We welcome the High Commissioner to the Council today.

Three years after the signing of the peace agreement, Colombia is to be congratulated, not only for ending decades of conflict, which is important, but also for faithfully working to heal the wounds

of the conflict. Although many challenges remain, Colombians are demonstrating their commitment to a future of peace, reconciliation and prosperity. That commitment was on full display when I travelled to Colombia in November and saw the staggering impact of the humanitarian and economic crisis in Venezuela on Colombia, which now hosts more than 1.6 million Venezuelan refugees and other displaced persons. What was especially remarkable to me was how the Colombians have responded to the plight of those less fortunate, embracing them as family despite the challenges that the Colombians are already facing. Their generosity is inspiring. The United States has hoped to mirror that example by responding to the crisis with over \$650 million of aid, with almost \$252 million directed towards the response inside Colombia, by far the highest aid package from any donor country.

My visit was also an opportunity to learn about the challenges of the peace accord's implementation and the important work being carried out by President Duque Márquez and key stakeholders. The fact that Colombia's local and regional elections in October were the most peaceful and inclusive in its recent history is a credit to their commendable efforts.

However, the United States remains deeply concerned by reports of violence against human rights defenders, social leaders and ex-combatants, as outlined in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2019/988). We support the Colombian Government's efforts to enhance protections for those groups, whose security is fundamental to a just and lasting peace. We applaud Colombia's progress on transitional justice, while recognizing that it those difficult decisions have not been made without controversy in Colombia. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed Missing in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict have made important progress, although their work is unfinished. The United States views the transitional justice mechanisms outlined in the accord as important mechanisms for peace and justice in Colombia. We also welcome actions to ensure that those who commit serious crimes post-accord are held accountable to the full extent of the law.

We must be mindful, though, that the successful implementation of the peace accord is closely linked with two other challenges, namely, Colombia's narcotics problem and the crisis in Venezuela, which threatens to destabilize the region. The United States

is committed to working with Colombia to pursue a whole-of-Government approach to counter-narcotics, rural development and rural security, including expanded manual eradication or the resumption of aerial eradication, when the requirements of Colombian law have been met. We share with Colombia the goal of reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production to half of 2017 levels by the end of 2023. Those efforts directly support peace implementation. More broadly, as I have previously noted, they boost economic development in areas with significant coca cultivation. The people of Colombia need viable economic alternatives to break out of a cycle that ultimately funds violence and impunity.

Widespread and largely peaceful social mobilizations demonstrate that Colombians are paying attention to the peace process, and we applaud the national conversations launched by President Duque Márquez in response. We hope that those conversations will facilitate the Government's efforts to ensure the reintegration of former combatants, the extension of Government presence and services into areas where they are lacking and economic opportunities for all Colombians. Colombia has a friend in the United States, and we look forward to continuing our joint efforts to not only end the conflict in the country but also to mend the wounds that it causes.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to start by showing solidarity with the people of the Niger for the death of over 89 soldiers over the weekend and by expressing our continued solidarity with our brotherly country of Haiti on another anniversary of the tragic earthquake of 2010 that cost over 300,000 lives, including 102 people working for the United Nations.

We welcome Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi. It is truly an honour to have her with us in the Security Council. We also thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

At the outset, the Dominican Republic reiterates its firm support for the peace process in Colombia and acknowledges the Colombian people's commitment to the process of achieving peace in the country. Peace has cost them dearly, and we must all remain committed to its consolidation. We cannot forget that it has been the brotherly Colombian people who have paid the highest price over years of violence. We therefore welcome the Government's efforts to address the demands and aspirations of Colombians within the framework of a

national conversation and to prioritize very specifically the issue of youth within that conversation. We hope that will culminate in the adoption of tangible joint measures to increase the people's confidence in the entire process.

We deplore the acts of violence recorded in some areas of the country resulting from the presence of illegal armed groups. We encourage the parties to ensure a safe environment free from violence for the civilian population.

Despite the challenges to its implementation, the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia remains a point of reference for building a conflict-free American continent and a clear illustration that dialogue and consultation are the only way to achieve peace. Therefore, to overcome the challenges ahead, the parties must address and resolve their differences in joint spaces such as the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the National Commission on Security Guarantees and the National Reintegration Council.

We recognize the efforts of the Government, which has committed itself to the peace process and promoted comprehensive reforms, including rural reform, as a way to combat poverty and promote the development of the communities most affected by the conflict. We stress that it is essential to continue providing educational opportunities to ex-combatants for their subsequent economic and social reintegration as agents of change and definitive reconciliation in Colombia.

We regret that, regarding the security situation, especially in rural areas, social leaders and human rights defenders who support the peace agreement and related policies continue to face heightened risks. We are particularly concerned that indigenous leaders, women leaders and human rights defenders, especially women defenders of the land and the environment, face threats to their security. Likewise, armed groups continue to violate the rights of not only Colombian children but also of Venezuelan children, who are in highly vulnerable situations. We call on the groups to commit to ending such violations.

We would like to express our recognition to the Colombian people for having peacefully exercised their right to vote in the recent district elections. We urge the authorities to step up efforts to provide the necessary guarantees to participants in the political

process, including ex-combatants. Those efforts were on display yesterday when the Government of Colombia prevented an attack on Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri “Timochenko”, a leader of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, for which I commend the Government of Colombia. All acts of violence must be investigated and prosecuted.

We hope that all parties concerned, including civil society, local communities and the private sector, will decisively stay the course, value the progress made in the peace process and prioritize the full implementation of the agreement. These goals can be achieved through inclusive dialogue, building trust among all the parties and promoting peace through development.

In conclusion, the Dominican Republic reiterates its support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and encourage it to continue working tirelessly with all stakeholders, including the United Nations country team, civil society and local communities, on the road to lasting peace based on the promotion and preservation of Colombia’s national unity.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I wish to thank you personally, Sir, for having called the two minutes of silence on Haiti and the Niger before the meeting. On this occasion, I would like to convey to the Ambassador of the Niger the condolences of the Government and the people of Germany for the heavy loss his country has suffered.

I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Claudia Blum de Barberi, for several reasons. First, she is of German descent, so we are very happy to have her here. Secondly, her presence here, like that of her predecessors, really signifies that the Colombian Government is fully supportive of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. As our British colleague just said, we welcome the President’s announcement regarding the extension of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia until the end of its mandate is a very welcome signal because the Colombian peace agreement continues to be a source of inspiration for all those people engaged in seeking to resolve complex conflict.

On a further positive note, I think the recent local and regional elections were a positive sign. The high rate of participation and the participation of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) for the first time as a political party was a very important

signal of the gradual advance towards a more inclusive and democratic Colombia. Moreover, during the recent demonstrations and mobilization, many young people in Colombia have called for the preservation and full implementation of the of the peace agreement, so I would encourage the new Government, through the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to continue working towards common solutions in the spirit of inclusive and respectful dialogue. I found the example of the bridge that was built, as mentioned by Carlos Ruiz Massieu, to be excellent; more such examples would be welcome.

The international community will continue to assist Colombia. It is great to have unity in the Security Council. We should preserve that. All of us who participated remember very fondly the Security Council mission to Colombia, where we all demonstrated our support for the peace agreement. The United Nations there, as we witnessed, continues to play a key role. At this stage, I would like to commend Carlos Ruiz for his work, the work of his people and the work of the United Nations agencies on the ground.

Germany supports the Secretary-General’s call to make more use of the tripartite arrangements among the Government, the United Nations and the FARC to promote dialogue and foster confidence-building.

With regard to the implementation of the agreement — and basically everything is in the agreement; it just needs to be implemented — I would like to just briefly mention what are the three key points from our perspective.

First, we strongly welcome the adoption of the reintegration road map. It is now very important now that it be implemented and that we find more clarity on education, health, economic reintegration, housing, community-based reintegration and psychosocial assistance. In this respect, I would like to echo what Carlos said regarding the inclusion of women as key and the inclusion of the 9,000 Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo fighters living outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. The communities are ready to include them, but those communities need support.

Secondly, with regard to the security road map, this is perhaps the saddest development. Last year was the most violent year for former combatants, with 173 victims. Social leaders, human rights defenders, indigenous leaders and women’s rights defenders continue to face grave risks and I therefore welcome

the fact that the National Commission on Security Guarantees met for the first time, after some time. I would really encourage the Commission to continue its work and to work hard on dismantling criminal organizations and their support networks, which are basically responsible for the deaths of social leaders. The presence of the State must be extended.

My final point relates to support for the institutions of the peace agreement. When Council members were in Bogotá, we met with representatives of these institutions. I am still very impressed by the quality and commitment of those people. We see the two Commissions and the National Reintegration Council as key to overcoming the deeply entrenched legacy of conflict in the country. They will lead to true reconciliation. In this context, it remains key that the Commissions remain independent and have the proper funding and functioning. The only thing to be overcome is the uncertainty with regard to the legal status of former combatants.

I am aware that that is a heavy task, and would like to echo what Kelly Craft said earlier. In addition to that task, there is that of housing hundreds of thousands of refugees from Venezuela. I would also like to commend Colombia on what its people and Government are doing in that regard.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buyswerwe (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by echoing the words of condolence and solidarity expressed to the delegation of the Niger.

I should then like to welcome the presence today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia and thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

Over three years since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, Colombia can stand proud. The parties to the agreement should be congratulated for their commitment and the progress achieved. At the same time, of course, we must ensure that we keep abreast of the challenges that remain.

The recent local elections testify to the positive impact of the peace process on Colombian democracy. There have been fewer reported incidents of violence and citizens were able to participate in the elections in areas of the country that had previously not been safe enough. Like the recent social demonstrations, these elections illustrate the commitment of Colombian

society to peace, as well as to the full implementation of the peace agreement.

We are also encouraged by the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus that have benefited from increased funding, as well as by the progress in economic and social reintegration. The restart of the activities of the Gender Technical Working Group of the National Reintegration Council is also an important step. However, with regard to legal safeguards, it is worrying that no substantial progress has been made in the process of accreditation of former combatants, which creates legal uncertainty and increases the risk of recidivism.

One of the cornerstones of the peace agreement is the establishment of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. Transitional justice is essential for reconciliation and lasting peace. We welcome the significant progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and urge all those under its jurisdiction to contribute to truth-seeking efforts. Threats of violence against lawyers defending former combatants are unacceptable.

We also regret the continuing violence against human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). The year 2019 was the most violent for former combatants since the peace agreement was signed.

We are particularly concerned about the specific targeting of women human rights defenders and social leaders, as well as by the lack of protection for ex-combatants residing outside the former territorial areas, who represent approximately 70 per cent of those who have been accredited. More effective measures are needed, including the finalization of the action plan of the Intersectoral Commission on Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and the reconvening of the National Commission on Security Guarantees.

We have carefully read the recent report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict (A/73/907-S/2019/509) and are extremely concerned about the high levels of recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Colombia, in particular by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and FARC-EP dissidents. I urge all armed groups to adopt and implement commitments to put an end to that grave violation and immediately release all children in their

ranks. We also call for continued investment in the “A different path of life” reintegration programme and the work of the Technical Working Group on Children of the National Reintegration Council.

In conclusion, it is important to build trust between the parties and to intensify cooperation and dialogue with regard to the implementation of the Final Agreement. It is in every interest of the parties to make use of the consultation, monitoring and verification institutions and mechanisms that have been created for that purpose. I would like to reiterate Belgium’s firm commitment to working closely with Colombia in order to advance the full implementation of the peace agreement.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): Before addressing the situation in Colombia, I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for the two minutes of silence that were observed earlier, first of all in memory of the countless victims of the Haitian earthquake on 12 January 2010. I would also like to offer my condolences to Ambassador Abarry and to the Government and the people of the Niger for the deaths of 89 Nigerien soldiers in the terrorist attack on the Chinagodrar camp on 9 January.

Turning now to Colombia, I wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, to the Chamber and congratulate her on her appointment. I would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and, above all, to commend his work and that of the entire team at the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Council has endeavoured to take a united front in supporting the collective efforts of the Colombian Government and people, in particular through the establishment of the United Nations Verification Mission, and we welcome President Duque’s call to extend the Mission until 2022.

It has now been over three years since the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was concluded. Much has already been accomplished thanks to the efforts of the Colombian Government and people, which I once again wish to commend.

For the first time since the peace agreement was signed, local and departmental elections were held on 27 October under broadly satisfactory conditions. The Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común party presented numerous candidates and Colombian voters turned out in large numbers. That high level

of participation in the elections demonstrated the positive contribution of the peace agreement to the democratic process in Colombia. The newly-elected local authorities will now be able to contribute to the implementation of the agreement, in particular through their involvement in development programmes with a territorial focus, which constitute an important component of the agreement.

The reintegration system is also producing results, as evidenced in the report of the Secretary-General (see S/2019/988). We are particularly pleased that the vast majority of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) ex-combatants remain engaged in the economic and social reintegration process, despite the choice of a very small minority to resume armed struggle, which France condemns.

We also welcome the continued progress in the work carried out by the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. The transitional justice system is set to hand down its first sentences this year, which is a crucial element in the construction of a lasting and inclusive peace. However, that will only be successful if the entire process is carried out and concluded effectively.

We must also clearly recognize that, compared with the ambition of 2016, certain provisions of the agreement have not yet been sufficiently implemented. As several speakers before me have highlighted, the peace agreement was conceived of as a whole, the various elements of which must be interconnected and inseparable in order to be fully effective.

France therefore calls on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts with a view to fully implementing all components of the peace agreement. We stress, in particular, the importance of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, which must be endowed with the resources it needs to properly function, especially to finance the alternative productive projects that will ensure its long-term success. Rural reform is one of the fundamental pillars of the agreement and must be implemented, as must political reform. Particular attention should also be paid to the chapters of the agreement addressing issues relating to ethnicity and gender.

The full and complete implementation of the peace agreement is the only viable way to respond to the remaining major security problems in the country,

including with regard to civil society figures, human rights defenders, former FARC-EP combatants and indigenous peoples, who are the principal victims. The year 2019 was particularly worrisome from that perspective. The Government has made efforts to ensure the presence of law and order forces and the individual protection of those at risk, but France calls on the Colombian authorities to do more to ensure the presence of all services — military and civilian — across its territory, including in the most remote departments, in consultation with civil society. Progress in the field of collective protection is also necessary. I fully agree with what the Ambassador of Belgium said concerning the protection of children.

Difficulties in implementation are inherent in any agreement, but various mechanisms have been devised in order to provide solutions to those problems. They constitute the appropriate forum for dialogue and should be used to a greater extent. We are also fully aware that the implementation of the agreement is taking place in a complex context, in particular due to the challenge that the Venezuelan migration crisis poses for Colombia. Here, I commend the generosity of the Colombian Government and people in welcoming Venezuelan refugees and migrants with the support of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again that the Government and the people of Colombia can rest assured of France's support and readiness to continue supporting them, alongside our partners within the European Union, on the demanding path towards peace.

Mr. Baati (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me, Mr. President, to express our condolences to the Government and the people of the sisterly Sultanate of Oman following the death of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who made important contributions to humanitarian issues and international peace and security.

I also wish to thank you, Sir, for your response to my delegation's suggestion to hold a minute of silence. I extend my condolences as well to the brotherly Niger and express our solidarity with the Haitian people and the United Nations, which has lost more than 100 senior personnel, notably the Tunisian Hédi Annabi, who was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti at that time.

I want also to welcome the presence of Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Foreign Minister of Colombia, and her delegation, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, whom I thank for his briefing this morning.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/988) and the valuable information it contains on various issues relating to the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia, which was signed three years ago. The agreement represents an important and historic achievement for the Republic of Colombia, paving the way for a new and promising period of peace, stability and well-being. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

As my delegation expresses its satisfaction at the important steps that have been taken so far on the various political, economic, social and security tracks, we once again stress the need for all Colombian parties to pursue their efforts in the national interest in order to fulfil the remaining phases, strengthen security and stability and achieve national reconciliation. In that connection, Tunisia hopes that President Duque Márquez's initiative will be able to overcome the pending difficulties and disputes, while achieving the desired progress in the areas of inclusive growth, transparency, combating corruption, promoting education, the environment and youth, in addition to completing the "peace with legality" initiative launched by the Colombian Government.

Tunisia believes in national dialogue as an effective mechanism for overcoming difficulties and resolving disputes. We therefore stress the need for all Colombian parties to continue to address all issues within the framework of constructive dialogue and compromise without excluding or marginalizing any party. Colombia's success in launching the comprehensive national dialogue and organizing local and provincial elections was a good indicator in that regard.

Success in implementing the peace agreement, achieving national reconciliation and consolidating security and stability is not limited to progress made in terms of political reintegration, but also relies on achieving inclusive development and the provision of basic services in all regions. In that vein, my delegation underscores the need to continue efforts in the areas of social and economic reintegration, in particular

through the provision of health services, education and vocational training to all, especially within local communities and former territorial areas for training and reintegration, with a view to reintegration.

We also reaffirm the importance of advancing on the transitional justice track, providing security guarantees, ensuring State presence and authority, achieving inclusive development in all regions, creating a climate of trust and laying the foundations for continued progress in all areas. Moreover, Tunisia emphasizes the importance of strengthening programmes for the reintegration of children and giving them access to education, health care and psychological and family support in order to set them on a different path of life and protect them from exploitation. It is also necessary to enhance the participation of women and young people in political and social processes, peacebuilding, enhancing human rights and rural reform, which are among the basic requirements for success in achieving peace and stability.

In conclusion, the ingredients for achieving peace and stability in Colombia are available and successful results are being achieved, despite circumstantial difficulties. For its part, Tunisia continues to support the efforts of the United Nations and of all the Colombian actors as they advance along the path towards a lasting peace for the benefit of all.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China offers its deepest condolences to Oman for the untimely passing of Sultan Qaboos.

China condemns the recent terrorist attacks in the Niger. We thank the Council presidency for the two minutes of silence observed in the wake of the terrorist attack in the Niger and on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Haitian earthquake.

China welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, to today's meeting of the Security Council and wishes to thank Special Representative Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

In the three years since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, thanks to the efforts of the Colombian Government and all parties involved, the reintegration of former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatants, institution-building and reforms in various areas, as well as the judicial mechanism, have been strengthened

and the peace and reconciliation process has continued to move forward.

In October last year, elections were held at the local and departmental levels for the first time since the signing of the peace agreement, which was an indication of continued progress in the Colombian political process. A new chapter is being written for peace, reconciliation and hope through the efforts of the Colombian people. Special Representative Ruiz Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, under his leadership, have made important contributions to the peace process in Colombia as they pursue their efforts to assist former FARC-EP combatants with their social, political and economic reintegration, as well as to take measures to guarantee their safety and safeguard the rights and interests of the people of Colombia, especially those of women, children and minority groups. China expresses its appreciation for all those efforts and hopes that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, while respecting its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, will continue to play a greater role in maintaining peace and stability in the country.

The peace agreement reflects the aspiration of the parties in Colombia for peace, development and prosperity and represents the broadest consensus in the country. There has been great progress in the peace process to date but much remains to be done in order to fully implement the peace agreement. The security situation in some areas is still fragile and the safety of former combatants and social leaders is still threatened.

Given all these challenges, we hope that the Government of Colombia and all the parties concerned will cherish the hard-won peace process, shoulder their respective responsibilities and obligations and take the fundamental interests of the country into account by pursuing dialogue with the necessary patience to resolve differences. They should work together with the United Nations Verification Mission in its mediation efforts to promote the peace process in Colombia so as to achieve greater and more concrete and meaningful progress.

China stands ready to work with other Council members in supporting the efforts of the Colombian Government, dialogue among the parties, the work of the Verification Mission and the peace process in Colombia so as to contribute positively towards achieving comprehensive peace, stability and development in the country.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in extending our condolences to the Government and people of Oman on the passing of Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing the two moments of silence. On behalf of the Government and people of Indonesia, let me in particular extend our condolences to the Government and people of the Niger over the recent terrorist attack, which claimed 89 lives.

Let me also warmly welcome Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. Her presence here today is appreciated, as it reflects the importance that her Government attaches to the Council's support for the peace process in her country. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu Aguirre for his detailed and comprehensive briefing on the recent developments. Today, I would like to make three brief points.

First, Indonesia congratulates the people of Colombia on the successful and relatively peaceful conduct of the local and departmental elections on 27 October 2019, in which the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común political party and former combatants participated. The people of Colombia must build on that important step in the political reintegration process. We therefore join the Secretary-General in encouraging the newly elected mayors, governors and other officials to make sure that programmes related to the implementation of peace are high on their agenda.

Secondly, Indonesia would like to underline once again that the consolidation of sustainable peace in Colombia can be achieved only through the comprehensive and consistent fulfilment by all Colombian stakeholders of their obligations under the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace. While we, as always, welcome the many positive developments that have been achieved, as well as the advances that have been generated by the peace agreement, we continue to call on all relevant parties to redouble their efforts to deliver on their individual commitments.

While it is relatively slow, as pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/988), we acknowledge the progress and efforts that have been made in resolving the accreditation of former combatants. However, that must be continued. We therefore once again join the Secretary-General in urging all parties

to make use of the National Reintegration Council to undertake strategic discussions on pending challenges in the reintegration process and take concerted action to address them by implementing the recently adopted road map. The political, legal and socioeconomic reintegration of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo is crucial to creating public trust and confidence in the peace process.

Lastly, it is incumbent on the Security Council and on us individually as friends to ensure that every effort is made to assist the people of Colombia. The Council, in particular, should continue to provide assistance to Colombia based on its relevant resolutions. It is also important for the Council to recall that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia was originally established in accordance with the 2016 peace agreement, in which the parties in Colombia requested the United Nations to set up a political mission.

Indonesia believes that capacity-building and technical support, along with projects geared towards economic self-sufficiency, would contribute positively to creating a conducive environment for the implementation of the peace agreement. As we have stated previously in the Chamber, Indonesia stands ready to assist, including by sharing our experiences and best practices in reintegration as well as in programmes on crops for peace, such as palm oil. In that regard, I am happy to report that from 5 to 9 November 2019, Indonesia and Colombia, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, organized an international workshop on crops for peace in Indonesia. The workshop was aimed at sharing Indonesia's experience on how the palm oil industry has helped to improve the condition of infrastructure in the environment around plantations and the socioeconomic conditions of the community.

In conclusion, I once again reiterate Indonesia's support for the peace process in Colombia and commend the people of Colombia for their courage to achieve peace and stability in their country.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to observe a minute of silence before our meeting in memory of the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and the recent terrorist attack in Niger. We grieve together with our colleagues. We extend our condolences to our Nigerien friends.

We welcome the participation of Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. I take this opportunity to congratulate her on her appointment to that important position and express our hope that the topic of Colombia will be discussed in the Security Council only in a positive manner. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu Aguirre for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/988). Based on that document, the Security Council and the Secretary-General agree that the success of the peace process depends entirely on the ability of Colombians to fully meet their obligations under the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

Colombia has entered a crucial phase that will determine the sustainability of the peace that the Colombians achieved at such a high price. As the Secretary-General rightly notes in his report, the Final Agreement stipulates a long period of post-conflict recovery but the solid foundations for peace must be laid now.

That is why the Security Council, which is entrusted with monitoring the Colombian peace process, is closely following developments and hopes that the success achieved by the signing of the Final Agreement will not only be maintained but also built upon. The role of the Verification Mission is very important. However, the primary responsibility for the peace process clearly lies with the Colombians themselves. As the report points out, despite some progress most of the work to consolidate peace still lies ahead.

Since the signing of the Final Agreement, it has become clear that, in addition to the emergence of new challenges in the Colombian peace process, there remain basic issues that need to be urgently addressed. While the October elections were more peaceful than previous ones, the Secretary-General notes increasing mistrust among various sectors of society. There are various reasons for that situation.

One of the main ones is the lack of solutions to security-related issues. The year 2019 saw the highest number of victims since the final peace agreement was signed. We believe that every murder must be investigated and that those responsible must be appropriately punished. The report also notes gaps in the area of political reintegration. In particular, one seat in Parliament remains temporarily blocked, although

under the final agreement it was supposed to be allotted to the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) party, not to a specific representative.

There is public demand for increasing the effectiveness of socioeconomic reintegration. The report notes the widespread dissatisfaction in society with regard to insufficient progress in the implementation of agrarian reforms, including reintegration and crop substitution programmes. In terms of legal reintegration, it is worth noting that, during the reporting period, State programmes did not accredit a single new participant, although they had received applications to that effect.

The Security Council regularly insists on the need to preserve the independence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In that regard, we cannot but be concerned about information in the report that lawyers representing former combatants in court have been subject to threats. Regardless of the origin of those threats, we see them as an attempt to pressure the justice system. That practice must stop immediately; prominent cases need to be investigated, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

I also note the report's observation that communities and civil society organizations affected by the actions of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional are insisting on the need for dialogue with the latter. We agree with the view that achieving genuinely lasting peace in Colombia is hard to imagine without taking into account the full spectrum of opinions. We trust that Bogotá will find a way to resolve disagreements with Cuba over negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We share the position of Havana that members of that group cannot be extradited, because Colombia cannot ensure their immunity, as demanded by the guarantees established under the protocols signed by the parties governing the actions of participants in the event that the dialogue breaks down.

Like all those who have read the report, we are alarmed by the wave of protests in the country. We are convinced that only the effective implementation of the final agreement can reassure society and prevent another return to arms. That document and its core element, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, have made it possible for the Secretary-General and the Security Council to support the peace process.

It has been our consistent belief that the situation can be stabilized only through peaceful means, with the greatest possible level of public dialogue. That

approach is enshrined in core resolution 2282 (2016), on peacebuilding, which states that national responsibility for preserving peace presupposes that the Government concerned take into account the views of every segments of society. In that regard, we hope that the initiatives announced by the President and society to establish a broad national dialogue will yield results. The most important thing is to prevent duplication of work.

We welcome the declared commitment of the Colombian leadership to the peace process, but we cannot stop there. The international community, the United Nations, the Security Council and, most important, the Colombians themselves expect the strict implementation of obligations under the final peace agreement. Absent that, the consequences of half a century of internal armed conflict will be insurmountable. We trust that the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will continue to play a significant role in the peace process.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): I thank you, Mr. President, for the observance of two minutes of silence that you organized this morning. We would like to convey the condolences of the Government of South Africa to our brothers and sisters of the Niger on the terrible loss that they suffered. We also remember with sadness the large number of our brothers and sisters in Haiti, as well as the valiant United Nations personnel, who lost their lives 10 years ago.

With regard to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, let me start by thanking the Foreign Minister for Colombia, Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, and welcoming her presence at this meeting. We appreciate her commitment and availability to brief the Security Council. I should like to assure her of South Africa's full support for her country's efforts to achieve long-term and sustainable peace. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his consistent and hard work in Colombia and informative briefing.

South Africa remains fully supportive of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which was signed between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in 2016. We welcome the mechanisms of the peace agreement, such as the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final

Agreement, and urge the Colombian people and authorities to use such mechanisms to address gaps and challenges related to the implementation of the peace agreement.

That is consistent with South Africa's principled stance that the only viable, sustainable resolution to the conflict remains in the full implementation of the peace agreement and an inclusive political settlement that is nationally led by and in the interests of the people of Colombia. In that regard, we welcome the relatively peaceful and successful holding of the local and departmental elections in October 2019, despite the challenges leading up to the day of elections. The participation of the FARC and former combatants is commendable and represents a positive step forward.

South Africa commends the progress made on the demobilization and reintegration of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). In order to achieve continued and sustained progress in that regard, the demobilization should be accompanied by continued training and the creation of economic opportunities for former combatants.

South Africa welcomes the recent progress made with regard to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which is playing a key role in addressing accountability for gross human rights violations committed during the internal conflict in Colombia. We furthermore call for respect for the judicial independence of the Special Jurisdiction. South Africa's own experience with its Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed that it was crucial for achieving national unity. In Colombia, reconciliation processes can ensure that the road to peace is inclusive.

South Africa is concerned about the intimidation and increased killings of former members of the FARC-EP and of social and community leaders, who now also include members of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. We call for a secure environment to be put in place for the protection of women, children, social leaders and human rights defenders, as well as all who are involved in the implementation of the peace agreement. In that regard, it is also important to strengthen the role of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, which can be used as a vehicle to swiftly implement the peace agreement.

We welcome the Government's efforts with regard to the territorial areas for training and reintegration,

as well as the constructive role and responsive attitude of the FARC. That is vital for the sustainable and successful integration of the FARC into Colombian society through, but not limited to, rural and political reintegration, work, access to land and opportunities, education, the protection of victims' rights and the empowerment of women.

Let me conclude by reiterating that it is important for the international community and, in particular the United Nations Verification Mission, to continue to support the full compliance with the agreement reached between the parties, as well as the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank Special Representative of Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and for the important work that he is doing. We warmly welcome Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

The peace process has continued to move forward through a challenging period. We encourage everyone to continue those efforts on the path to peace and prosperity.

We welcome the first local and departmental elections since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and the first with the participation of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), which marks an important step forward.

The role of the local and departmental authorities is critical to the success of Colombia's peacebuilding efforts. It is the opportunity for the newly elected local authorities to align themselves with the peace process and advance the implementation of the peace agreement. We acknowledge the Government-initiated national conversation on different sectors and themes. We encourage seeing dialogue as a platform to build more consensus and maintain momentum in the society.

We note positively that the vast majority of former fighters remain engaged and committed to the Final Agreement and continue working to reintegrate into civilian life, despite continued uncertainties and attacks against them. It is important to emphasize that risks and challenges still remain and require more attention and action. As a result of the increased urbanization

of demobilization, the majority of ex-combatants now live in civilian communities where it is more difficult to track them and ensure that they can access services and the same benefits as other citizens.

We are deeply concerned about the security situation and the rising levels of violence against community leaders, human rights advocates and former combatants. Those individuals are at the forefront of implementing the peace agreement and violence towards them represents a fundamental threat to its success. The year 2019 was the most violent year for former combatants — a record 77 of whom were killed. We also remain concerned about the reports of violence targeting women's political participation.

It is important to ensure the security of all parts of the country, especially for the most vulnerable. We encourage the Colombian Government to continue to make use of all established mechanisms. The National Commission on Security Guarantees, a body established in the peace agreement with the mandate of seeking solutions to ongoing protection challenges, should be used to develop a policy on the dismantling of criminal organizations and their support networks. We reiterate the need to prioritize prevention, early warning and collective protection measures, which should take into consideration the particular needs of the potential victims, such as indigenous people and Afro-Colombian communities, and should have a gender-sensitive approach.

Progress is needed in other areas of the agreement. We encourage everyone to continue that valuable work through transitional justice mechanisms that provide truth, justice and reconciliation for victims — decisive elements for sustainable peace and long-lasting development. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is a pillar of transitional justice and respect for its independence and autonomy must be ensured.

We are pleased to see the progress that the Colombian Government has made and would like to express Estonia's strong support for the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement. The support of the international community, including the Security Council, remains critical.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Before I begin, I would also like to express my country's solidarity with the Government and people of Haiti 10 years after the devastating earthquake and express our condolences to the Government and people of the Niger.

We thank you, Mr. President, for acknowledging those events with moments of silence earlier.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines extends a warm greeting to Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, and Mr. Emilio Archila, Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, and welcomes their participation in today's meeting. We also thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his briefing and very important work.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the progress highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/988). We acknowledge the advances made during the reporting period, such as progress in the "peace with legality" strategy; the convocation of the first local and department elections since the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, in particular the participation of former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the active participation of women in the political process; the development of programmes with a territorial focus for conflict-affected municipalities; the valuable contributions of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; the 12 new collective productive projects approved by the National Reintegration Council; and the increase in the number of former combatants pursuing academic studies.

We also wish to highlight the reported progress in discussing the bill to extend the law for victims and land restitution. Indeed, the issue of reparations is an important component of restitution and reconciliation.

Notwithstanding those positive developments, my delegation notes significant encumbrances to the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. We are concerned about the lack of progress in the process of accreditation of former combatants, as well as the difficulties in ensuring security guarantees for some communities. Those legal and security guarantees are paramount for the holistic reintegration of former FARC-EP combatants.

Similarly, permanent solutions for the former FARC-EP combatants who reside outside former territorial areas for training and reintegration (representing 70 per cent of those who have been accredited) are crucial for the full implementation of the Final Agreement. Equally

crucial is the need for agricultural reforms and the full implementation of the programme for the substitution of illicit crops, which will serve to discourage participants from entering the illegitimate economy. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is concerned about the reported threats to participants involved in that programme.

Fundamentally, my delegation is disturbed by the continuing acts of violence, especially against women and children; the attacks against communities; and the killing of indigenous people and Afro-Colombians. We condemn those acts of violence and call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines agrees with the Secretary-General's call for the parties to the Final Agreement to overcome their differences regarding its implementation through sustained dialogue, as well as his recommendation to fully capitalize on the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement to resolve their disputes.

It is important to underscore that the process of consolidating lasting peace in Colombia is at a very important stage. There is no space for complacency or selective implementation of the Agreement. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines calls on all parties to honour their obligations and comply with the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement. The Colombian peace process remains an exemplar in our multilateral system, underscoring that one must never foreclose on dialogue in seeking to resolve conflict, no matter how difficult and entrenched a conflict may be.

In closing, we reiterate our support to the Government and people of Colombia in their pursuit of lasting peace, as well as the United Nations Verification Mission and country team in assisting with the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for having the Security Council observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and for the victims of terrorism in my country. I express my condolences to the Government and the people of Oman following the passing of Sultan Qaboos. I thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his very informative briefing. I also thank the Minister

for Foreign Affairs of Colombia and her delegation for their presence here today.

Three years have passed since the signing, in Havana, of the Final Agreement for Ending Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, between the Government of Colombia and the rebels of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in 2016. Today, we are pleased to note that the implementation process of the Final Agreement has made significant progress in some areas. Although it is slow or even insufficient in some respects, that progress nevertheless demonstrates the strong will of the Colombian authorities and other stakeholders to advance the peace process and is to be welcomed.

As a result of the war and organized crime, Colombia continues to register serious human rights violations and ongoing criminal activities. The violence, which had reached a worrying level at the end of last year, is now somewhat reduced, which has enabled elections to take place, even in areas where elections could not previously be held due to insecurity. My delegation is pleased with the smooth running of those inclusive municipal elections, in which a woman, for the first time, was elected mayor of the capital, Bogotá.

Despite that progress, my delegation would like to call on all actors to redouble their efforts to consolidate the gains I mentioned earlier. Several factors may still undermine the progress made, including the still ineffective State presence in several regions of the country formerly occupied by armed groups, insufficient funding for the implementation of the Final Agreement and the assassinations of human rights activists, leaders of indigenous peoples and former combatants.

The country is also facing the reconfiguration of paramilitary groups and the rearmament of some of the armed groups that have decided to drop their commitments with the Colombian State. Nevertheless, we welcome the categorical rejection by Colombians on all sides of such attempts to undermine the peace process. The adoption of the road map for reintegration will hopefully enable progress in the social sectors and will bolster the country's current positive momentum. There is no doubt that the diversification of the economy through the substitution of illicit crops and the promotion of alternative agricultural production will help reduce the level of violence by increasing the income of producers.

My delegation also commends the efforts to date the Colombian Government to achieve national reconciliation and implement the Final Agreement despite constraints, especially the financial constraints. We also reiterate our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ruiz Massieu, for his tireless work and urge the members of the Council to maintain their vital support of the Colombian authorities in their pursuit of lasting peace.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the Niger's support for the full implementation of the Final Agreement so that the Colombian people, whose history has been marked by conflicts, can at last know peace, calm and prosperity. I would also like to once again convey my gratitude for the words of solidarity expressed towards my country following our recent tragedy.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Viet Nam.

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

Last November, the people and all political parties of Colombia commemorated the third anniversary of the signing of the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. History tells us that reaching a peace agreement is difficult, but putting it into action is much more difficult.

In that regard, Viet Nam highly commends the commitment and efforts of the Colombian Government and all relevant stakeholders in achieving sustainable peace and security in the country. Over the last three years, Colombia has witnessed very positive developments. We believe that those advances will help promote the livelihood of its people. We also stress the important role of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, along with the United Nations country team, in supporting projects and initiatives related to the implementation of the Final Agreement.

Many challenges, difficulties and problems remain, as mentioned by Council members. In that regard, I would like to stress the following points. First, security and development for all Colombian people, including former combatants, must be a top priority. That will

greatly contribute to long-lasting conciliation and peace. The international community should intensify its support for the Government of Colombia in several important areas, such as law enforcement capacity-building, substitution of illicit crops and the prevention of illicit economic activities, crime and violence. We call for intensified efforts and cooperation to disclose the location of mines and minefields in the country.

Secondly, we emphasize the need for further measures to promote economic and inclusive development, social cohesion, rural development, housing, education and job creation in order to sustain the progress made to date. In all reconciliation processes, providing equal opportunity to all is the only viable means of deterring violence and reducing the risk of relapsing into conflict.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our strong support for the processes of peace, security, national reconciliation, national unity and development in Colombia.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Blum de Barberi (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ten years after the earthquake that affected millions of people and changed their history, Colombia reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Haiti. We also express our sorrow for the victims of the violent events in the Niger.

I thank the presidency of Viet Nam for convening this meeting and all Council members for their ongoing and unanimous support of Colombia. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/988) and his Special Representative, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for the significant work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia under his leadership. My Government appreciates the Mission's participation in the national talks led by the President of the Republic on the policy of "Peace with legality", as well as its independent assessments of the progress and challenges in that area.

The policy of "Peace with legality" that the Government of President Iván Duque Márquez has been implementing is aimed at the realization of the constitutional right of Colombians to peace within the framework of the protection of the rule of law and is

therefore a benchmark for the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed in 2016 between the Government and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) guerrillas.

Among its many components, the policy includes decisive instruments for making progress on the two fronts examined by the Verification Mission, in accordance with its mandate — the reintegration of former FARC-EP members and security guarantees for communities in the areas most affected by the violence.

With regard to the first mandate, concerning reintegration programmes, the Secretary-General has acknowledged the significant progress made by Colombia. The first-ever participation of the FARC party in the regional elections held last October and the election of some former combatants or candidates endorsed by them are evidence of the guarantee of the full integration of its members into political life.

In addition, the State lifted the bans that could restrict the exercise of the vote or the candidature of former combatants and special protection measures for their candidates were put in place. That election day was more peaceful than in the past and reaffirmed the vitality and pluralism of Colombian democracy.

In terms of economic and social reintegration, the 898 individual productive projects and 47 collective projects under way and access to employment have allowed more former combatants to generate their own income and not depend on State programmes. Ninety-nine per cent of former FARC members are affiliated with the health insurance scheme and 9,000 of them have had access to formal education and technical training.

I am also pleased to announce that on 27 December, the Government approved the road map for social and economic reintegration agreed with FARC, which establishes a comprehensive, sustainable and transitional process that, based on institutional services, will guarantee the realization of the right of people in transit and their families to reintegration.

We have taken note of the information provided by the Secretary-General on the accreditation of former combatants and a workplan has already been defined to analyse individual cases. The workplan enabled the accreditation of a further 99 individuals in December 2019, in addition to those included in the report, thus

bringing the total number of accredited persons to 13,185. Similarly, as mentioned in the report, the activities of the Gender Technical Working Group of the National Reintegration Council are noteworthy, as are the participation of young people.

The Secretary-General also refers to the Government's expectation that former FARC-EP members hand over their assets to provide reparations to victims and that they cooperate in locating anti-personnel mines and in establishing the truth. Those remain issues on which Colombian society expects answers. It is worth noting that the Verification Mission is paying greater attention to those issues, which are also part of the reintegration process.

Regarding the Mission's second mandate, the report mentions various measures adopted by the State for the protection and security of the communities affected by violence but warns of the serious challenges that remain, several of which concern the need to consolidate the stabilization of the areas most affected by poverty and violence. That is where the projects under the "Peace with legality" policy become important. Pursuant to that policy, the Government has launched 16 development plans with a territorial focus, which cover the 170 municipalities most affected by violence and poverty.

In the 17 months since the Government took office, 309 new projects have been approved for implementation by local authorities, at an investment cost of \$500 million. At the national level, the Government has completed 641 additional projects under the plans. It is also essential to highlight the role of the private sector, which recognizes the economic benefits of stabilizing the territories concerned and is progressively investing in the areas most affected by violence and poverty.

Other undeniable security challenges relate to illegal economies and associated crime, which we have not yet been able to eradicate from our country. We continue to suffer the consequences of criminal economies, in particular drug trafficking and illegal mining, which have historically fuelled violence. The Government is prioritizing the issue and working resolutely to address those threats, which affect former combatants, social leaders, ethnic populations, human rights defenders and vulnerable communities in general.

Colombia ended 2019 with the lowest rate of kidnapping in its recent history, while homicides of social leaders decreased by 25 per cent compared

to 2018. Such crimes nonetheless remain deplorable reminders that we cannot be complacent and must continue to work. For that reason, the State is taking systematic steps to speed up judicial investigations and develop comprehensive public policies to confront criminal organizations and strengthen prevention, early warning and protection.

The special unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office assigned to investigate attacks on former combatants has already issued 51 arrest warrants against suspects and 23 sentences have been handed down, including in the cases of Alexander Parra Uribe and Dimar Torres mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

A new meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, led by President Duque Márquez, was held on 8 January, at which the Commission verified that the considerations of civil society were reflected in public policies on the dismantling of illegal armed groups and the protection of social leaders, former combatants and human rights defenders. The recent thwarting of a plan to assassinate the president of the FARC party is the result of the robust measures being taken by the Government.

By the end of 2017, coca plantations had reached an unprecedented 200,000 hectares, but thanks to the State's action since 2018, their growth has been halted. Some 100,000 hectares were destroyed in 2019, mainly through forced manual eradication programmes. The Government recognizes the challenges that the country faces and will continue to work with unwavering commitment to confront the criminal structures responsible for attacks on communities and individuals.

The Secretary-General's report mentions the importance of achieving comprehensive progress in other chapters of the 2016 agreement. Although the issue is not part of the Mission's mandate, our Government has a comprehensive vision for that field. There are more than 500 action indicators that impact the construction of "peace with legality", for example in terms of our comprehensive rural transformation. In the 17 months that our Government has been in power, 697,000 hectares have been incorporated into our land fund and 375,000 hectares have been regularized. With the enactment of an economic growth law, between 2020 and 2022 approximately \$900 million will be invested in building tertiary roads that will improve the connectivity of remote rural areas of the country with more developed centres.

At the same time, the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition continues to be consolidated, with the increasingly active participation of victims. The necessary resources have been approved in our national budget for 2020 so that the three principal mechanisms of that system will be able to fulfil their mission independently.

Finally, I wish to refer to the demonstrations that have taken place in the capital and other cities since 21 November, which are referred to in the report of the Secretary-General. Social and non-governmental organizations have addressed various petitions to the State in the course of these demonstrations. Colombia guarantees the right to social protest as an expression of participatory democracy, which must be protected. In response to the demonstrations, President Duque launched a grand national conversation as a channel for communication between citizens and their institutions.

By 31 December, 12 meetings had been held between representatives of the Government and more than 1,000 members of social organizations, leaders and experts in many fields in order to analyse proposals with a view to building a more just and equitable society. I note with satisfaction that the report recognizes President Duque's openness in the national conversation and I trust that it will contribute to consolidating the progress achieved in our ever-challenging political and social context.

I wish to reiterate before the Council today that the process of building "peace with legality" in Colombia is ongoing. The process is an irreversible one, but it requires the commitment and support of the Council and of the international community as attestations to the exceptional achievements and advances that have been made thus far.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.