



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

**9765<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Wednesday, 30 October 2024, 10.25 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Baeriswyl . . . . . (Switzerland)

*Members:*

Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Merabet
China . . . . .	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France . . . . .	Mr. Dharmadhikari
Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia . . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Eckersely
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2024/741)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2024/741)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

**The President**: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz 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/2024/741, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ziadeh.

**Ms. Ziadeh** (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, along with your country, Switzerland, and your team on an excellent presidency of the Council this month.

*(spoke in English)*

It is my honour to update the Council on the latest developments in Kosovo since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/741), which covers the period from 16 March to 15 September of this year, and to share a few overarching observations.

In my engagements with officials in Belgrade and Pristina and with local political and civil actors and international partners, I hear — and I am sharing what I heard — an aspiration for a constructive dialogue and peaceful relations, although the situation on the ground remains fragile and progress tentative.

During my most recent visit to northern Kosovo in September, civil society organizations, political actors and residents alike voiced serious concerns about the adverse impact of recent unilateral actions affecting their economic, social and political rights. They explained that the recent closures of Post of Serbia branches and municipal offices run by the Government of Serbia, including the latest in Skenderaj/Srbica on 16 October, have limited their access to key services, particularly for the Kosovo Serb community. Those difficulties compounded the effect of earlier measures, such as the regulation on the use of the dinar and the closure of branches of Poštanska štedionica savings bank. Those community members further voiced their anxiety about indications that the Pristina authorities might attempt to assert control over Serbian-funded education and health institutions.

Amid discourse earlier this summer on reopening the Ibar bridge to vehicular traffic and in response to an increased number of arrests of Kosovo Serbs for alleged public order offences, we have observed a notable rise in civic activism in northern Kosovo, including among women's groups and university students. In that regard, I must voice concern at the arrests of individuals for exercising their freedom of expression and assembly. In recent weeks, there have been a number of allegations of excessive use of force and ill-treatment by police during arrests and in police custody in northern Kosovo. There are now ongoing investigations by the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo regarding those allegations. Making the findings of the Inspectorate publicly available, once the investigations are concluded, could be a helpful step towards building trust in the institutions. I note that, just a few minutes ago, the Inspectorate recommended the suspension of two police officers involved in the detention of a Kosovo Serb in Saint Lazar Square on 26 October.

Advancing and safeguarding human rights is at the very core of our mission in Kosovo. Against the background of recent developments, strengthening measures to further promote equality and non-discrimination are pivotal, in particular to upholding property rights, preserving cultural

heritage and fully observing the language rights of all communities. I welcome the efforts of the Ombudsperson to engage with diverse communities, and I encourage him and his team to continue fulfilling their mandate independently. I also welcome some recent progress made by the Working Group on Missing Persons and continued endeavours to meet the expectations of the families, whose ongoing grief weighs heavily on the social fabric.

One year since the serious security incident in Banjska/Banjskë, I continue to call for timely accountability for perpetrators through thorough, fair, transparent and independent judicial processes, which are essential for fostering stability. Such acts of violence are unacceptable and must not be repeated. In that regard, we note that the initial hearing on the case was held on 9 October at the Basic Court of Pristina against the three defendants who are in custody; a total of 45 have been indicted on a range of charges, including terrorism.

The chief negotiators met in Brussels last Thursday under the facilitation of the European Union (EU). The decision to establish a working group to facilitate the entry of certain perishable products and the advancement of energy interconnection are welcome developments. Intensifying efforts to achieve concrete results from that EU-facilitated dialogue is essential. The dialogue, which we strongly support, remains central to resolving outstanding issues, including the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Success will be achieved through constructive, open approaches and respect for the hard-won agreements forged over a number of years. I believe that both sides recognize that meaningful progress towards decisive political outcomes must be built on the confidence gained from achieving attainable goals. I welcome the Kosovo Judicial Council's prudent stance on keeping the door open for the potential return of Kosovo Serb judges, in line with the standing EU-facilitated dialogue.

The lifting of the ban on the entry of goods from Serbia on 8 October, accompanied by consensus on Central European Free Trade Agreement procedures, resulted in nine agreements aimed at boosting regional economic prosperity. The crossing of Serbian goods into Kosovo has now resumed. It is imperative that the current bottlenecks be expeditiously addressed. The recent progress underscores the potential for deeper work towards regional integration via constructive

diplomatic compromises and consensus. The envisioned release of initial funds from the growth plan, following the European Commission's adoption of the reform agendas presented by Governments in the Western Balkans, encourages momentum to further advance and strengthen regional integration and cooperation.

Trust-building at all levels remains the cornerstone of a shared and better future for all. The findings of the recent trust index report, produced by a local non-governmental organization as part of the Barabar project supported by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), highlights the lack of confidence in institutions and increasing pessimism about the future of intercommunal trust. Yet most Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb respondents see reconciliation as essential for a better future for coming generations, highlighting the importance that active trust-building work has — perhaps now more than ever — for achieving progress.

Accordingly, our Mission remains dedicated to fostering efforts on the ground that aim to build trust across communities, including in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, women and peace and security, and youth, peace and security. As part of our commitment to encouraging the meaningful participation of women and youth in political processes, UNMIK recently supported high-level discussions on promoting gender equality within the dialogue. Those exchanges produced specific recommendations for gender-inclusive governance and decision-making. In addition, building on the successful organization of the sixth regional United Nations Youth Assembly, 130 local and regional youth delegates participated in the "Youth, Peace and Security in the AI era" event, which took place in Kosovo in May. UNMIK continues to organize workshops to equip young people from diverse communities in Kosovo with the skills to counter misinformation and disinformation.

With the pre-electoral campaign period fast approaching, it is crucial for political leaders and all sectors of society to create an environment in which voters feel confident, engaged and assured that participation by all communities, including the Kosovo Serb community in the north, can lead to meaningful outcomes. That means ensuring the peaceful exercise of the right to vote as an element of the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs. It also means ensuring conditions for broad

participation, which is achievable only when people feel safe, respected and empowered.

It was only last month that Council members met in the General Assembly during high-level week. During the week, world leaders highlighted the need for collective action to promote peace, sustainable development and human dignity. All those values hold profound significance in Kosovo and the region. Such values are at risk if actions are taken that threaten rights, freedoms and livelihoods among diverse communities. From here in the Council, I therefore urge all parties equally to heed the Secretary-General's call for responsible leadership, to ensure that those shared values are upheld in spirit and in practice.

Before I conclude, allow me to acknowledge the significant contributions of the outgoing Commander of the Kosovo Force, Major General Özkan Ulutaş, whose leadership was instrumental in managing various crises. I also warmly welcome his successor, Major General Enrico Barduani, with whom I look forward to working closely.

I appeal to members of the Security Council to remain steadfast in their commitment to peace, stability and cooperation in Kosovo, and I express my deep appreciation for the Council's continued support to UNMIK. By working together, we can help to propel constructive political dialogue, protect fundamental rights and promote more lasting security and prosperity for all.

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

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

**Mr. Đurić** (Serbia): Let me begin by thanking Council members for their continued attention in relation to the escalating crisis in Kosovo and Metohija.

Faced with dire challenges to the safety and well-being of its people, Serbia remains steadfast in its commitment to peace, stability and full respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, resolution 1244 (1999) and international law. As we navigate those challenges, I want to emphasize that Serbia is fully committed to building a prosperous future for all of its citizens. Speaking as a representative of Serbia, I can proudly say that my country is today a forward-leaning and responsible member of the international community. Serbia is a key

European contributor to a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations, from the Middle East to the Mediterranean and on the African continent as well. Having sustained a record high gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate for over a decade, Serbia has seen the size of our national GDP more than double over the course of the past decade. We are fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages investment and innovation. In December, Serbia will assume the chairmanship of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and, in 2027, my hometown of Belgrade will host the Expo 2027 Specialized World Exhibition, creating new opportunities for the entire region. As part of the Open Balkan initiative, launched by President Vučić, Prime Minister Rama of Albania and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, we have created a single regional labour market and are welcoming to our country people from across the region. Initiatives like the Digital Serbia project aim to integrate technology into our economy, thereby promoting a knowledge-based society. As we build new industries and create jobs, we are committed to ensuring that no community is left behind in the progress.

Sadly, the contrast with what is going on in our southern province of Kosovo and Metohija could not be starker. As a series of reports by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and recent developments reveal, in the past two and a half years, the situation in Kosovo and Metohija worsened significantly, with human rights abuses and unilateral moves by the regime of Albin Kurti creating a climate of fear and instability. Today I am here to detail some of his regime's serious transgressions against the Serbian community and to appeal for the Council's urgent, decisive action. And as we shall see today, the real question facing us is whether we will stand aside while innocent ordinary people suffer or take meaningful steps to protect the vulnerable.

First, this year we mark a sad anniversary that cannot be overlooked. It has been 20 years since the 17 March 2004 pogrom, when 28 innocent people were killed and almost 1,000 more were wounded. It was a second wave of ethnic cleansing against Serbs following the one in 1999, which led to the forceful expulsion of 250,000 people and the destruction of more than 150 Serbian churches, leaving an additional 40 Serbian Orthodox churches destroyed on 17 March alone.

As I already mentioned, the recent past for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija has been painful and complicated.

Given that past, it is even more devastating to consider the unbearable present that has been created by the regime of Albin Kurti for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. Since Albin Kurti's return to power, his Administration has systematically intensified measures aimed at isolating and marginalizing the Serbian community. Imagine one's currency suddenly being banned, pensions stripped away and social support cut off. For Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, that is not hypothetical — it is precisely the reality they are facing in Kosovo today. In September, heavily armed special police stormed post offices in Serbian-majority municipalities, effectively paralysing daily life. Basic rights such as registering a birth of a child or accessing welfare benefits offered equally to all by the Serbian Government have become nearly impossible. Violence against Serbs has escalated sharply. In 2024 alone, over 90 attacks specifically targeted Serbian individuals and properties, with not a single perpetrator facing justice. Disturbing incidents involving children have especially shocked our communities. Recently, a child was attacked in north Mitrovica by a man wielding knives — marking the sixteenth such assault since Mr. Kurti took office. How many attacks must we witness before concrete action is taken?

In northern Kosovo, the Serbian population faces a daily reality of crude force. Completely outside any of the existing agreements, the region is governed by a mono-ethnic police force loyal to Kurti that enforces policies through intimidation rather than consent. Adding to that, Kurti's Administration has imposed ethno-nationalist Albanian mayors, who were "elected" with virtually no Serbian support and hold no legitimacy whatsoever among the communities they are supposed to serve. They have not a single per cent of support — and yet they govern. Meanwhile, Pristina's refusal to honour the Brussels Agreement, which calls for the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities, has stripped Serbs of even basic legal protections.

Just two days ago, in a public statement that yet again openly challenges the fundamentals of the dialogue process and the rule of Kosovo's own laws, Prime Minister Albin Kurti stated that he does not plan to implement the agreement on the community of Serb-majority municipalities at all. That is not only a rejection of commitments made under European Union (EU) mediation, but a direct affront to the Council and the international community's authority. Interior

Minister Xhelal Sveçla, known for his documented violent attacks against the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) just a couple of years ago, added to that affront when he stated that his administration has no intention of implementing article 9 of the Brussels Agreement, which guarantees the collective return of Serb representatives to the Kosovo police in the north. That open defiance, while not surprising, is scandalous, undermines years of dialogue and casts doubt on Pristina's willingness to build a peaceful future. If agreements, once signed, can be discarded and mocked, what foundation remains for trust and dialogue?

In addition, Pristina's Administration has taken steps that blatantly violate Kosovo's own Constitution. The Serbian List — a political party that overwhelmingly won in Serb-majority areas in elections that were upheld by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the EU and UNMIK, is being illegally denied the constitutional right to nominate representatives to Government positions and Kosovo institutions. That denial of fundamental democratic rights further exposes the disregard for the rule of law and democratic norms in Kosovo and Metohija. It also raises the necessity for the international community to make sure that there are safeguards against that type of behaviour following the upcoming parliamentary elections. Why would any Kosovo Serb cast a vote in those elections — regardless how much we want them to — if, for the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, even rights enshrined in the Constitution do not apply?

To make matters worse, Pristina has even banned His Holiness the Serbian Patriarch from entering Kosovo and Metohija to visit the Patriarchate of Peć, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is also the spiritual heart and historical seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church. That action is a violation not only of religious freedoms but of centuries of Serbian cultural heritage, showing a lack of respect for basic rights and freedoms.

Violence targeting Serbs has reached an alarming level. Military-style police patrols and provocative marches by Kosovo's armed forces — which as such are illegal — have intensified fear in Serbian areas. In this year alone, six Serbs have been shot at, without a single person being held accountable. Who shot Dragisa Galjak in the back? That question is not even being raised anymore. Ethnically motivated attacks have risen by 50 per cent since Albin Kurti took office, with 434 incidents recorded over the past two and a half years.

I ask Council members to imagine their communities facing that kind of insecurity daily — would they feel safe?

In northern Kosovo, Pristina's special police forces have taken increasingly aggressive steps to suppress Serbian presence. Armed officers have stormed Serbian institutions, physically attacking unarmed civilians and even wounding children. I have to mention that, unfortunately, we are even seeing an increase in the number of reported cases of sexual assault against Serbian women, sometimes by Kosovo security officials, without due process following them.

All that is part of a systemic campaign aimed at intimidating an already deeply shaken community. Just last year, an 11-year-old boy, Stefan Stojanović, and his 21-year-old brother, were shot by a member of the so-called Kosovo security forces during a Christmas procession. The shooter, Azem Kurtaj, was granted de facto amnesty and remains completely free to this day. What message does it send when those who harm children are set free without consequences?

For displaced Serbs, their return remains a distant and very often dangerous hope. Thousands of families forced to leave Kosovo and Metohija in 1999 still live in exile, as returning means facing severe discrimination and personal risk. Recent incidents serve to underscore that harsh reality. Serbian returnees, such as Žarko Zarić and Radovan Ristić, found their homes vandalized and burned. During the reporting period, three houses in the village of Novake were also torched, targeting Serbian families who dared to come back. Today only 1.9 per cent of the 250,000 displaced Serbs have managed to return home. Why must they endure such obstacles? When will they be allowed to reclaim what is rightfully theirs?

Even those who attempt to assert their property rights face arrest and intimidation. In August, Serbian individuals such as Dragan Cvetković and Miloš Šošić were detained on baseless charges. Their crime was simply being Serbs in Kosovo. Kurti's Administration recently enacted new expropriation measures that allow for the confiscation of Serbian land, further dispossessing those who wish to return. Is it not the right of every citizen to live in their homeland without fear of losing it?

In the light of what I have just said to the Council, I want to say to our Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija that they are not alone. Serbia stands with

them in their struggle for justice, dignity and security. We will not waver in our support for their rights to live in peace, raise their families and preserve their heritage. Their courage in the face of adversity is a testament to their resilience and strength. As they continue to endure those challenges, they should rest assured that Serbia and the international community are fighting to ensure their rights, safety and future. We will not allow their voices to go unheard, and we will tirelessly advocate for their right to live freely and safely in the land of their ancestors. The world must recognize that their struggle is not just about territory — it is about the fundamental right to live without fear, with dignity and justice.

We demand amnesty for, and the release of, all political prisoners held in captivity by the regime of Albin Kurti. There can be no true reconciliation or full normalization until the more than 80 Kosovo Serb political prisoners return to their homes and loved ones. We all recall the numerous collective amnesties granted to former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, even for crimes committed in North Macedonia many years after the war in Kosovo, let alone in Kosovo and Metohija itself. We also remember this picture I have here of Kurti's Interior Minister Sveçla standing in front of a burnt-down EULEX vehicle, and Kurti's mob attacking United States Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson in Parliament in Pristina, while blocking the work of that body with stun grenades and tear gas for months on end. Are we now supposed to accept, for example, that Milun Milenković Lune is a terrorist and Sveçla is a law-abiding citizen, and even an acceptable interlocutor?

I want to be clear to the Albanian community in Kosovo that Serbia has no conflict with them. Our issue is with the actions and policies of Albin Kurti's regime, not with the Albanian people. We recognize their aspirations for peace and prosperity, just as we do for the Serbian community. We call on them to reject policies of division and conflict and to join us in seeking a future built on mutual respect, security and cooperation. Albin Kurti has become a mirror image of the regime he set out to fight against more than a quarter of a century ago and has unfortunately even surpassed it in certain ways. He has grown into a true oppressor, discriminator and divider. Let us together imagine a future in which Albanian and Serbian children learn and grow together, neighbours support one another and economic growth benefits all. That future is possible,

but it requires rejecting extremist policies that deepen the divide. Stand with us in calling for a Kosovo Government that respects all its citizens and fulfils its international commitments.

My message to the international community is that the time for decisive action is now. Pristina's leadership, under Albin Kurti, continues to undermine stability, violate human rights and ignore international agreements. We need clear consequences for those actions. Sanctions against Kurti's Administration must be imposed, and zero tolerance must be shown for further unilateral moves that violate agreements and provoke conflict. We urge the Council to enforce the existing agreements, particularly the 2013 Brussels Agreement, and to hold Pristina accountable to its commitments. The establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities is not optional. It is a legally binding obligation that must be honoured without delay. Kosovo's leadership must be compelled to respect the rights of all of its citizens and uphold its commitments to peace and security. Imagine the future we can create if we work together to protect human rights, reject extremism and uphold international law. That future demands action, not words. It is time to hold Kurti accountable and ensure a Kosovo and Metohija where Serbs and Albanians alike can live in peace and dignity.

In conclusion, I ask: will the Council uphold the values it stands for, or will we allow human rights to be further eroded? Serbia stands resolute in its pursuit of stability, security and peace. We call on the Council to reaffirm its commitment to protecting all communities in Kosovo, while ensuring that basic freedoms are safeguarded.

Furthermore, as mentioned on 13 September, as an essential step for countering the escalating effects of Pristina's unilateral actions, preserving dialogue and re-establishing stability, Belgrade called for a return to the status quo ante, which means that the following concrete measures are to be taken — calling and holding free and democratic local elections in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, with the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo and European Union control; the implementation of article 9 of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, through the collective return of Kosovo Serbs to the Regional Directorate of the Kosovo Police-North; the return of Serbian judges and prosecutors to judicial

functions; the withdrawal of special forces of the so-called Kosovo Police from illegally built bases and checkpoints in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as their withdrawal from all Serbian institutions, which, from 1999 until they were illegally closed down in 2024, provided vital public and administrative services to citizens; the urgent and final formation of the community of Serb-majority municipalities; the implementation of the guarantees of the European Union and the United States of 22 December 2022 and the immediate release of all political prisoners; and immediately enabling unimpeded payment transactions and postal services.

Let us strive together for a future in which Serbs and Albanians live side by side in mutual respect. Building lasting peace will demand courage and honouring past commitments and cultivating trust. Will we seize this opportunity, or will we let division dictate the future? The choice is ours, and history will judge us by it.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

**Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz**: I need to start by with the quotation: “a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes”. With regard to fake news, President Obama said that even when he was President, he had not realized how susceptible we had become to lies and conspiracy theories despite, having spent years being a target of disinformation himself.

We are living in turbulent times. Manipulation has become a key tool in an all-out war against free democratic countries. Let me be clear — there is no place in the world called Kosovo and Metohija. It is Kosovo, Kosova, the Republic of Kosovo, the Republic of Kosova. It would be the same as if every time I mentioned Serbia, I started calling it Kraljevina or some other name, which I will not do.

It is concerning to see what even experienced professionals are ready to believe, because they cannot, or do not, double check. They are too busy, and often too superficial, simply reading from texts and not properly analysing. What we have had to listen to here today are so many lies that it is completely impossible to debunk each and every one of them in the short time we are here together.

Most Member States have Embassies in the Republic of Kosova, which have confirmed that not

one of Mr. Đurić's statements is true. Let me be clear: do not trust a single point, such as crazy lies that the citizens of Kosova do not have access to health care, bank accounts or local services. The reality is that we have many Serb citizens in the northern municipalities of the Republic of Kosova gladly telling us that they can finally breathe freely without fear and that they can, for example, finally have their children registered in the municipalities after many years.

Members surely know that they would not imagine that China, the United States, Slovenia, Japan or Switzerland would accept any foreign personal documents for their own citizens being issued by a foreign country in a local municipality on their own territory, let alone this illegal Serbian-ruled territory. Illegal Serbian institutions constitute more than a decade-long blatant violation of the 2013 Brussels Agreement, just one among the many that Serbia has been violating the entire time. In the past, parallel illegal structures would not issue the necessary papers. They offered only illegal ones from Serbia. That was systematic and illegal and clear discrimination by a foreign Power. We liberated our citizens from that oppression.

After we finally established rule of law, they cried foul and lied about alleged discrimination. I ask members to look at this pamphlet from Serbia, which I believe every one of the members of the Security Council received in recent days. Every one of these statements is simply wrong because it treats Kosova as being part of Serbia, which it is not. I use this occasion to showcase only one example, but there are many of them. It presents members with an overview of what, in reality, is non-existent discrimination of the citizens of Kosova. Not one of these elements is true. They are all false.

We established something new that is very precious for the citizens in the north, that is, normalcy. With the fight against crime, we established the rule of law instead of the rule of criminal gangs sponsored by Belgrade. We established normal municipal services instead of the misuse of public funds. We merely established what members' already established democratic countries are offering to their citizens — responsible and transparent public service. We will continue to protect our citizens and to widen access to the services they deserve, which they have gone without for so many years.

Not only are the people in Kosova fed up with the continuous Serbian lies. Vučić is losing influence among Serbian citizens of the Republic of Kosova for a reason. If they do not believe the lies and the propaganda, no one should. But that is only one aspect.

We need to talk about a danger that some are afraid to mention. We need to talk about war — how to prevent another war in Europe. Some say the Putin could target the Balkans next. Putin's proxy, Vučić, is protecting the terrorists who led Serbia's paramilitary attack against the Republic of Kosova on 24 September 2023. Their leader, Radoičić, one of the most brutal and richest people in Serbia — not rich by inheriting wealth from his parents, but by crime — was involved in the extortion and killing of Serbian citizens of Kosova. Kosova wants him extradited. He is responsible for the killing of our police officer and national hero, Sergeant Afrim Bunjaku. Mr. Đurić knows him well from his years as Vučić's right hand in his fight against Kosova from 2013 to 2020. Đurić and Radoičić, the killer, were allies in suppressing decent Serbian citizens who just wanted to live a normal life. Mr. Đurić was in charge when Radoičić was involved in killing Kosovar Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. He was gunned down on the street in front of his office. Radoičić is the main suspect in his murder as well. And Đurić was meeting with him again, having a coffee recently in Belgrade with that criminal and terrorist. That shows the type of characters we are dealing with. Who else here is comfortable hanging out with a brutal killer? And because we started by showing photographs and in order to not leave any space for disinformation: this is Radoičić, and this is the now Foreign Minister of Serbia, Marko Đurić.

Serbia's attack on 24 September 2023 was planned as a military invasion and annexation of a peaceful country, with thousands of NATO troops. To be clear: that was the first attack of the Putin alliance against a country with a NATO presence. It is a test for the West, a test for more. And Vučić and Putin are not giving up. Therefore, we need first deterrence, then dialogue, in that order. Only with credible deterrence will peace and security be safe. Because when Vučić, Đurić and others in Serbia say "dialogue", they do not mean it. They are not interested in dialogue. They are interested in destroying the independent Republic of Kosova even by force. Nobody should be fooled. They have proven it, and they will try again. Therefore, Kosova is thankful

to NATO and its allies for increasing their troops in order to deter Serbia from another aggression.

The Defence Minister of Serbia, who prepared the paramilitary attack on Kosova for more than a year, was promoted by Vučić. He is the new Prime Minister of Serbia. The European Union (EU) President Von Der Leyen refused to meet him in recent days because of his active connections with Russia. Vučić also promoted an old friend who is under sanctions by Western countries, but is the messenger between Putin and Vučić, Mr. Vulin. He is anti-Western and pro-Russian. He was a close adviser of Milošević and laid flowers just some months ago at the grave of mass murderer Stalin before getting awarded by Putin personally. He is now the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia. He has just embarked on his trip to Belarus. Mr. Đurić, along with his successor Mr. Petković, was among the leaders of the violent attack against the United States Embassy in Belgrade, during which it was set on fire by a violent mob. Now he is Foreign Minister of Serbia. That is the Serbia of 2024. We are not talking about the 1990s. We are talking about 2024, and that is just a part of the dark picture. One must not believe a single word of those dangerous people that one cannot check for oneself.

All those developments are most concerning. Vučić is preparing and ready for more. All across Serbia, murals of war criminals indicted or convicted by United Nations tribunals can be seen. Also, for many months, gigantic murals have been surfacing that announced the Serbian army will return to Kosova. Such huge murals in such an autocratic country do not appear by chance. Increasingly more experts are warning that Serbia is resembling the fascist Serbia of the 1990s. Serbia has become the biggest threat to peace in Europe, right behind Russia. Both Putin and Vučić have a dark legacy, a legacy of aggression and genocide. Both of them need to be stopped.

The problem for Vučić's people is not an association, the real problem is our sheer existence. For them, the association is not at all a tool to ease the lives of citizens. It is just another option in trying to break away a part of our country. Similar to Putin with Ukraine, Vučić wants nothing short of the disappearance of the Republic of Kosova. In 1999, he played an integral role in the genocide against our people. That man should never have become President of the country. He should be on trial or in jail. He keeps promoting a racist ideology of Serb supremacy similar to Russian supremacy. Serb nationalists want a so-called Serbian

world, similar to the Russian world. All Serbs should live under Serbian rule — that is their public statement.

The last time Serbia was going in that direction, it waged four wars, resulting in more than 100,000 people killed. Vučić's legacy of war and violence is a warning. Fascist ideologies are not folklore. They are dead serious in every sense. In his core, Vučić has not changed. He has been a man of violence, even a man of killing, since a young age. In the days of the Srebrenica genocide, he threatened the international community, stating: "We will kill 100 Muslims for every Serb killed."

Another warning from history is appeasement only feeds the beast, getting us closer to war. Vučić is only waiting for the next chance. If it were not for NATO troops in Kosova, Vučić and Putin would have tried to invade a second time within just one year. At the same time, Vučić is blocking the EU-mediated dialogue that has broken down because of him. Vučić refused to sign an EU proposal in Brussels. We were ready to sign it, as Council members all know. When the EU extended the invitation for the next round, he again refused to sign, as Council members again well know. When the EU kept insisting the deal was valid without any signature, Vučić had his Prime Minister send a letter to the EU that Serbia was not accepting any of those deals. Still, the EU believes that appeasement and deals will help to tame the beast. That is encouraging Vučić to escalate. Putin and Vučić alike consider appeasement a sign of weakness, as Hitler and Stalin did.

Kosova has become an example for many in the region of a successful democracy, because Kosova is a success story of a country that respects and contributes to the rules-based international order and gives people hope. Just last Saturday, the EU Commission President Von Der Leyen visited our country and stated publicly that our reform efforts are "outstanding". Meanwhile, Kosova is even viewed in Serbia more positively than some of the countries whose representatives are sitting around this table. We are not only the youngest country, but also the country with the youngest population in Europe and with the highest economic growth out of 34 European countries, according to reports of the International Monetary Fund. We are a democracy of which an extraordinary 81 per cent of its citizens say they are living under the rule of law, a country with the most powerful protection for minorities in Europe. For example, 20 of out of 120 seats are guaranteed for minority members of Parliament as members of Government for the minorities, regardless of the

outcome of the election. Such a level of minority rights is unique on this planet. There is more solid proof against that propaganda. But just in April, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted overwhelmingly, with more than 80 per cent of the votes, in favour of the Republic of Kosovo becoming a member of the Council of Europe.

The Assembly report states that Kosovo has done more than required to protect its minorities. Yes, we do, and we are proud of our achievements. Serbia had fired a cascade of lies and slurs during that debate. The response of 47 countries, members of the Council of Europe, could not have been clearer: 82 per cent voted for Kosovo. It was just another defeat for Vučić. And do Council members know how he reacted? The next day he blocked at the border thousands of travellers to Kosovo for hours. That is how he is, and people have long known that he is that type. Therefore, the real question raised by all that is: does anyone here truly believe that such a diverse group as the Assembly of 47 countries could have voted so overwhelmingly for our country if there were any truth to what Mr. Đurić and Mr. Vučić are trying to sell? The Council of Europe, non-governmental organizations, countless foreign Government officials and members of Parliaments, a lot of foreign media, our own free media and, last but not least, more than 1 million visitors each year — they all give a different account. There is, then, more than just the word of my Government that can prove that what looks like propaganda, is presented like propaganda and is debunked as propaganda surely is propaganda.

In all honesty, and with all due respect to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo reports are not the kind of propaganda that Serbia is putting out — of course not. Other reports have become so biased, so incomplete and so pro-Serbia that they are already not a reliable source in any way. There are much more detailed, more factual and more independent reports from international organizations — reports that are repeatedly referenced and that can be relied on, such as the reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, for example.

Let me conclude with some basic remarks and an invitation: we may be a small country, but we are a giant in human dignity, in human rights and in respect for everyone. We treat people with respect — that is our very tradition. As a young and modern democracy,

we are proudly committed to the rule of law and to human rights. Serbia and Vučić committed genocide against Kosovo. Thanks to civilized countries in NATO that came to our rescue, although we suffered, we have survived the worst nightmare, the genocide, and we came back stronger than before, committed to rebuilding our country and to building our State, the Republic of Kosovo — a republic governed by the rule of law and a true democracy for all of our citizens. We have achieved a lot in a record short period of time. We are humble, but we are proud of what we have achieved. Nobody can take that away from us ever again. We are on our journey to NATO and the EU; we are the most Western country in the Western Balkans for sure. We kindly invite Council members to see it with their own eyes. They might share an experience with so many visitors, being stunned by the vibrant and open atmosphere. Council members should just see it for themselves — Kosovo is really a great country.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz for her briefing.

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

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by acknowledging the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Marko Đurić, to whom I listened attentively. I thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her briefing. I also listened carefully to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

I begin by reaffirming Ecuador's commitment to peace and stability in the Western Balkans. We are familiar with the historical complexity and tensions that have marked that region, and we firmly believe that a future of stability and prosperity can be achieved through dialogue and cooperation. It was for that reason that, shortly after beginning its mandate as an elected member of the Council almost two years ago, Ecuador welcomed the efforts of the parties to resume negotiations for the normalization of their relations, under the auspices of the European Union (EU). That agreement renewed optimism in the search for lasting solutions that ensure stability in the region, amid a complex geopolitical context.

Unfortunately, little progress has been made on the implementation of the agreement, and tensions have increased. The Secretary-General's recent report (S/2024/741) indicates that the situation in northern Kosovo remains tense, marked by incidents that affect

local communities and jeopardize the fragile security situation. Unilateral actions, such as the closure of essential institutions and services, and other measures mentioned in the Secretary General's report cause the situation to deteriorate and hinder efforts towards an inclusive and sustainable peace. It would therefore be advisable to carefully reconsider such actions. Ecuador urges the parties to engage constructively, sustainably and in good faith in the dialogue facilitated by the EU, whose positive role we commend. We also acknowledge the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and that of NATO. The parties must exercise restraint, while avoiding measures or statements that exacerbate tensions and jeopardize the progress achieved to date.

In a positive sign, we have heard about the recent lifting of the embargo on Serbian goods at a border crossing, which shows that, with political will and good faith, progress can be achieved towards reaching agreements that benefit [the] communities. The protection of minorities, the guarantee of their socioeconomic rights and their participation in institutional and decision-making processes foster social cohesion and help build a sustainable peace. That includes making progress in the work to establish the association of Serb-majority municipalities, as provided for in the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, which was reached more than 10 years ago. In addition, it is essential to clarify the fate of missing persons and to facilitate the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

While exercising our responsibility in the Security Council, we have found that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) remains crucial in promoting peace, dialogue and stability in the region. For that reason, I renew Ecuador's recognition of UNMIK's efforts, and I encourage Special Representative Caroline Ziadeh to continue her work and leadership, particularly with the use of preventive diplomacy and confidence-building tools.

I would like to state that my country also considers it commendable that the priorities of the women and peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda have been included in the discharge of Ms. Ziadeh's mandate. I conclude by reiterating Ecuador's desire for reconciliation, peace and sustainable development in the Western Balkans and its support for cooperation by the parties under resolution 1244 (1999).

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, for her briefing. We also welcome Minister Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz and Minister Marko Đurić to the Chamber today. At the outset, we also want to commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force for their contributions to peace and stability in Kosovo.

I will resume where I left off in the April briefing on UNMIK (see S/PV.9612), by focusing on key areas where we believe Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the Council, could concentrate their efforts.

States Members of the United Nations just adopted the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1), Maybe Serbia and Kosovo could also reflect on their own pact for the future, through a sincere commitment to peaceful coexistence, reinvigoration of the EU-facilitated dialogue and advancement of the normalization of relations. We are not encouraged by what we have heard today, but we will continue to hope and to try. The year 2025 could — should — represent a fresh start and an opportunity for a reinvigorated dialogue, a dialogue that would see all its agreements implemented and a final agreement on normalization reached.

Against that backdrop, I would like to make the following points.

First, Slovenia firmly believes that mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence constitute the only viable option for lasting stability in the region — acceptance and coexistence of Serbia and Kosovo, and acceptance and coexistence of Albanians and Serbs within Kosovo. Mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence mean Serbs in Kosovo, especially in the north, feeling safe and secure in continuing to nourish their identity and their way of life among the majority in Kosovo. Mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence mean Serbia seeing its community in Kosovo protected so that that community will not feel like a guest in its own home. In that context, Slovenia emphasizes the need for progress regarding the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence mean Kosovo breaking out of international isolation and integrating all its communities — politically, legally and socially — under the Kosovo laws. They are a premise on which the dialogue and agreements facilitated by the

EU have been based and remain a relevant goal of the dialogue today.

The second point is the need for stronger commitment on the part of leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to fully implementing several agreements reached so far through the EU-facilitated dialogue, especially the 2013 Brussels First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations and its annex, the Ohrid Agreement of 2023. Serbia and Kosovo have been able to compromise and to take difficult decisions to ease people's lives. We welcome the positive steps mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/741), such as the official registration of the property of the Visoki Dačani Monastery, the issuance of driving licences in the north and the recent decision to lift the ban on Serbian goods, in return for which Kosovo was allowed to represent itself independently in the Central European Free Trade Agreement.

My third point is about unilateral actions and derogatory rhetoric. Unilateral and surprise actions, even when taken in line with the rule of law, heighten tensions, unravel trust and pose a risk of escalation. We have seen too many of those actions in the past period. They do not help community integration processes and should be avoided. Upholding the rule of law is crucial, and in that context we urge Serbia to collaborate in pursuing justice for the attack in Banjska last year. A word should also be said about derogatory rhetoric. We continue to believe that it should be avoided in bilateral communications and here, in the Chamber of the Security Council, if we are to hope to build a better future for all in Kosovo.

In conclusion, the recently adopted Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1), especially its Declaration on Future Generations, can inspire UNMIK's work by promoting cultural diversity, preserving heritage, enhancing educational and professional mobility, encouraging digital transformation and innovation and promoting a green economy. Kosovo's youth from all communities can be empowered to drive positive change together. We welcome UNMIK's support for the Barabar Centre in Pristina, which promotes inter-ethnic dialogue and social and cultural interactions among diverse communities.

Lastly, as I highlighted in my April briefing, the path to lasting peace and coexistence cannot be built on a zero-sum game or short-lived victories. Actual progress requires commitment and compromise. The sooner all

parties recognize that, the sooner the communities of Kosovo will live in stability and prosperity.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): May I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Caroline Ziadeh for her briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, and Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz from Kosovo at today's meeting. I listened carefully to their statements.

We must first reiterate our support for the critically important work that continues to be done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The execution of the mandate to promote peace, security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo continues to be highly valued. Even as 25 years have passed since its establishment, UNMIK's role in the advancement of peace and stability in the Western Balkans cannot be overstated. We are especially encouraged by UNMIK's support for initiatives that seek to build trust across Kosovo by promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and combating divisive narratives.

Guyana commends the continuing efforts of the European Union (EU) in facilitating dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. We encourage both parties to recommit to that mechanism and to continue to use peaceful means to resolve any concerns that may arise. We continue to believe that the EU-facilitated dialogue is the most appropriate mechanism for finding consensus towards the goal of achieving a just and lasting peace. We are dismayed to see stagnation in the dialogue, with very limited progress being made by the parties in implementing their obligations. It is evident from the agreements reached in 2023 that there exists a path on which the parties can come together in the interest of stability and prosperity for their populations. We are hopeful that both sides can re-examine their positions and return to the negotiating table.

Guyana is concerned about the incidents highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/741). Unilateral actions that are likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on the lives of the Serb minority community will serve only to heighten tensions and erode trust. Those actions have the potential not only to cause harm to the economic and social well-being of minority communities, but also to put at risk the stability of Kosovo, Serbia and the wider region. We call on all parties to act responsibly and with foresight of the consequences of their actions. It is

the responsibility of Kosovo's leadership to ensure that the human rights and well-being of all of the population are respected and upheld at all times. We have taken positive note of the efforts by the United Nations and Kosovo to advance women's participation in the peace process, to promote gender equality and to address violence against women.

Guyana believes that progress is always possible. In an era of increasing armed conflicts, we call on the leadership of both Kosovo and Serbia to take heed of the devastating consequences of forsaking diplomacy. We reiterate our call for the parties to maximize the opportunities for bridging divides through the EU-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and to recommit to the full implementation of existing agreements. Guyana believes that there is a future in which an independent, democratic Kosovo can exist alongside Serbia — a Kosovo where all of their peoples can thrive in societies that enjoy peace and prosperity and where diversity is a strength that is celebrated and not a source of instability and division.

**Mr. Eckersley** (United Kingdom): We welcome the Foreign Minister of Serbia and the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo to the Chamber.

Allow me to begin by thanking the Special Representative for the work that she and her team are doing to promote stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo.

The United Kingdom is a long-standing supporter of Kosovo's sovereignty and independence. We remain committed to supporting an inclusive, diverse and multi-ethnic democracy in Kosovo. We welcome, for example, Kosovo's efforts to recruit police officers from non-majority communities and its commitment to tackling conflict-related sexual violence, including through its leadership of the International Forum for Women, Peace and Security. Yet, for many years, the absence of a normal relationship between Kosovo and Serbia has negatively affected the lives of individuals living in both countries and affected regional stability.

In recent weeks, we have seen positive steps towards greater cooperation. They include the easing of restrictions on Serbian imports into Kosovo and the agreement securing Kosovo's representation in the Central European Free Trade Agreement. We are, however, concerned that progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue has been faltering. We call upon both parties to reaffirm their commitment to the EU-facilitated

dialogue, and we echo the Secretary-General's call for greater participation by women in the process. It is important that both sides demonstrate the political will and the courage to fully implement existing agreements under the dialogue, including the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities. At the same time, it is important for all sides to avoid actions that could jeopardize such progress. We urge Kosovo to carefully consider the impact of its decisions on all its citizens, including those from non-majority communities, and to work with its partners. And we urge Serbia to play its part in supporting efforts to ensure justice and accountability for the perpetrators of last year's shocking attack in Banjska and to play a constructive role in reducing tensions and promoting positive relations in the region.

I would like to end by expressing the United Kingdom's gratitude to the Special Representative and to all Mission staff who have contributed to UNMIK's work over the past 25 years. Promoting dialogue and trust-building between Kosovo's communities is and remains vital. However, it has been over 16 years since Kosovo's independence, and the situation is unrecognizable from 1999. It is therefore time for the Council to review UNMIK's role to reflect conditions on the ground.

**Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh for her briefing. I would like to extend a welcome to Foreign Minister Đurić and Deputy Prime Minister Gërvalla-Schwarz to the Security Council.

First and foremost, Japan commends the commitment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to help to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo and the advancement of regional stability in the Western Balkans. We also thank Ms. Ziadeh for her leadership and active engagement with local and international partners to promote mutual trust between the parties.

Japan has supported peace and stability in the Western Balkans alongside its people, who have rebuilt their lives from the tragedy of war. We have also worked together in the process of Kosovo's development based on the rule of law and democracy since its independence. It is important to promote peace, stability and cooperation among the countries in the region. The accession of the Western Balkans to the European Union (EU) will contribute to those aims.

In that regard, Japan has been supporting the Western Balkans in their efforts for socioeconomic reform and reconciliation for decades, which was accelerated by the launch of Japan's Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative in 2018. The initiative aims to support reforms in the Western Balkan countries toward EU accession and to facilitate regional cooperation. Japan's Foreign Minister visited Serbia and Kosovo in July and had candid dialogues on our bilateral relations, respectively, as well as the future of the region. That is our renewed commitment to help to seek reconciliation among the parties.

As a country that has fostered a long friendship with both Serbia and Kosovo, Japan remains concerned about the situation on the ground, where there have been several negative incidents. We take note that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/741) and those of the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo assess that the security situation in northern Kosovo remains fragile after a series of incidents sparked tension. We reiterate that the Banjska attack last year must be fully investigated and that the perpetrators must be held accountable based on an impartial investigation. In addition, we underscore the importance of full and transparent communication and continuous dialogue among the parties regarding policies with a significant impact on regional stability and daily life. Fomenting distrust is not a constructive approach. We solicit all parties to refrain from any actions that could lead to further tension and escalation. It is ordinary people who suffer from the consequences of such actions. Needless to say, the protection of human rights is the basic responsibility of all nations. Japan strongly urges both parties to constructively engage in the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and to find solutions for unresolved issues, which is essential to peace and stability in the Western Balkans. It is also important for both parties to recommit to existing agreements, such as the Brussels Agreement and its annex, the Ohrid Agreement of 2023, and to continue to implement them in good faith and in their entirety, including via the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities.

Since its establishment in 1999, UNMIK has played a critical role in supporting Kosovo. We also recognize that the situation in Kosovo is very different from 25 years ago. Therefore, UNMIK's role should be reviewed accordingly.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to work with all stakeholders to achieve peace, stability and reconciliation in the region.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, for her comprehensive briefing. We welcome His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, to this meeting. We also welcome the participation of Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz in this meeting.

Mozambique is concerned about the rising tensions in the territory. They have the potential of poisoning and deepening the inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, and they therefore threaten the stability in the region. The resort to incendiary political rhetoric by the parties is also a matter of concern. It may inspire some sectors to engage in violence, as in the past, with a negative impact on negotiations.

Despite years of dialogue and a number of agreements signed, the path to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between Belgrade and Pristina continues to be long and difficult. We therefore wish to encourage continued efforts to break this deadlock and pave the way for a lasting stability and harmonious coexistence. We urge the parties to resolve their outstanding differences through dialogue and diplomacy. We encourage them to remain committed, in good faith, to constructive engagement so as to find the necessary compromises. We urge all parties to abide by resolution 1244 (1999).

We concur that involvement of all key stakeholders in the process, including women, youth and civil society, ensures comprehensive and sustainable solutions. On the other hand, that approach can bridge gaps and build stronger and more resilient communities. Mozambique wishes to reiterate its support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and for all efforts by regional actors and international stakeholders towards finding sustainable solutions, paving the way for peace, stability and prosperity in Kosovo.

**Mr. Dharmadhikari** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, for her briefing. I welcome the presence among us of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Marko Đurić, and of Kosovo, Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz.

There is an urgent need to move towards normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo and towards an easing of tensions. The normalization of those relations is a guarantee of regional stability and an essential condition for the European perspective that the two countries have chosen. France welcomes the breakthrough in the work on the Central European Free Trade Agreement, which was made possible by the compromise reached in October between Kosovo and Serbia, the facilitating role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in that regard, as well as the decision of the Kosovar Government to reopen the Merdare border crossing point to goods from Serbia. That is an important decision that will enable progress to be made towards regional and European integration. Further efforts are still needed to reduce waiting times at the border.

France welcomes the decisions taken at the end of last year by the Serbian authorities to begin implementing the Brussels-Ohrid agreement, as well as the statement by Prime Minister Vučević on 9 October in which he affirmed Serbia's commitment to implementing all its obligations within the framework of the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. That progress is encouraging, but still insufficient. The parties must continue their efforts in order to ensure that the agreement reached more than a year and a half ago is fully implemented. It is essential for both parties to demonstrate their willingness to make progress in that dialogue.

France condemns the increase in unilateral actions taken by the Kosovar authorities in the north of the country, which is affecting people's daily lives in the Serbian community. Those decisions needlessly fuel tensions.

France reiterates that Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration depends first and foremost on progress being achieved within the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. The status of Serbian parallel structures must be resolved within that framework through the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, on the basis of the European Union draft statute on that matter. The lack of progress in that regard remains an obstacle to implementing the rights of people in the Serbian minority in Kosovo. It is essential to restore representative democracy in northern Kosovo and to re-establish the active participation of Serbs in local governance, policing and the judiciary.

At the end of September, we marked the first anniversary of the Banjska attack — a tragic anniversary. It is unacceptable that the perpetrators have yet to be tried for their crimes. They must be brought to justice. The Serbian authorities are aware of the commitments they have made and what they need to do in that regard. France will continue to closely monitor the developments on that issue.

The normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo can be achieved only if both parties seek a compromise and, necessarily, if they both have the political will to achieve one. France calls on the Serbian and Kosovar leaders to act responsibly and to honour their commitments. We will continue to support the European Union-led mediation efforts with a view to reaching a comprehensive, definitive and legally binding agreement. It is through dialogue and within the framework of the European mediation efforts that just and lasting solutions will be found. Let us recall that the European Union was given a mandate in that regard by the General Assembly.

France supports UNMIK's efforts to strengthen the rule of law, respect for human rights and reconciliation between communities in Kosovo, in coordination with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The UNMIK mandate includes the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. France supports the extension of its mandate for as long as necessary.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Caroline Ziadeh for her briefing on the situation in the province and the insights she shared. We welcome the participation of Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, in this meeting. We also listened to the opinion of Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz. We are once again deeply impressed by her so-called vast historical knowledge and in-depth geopolitical reflections.

Inter-ethnic tensions in Kosovo are at a 15-year high. The root of that evil is unchanged. It stems from the aspiration of the so-called authorities in Pristina to establish full control over the Serb-populated northern part of the province, and they are eager to do that with the full connivance of their Western backers. Many of the specific manifestations of that aggressive policy were reflected in the Secretary-General's semi-annual

report (S/2024/741) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Pristina's malicious provocations include the ban on the circulation of the Serbian dinar in the province, the forced closure of administrative bodies providing services to Serbs in Kosovo, the expropriation of land parcels belonging to Serb residents in Kosovo and the squeezing-out of non-Albanian community institutions and businesses. Fabricated pretexts are being used to arrest Serbs, schools and hospitals are being raided, homes of returning refugees are being set on fire and Orthodox churches are being desecrated. We join in the Secretary-General's call to take those threats very seriously.

Despite the formal lifting of the unilateral embargo imposed on goods from Serbia in June 2023, there are queues of trucks several kilometres long piled up at the Merdare crossing, which is currently the only crossing open for entry. As is customary, the West prefers to turn a blind eye to all that, waxing lyrical about the so-called constructive steps being taken by the Kosovo Albanians and giving them credit for solving the problem that they themselves created by ignoring their obligations under the Central European Free Trade Agreement.

In 2024 alone, 93 ethnically motivated incidents targeting Serbs in Kosovo were recorded, and since the ultra-nationalist self-determination movement came to power in February 2021, the number of such incidents has reached 550. Albin Kurti, the so-called "Prime Minister", has de facto declared war on all things Serbian, pushing the Orthodox community in the province to the brink of survival. And yet he cynically asserts that he is supposedly continuing to fight against today's fascism in Kosovo and beyond.

The systematic terror targeting Kosovo Serbs is best explained by the catastrophically low rate of refugee returns mentioned in the Secretary-General's report — over the past six months, only 13 people have returned, of which only seven are Serbs. At the same time, the outflow of non-Albanians has risen sharply, which jeopardizes not only the traditionally multi-ethnic structure of the society, but also the long-term socioeconomic prospects of the province. It is clear that, unless we stand up to Albin Kurti, he will continue cleaning out Serbian enclaves, and his appetite will only grow. An example of that is the demand to open Serbia's airspace for commercial flights to Kosovo.

Nevertheless, the West continues to abet Pristina by trying to prop up its international legal personality. Kosovo's status in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly has been raised, and significant work has been done to get the province accepted into the Council of Europe. In turn, Belgrade is repeatedly facing demands to recognize the so-called independence of the province. In order to exert greater pressure, chapter 35 of the negotiating framework for Serbia's accession to the European Union was supplemented with the relevant so-called obligations supposedly arising from the oral Brussels-Ohrid understandings of 2023. Moreover, the relevant official documents — the Brussels agreements of 2013 and 2015 — have been deliberately forgotten because they, inter alia, bind Pristina to establish the community of Serb-majority municipalities. Let me reiterate once again to everyone here in the Chamber that the establishment of that community is not simply a wish, but an obligation placed upon Pristina, which it has been sabotaging for more than a decade. Moreover, that obligation must be implemented in full, without pseudo-compromises on the part of our Western colleagues. We demand an end to those fraudulent games and to immediately oblige Pristina to begin the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities.

The attempts by some external actors to boost the military capabilities of the Kurti regime pose a clear threat to security in the region. The NATO countries continue to supply Kosovo with weapons, including armoured personnel carriers, anti-tank missile systems, reconnaissance and strike drones. Within three years, Pristina expects to put into service more than 350 armoured vehicles and to acquire its own fleet of military helicopters. That is a flagrant violation of resolution 1244 (1999), which defines the international contingent for Kosovo as the sole military presence to be accepted in the province.

We support the package of measures proposed by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić aimed at overcoming the deep crisis the settlement process is currently in. Those include a return to the status quo ante principle, which implies that Pristina is to fully cancel all discriminatory measures taken against the province's Serbs; to put an end to humanitarian and police and terror against the non-Albanian population; and to return Serbian representatives to legislative, judicial and municipal authorities. We deem it justifiable that Belgrade intends to once again request

the return to Kosovo of up to 1,000 Serb military and police personnel, as per resolution 1244 (1999).

We have been following very closely what began in The Hague in April 2023, namely, the trial against the leaders of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army. That trial was supposed to take place many years ago as part of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), but the ICTY turned a blind eye to the crimes committed by those individuals. Reports on the activities of the Specialist Chambers make it clear that defendants are trying to exert pressure on witnesses, and even if there are convictions, the time to be spent in detention tends to be subsequently reduced on appeal. Nevertheless, we hope that the criminals will receive the punishment they deserve, even if it is significantly delayed.

The West's political protectionism towards Pristina is increasingly fuelling Kurti's ambitions of a greater Albania. Kurti is attempting to destabilize regions of central Serbia with a large Muslim population and enthusiastically meeting with the marginal Serbian opposition. There has been no reaction from Washington or Brussels to the interference of the nationalist self-determination movement in the electoral processes in North Macedonia. Similarly, attempts to undermine the territorial integrity of Montenegro have been ignored.

In such difficult circumstances, UNMIK is needed more than ever before, much like the maintenance of its human and financial capacities. Regular discussions of the situation in Kosovo should remain on the Council's agenda, and they should take place in an open format.

We draw attention to the fact that the Kosovo Albanians were involved in detaining a Russian citizen serving in UNMIK, Mr. Mikhail Krasnoshchekov, on 28 May 2019, and inflicting grievous bodily harm on him. However, those individuals have not yet been brought to account. Another Russian citizen, Mr. Andrei Antonov, was declared *persona non grata* on 31 December 2021, and his personal safety was put at risk. That was done by an unlawful decision taken by province "authorities". Regrettably, no one has been brought to justice for that either.

Russia's position on Kosovo remains unchanged. We stand in favour of Belgrade and Pristina reaching a sustainable, mutually acceptable solution that falls strictly within the international legal framework, which is resolution 1244 (1999). Such an outcome should

satisfy the interests of Belgrade and the Serbian people and should secure the support of the Security Council.

**Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone): Let me thank Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for her comprehensive briefing.

We acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and of Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz at today's meeting.

Sierra Leone welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/741), as well as the European Union (EU) Rule of Law Mission report.

Reflecting on a prior meeting of the Council this year on UNMIK (see S/PV.9612), Sierra Leone is concerned about the reported "little progress" in the implementation of the EU-facilitated agreements between Belgrade and Pristina during this period. That lack of progress is particularly troubling, as it highlights an ongoing political impasse that has the potential to deepen the ethno-political divide, with significant human rights concerns.

Sierra Leone acknowledges the dedicated efforts of Special Representative Ziadeh and the Mission in carrying out the mandate established by resolution 1244 (1999). We commend the coordination among United Nations agencies in Kosovo to improve the lives of the people, in particular women, youth and refugees, and their contributions to security and institutional strengthening.

In that regard, we acknowledge the vital role of UNMIK in building trust between communities, advancing human rights and the rule of law and supporting efforts to normalize relations between Belgrade and Pristina. However, despite extensive resources and concerted efforts by the United Nations country team and EU entities and the resilience shown by the Quint to foster dialogue and good governance, the path to a peaceful and sustainable future for all communities in Kosovo ultimately lies in the hands of its multi-ethnic people and leadership.

Sierra Leone therefore strongly urges against any actions, including retaliatory measures, that create unfavourable conditions for specific ethnic groups within Kosovo. Such actions hinder much-needed progress in implementing the Brussels Agreement of

2013 and the March 2023 Agreement on normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo. In that regard, Sierra Leone calls on all sides to prioritize dialogue and peaceful engagement, refrain from unilateral measures and re-engage in the EU-facilitated dialogue, aimed at normalizing the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina.

Drawing on our own post-conflict and peacebuilding experience, I wish to share three insights — focused on accountability, prioritizing people-centred development and fostering unity for progress.

Sierra Leone notes the steps taken by Kosovo authorities to harmonize public administration, regulate services and conduct business operations, particularly in northern Kosovo. We also recognize the significant mandate of Kosovo's Special Prosecutor's Office and underscore the importance of accountability to bridge a divided past with a unified future. However, Sierra Leone remains concerned about reports indicating the potential targeting of Kosovo-Serbs, which adversely affects their socioeconomic rights and welfare. In addition, we are troubled by the nature of arrests, indictments and the use of police force in cases related to property disputes, peaceful protests and crimes from the Kosovo conflict.

Sierra Leone emphasizes the necessity of due process, fairness and good governance as being foundational to accountability. Therefore, we urge the Kosovo authorities, especially the Parliamentary Assembly, the Privatization Agency, the Special Prosecutor's Office and the police force to pursue accountability measures that promote social cohesion and justice. Inspired by Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we advocate for consultative, non-adversarial approaches that respect rights and foster healing and reconciliation.

That brings me to the importance of people-centred, participatory development. Sierra Leone reiterates its call to preserve Kosovo's multi-ethnic fabric by ensuring economic rights and safeguarding religious and cultural freedoms. We are deeply concerned about reports of unilateral actions that exacerbate ethnic tensions. Notably, the phased implementation of currency regulation has imposed hardship on ordinary people. Restricting the freedom of movement and excluding Kosovo-Serbs from police and judicial roles, while concentrating special operations units in northern Kosovo, further complicates the situation.

Mindful of Kosovo's fragile past, Sierra Leone urges the authorities to embrace representative, inclusive and consultative decision-making processes, in particular in matters impacting local communities. Similarly, in the light of the upcoming general elections, we emphasize the civic responsibility of all citizens to refrain from actions that undermine the authority of the Kosovo Government or hinder participation in public dialogue and elections.

Finally, the failure to adhere to peace agreements, especially the delayed establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities and Serbia's opposition to Kosovo's international aspirations, signifies a zero-sum approach that ultimately would harm the people of Kosovo. While current frameworks may not resolve all challenges in the region, it is essential that negotiations proceed with genuine commitment from both parties. Diplomatic forums must not be used for political leverage at the expense of progress, and State institutions should never serve as bargaining tools. Constructive engagement through existing diplomatic channels is vital. Sierra Leone calls on Kosovo and Serbian leaders, as well as their allies, to recommit to the EU-facilitated dialogue with mutual dedication to cooperation.

**Mr. Merabet** (Algeria): I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, at today's meeting. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Caroline Ziadeh for her insightful briefing. I listened carefully to the remarks made by Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Algeria remains concerned about the tense atmosphere and the potential for escalation that persists in northern Kosovo. Unilateral actions undertaken by authorities in Kosovo, without consultation or agreement with Kosovo-Serb representatives, are a source of deep concern. Those include the implementation of the new currency regulation, the closure of post offices and other institutions financed by Serbia and the intended reopening of the highly symbolic main bridge in Mitrovica to vehicle traffic. Those unilateral actions continue to have a negative impact on the daily lives and socioeconomic rights of thousands of Kosovo Serbs and other non-majority communities. They also contribute to raising tensions among communities, undermining any progress towards a peaceful solution, and may overcomplicate the political process. In the meantime, relations between Belgrade and Pristina are increasingly deteriorating in an already tense and

fragile security situation, without any tangible progress in the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue.

Against that backdrop, I would like to stress the following.

First, Algeria reiterates its call to refrain from any action that could lead to escalation and ethnic tensions in Kosovo. It is necessary to favour consultations and coordination between the parties and avoid decisions that could undermine the fragile stability in Kosovo and hinder efforts towards normalization.

Secondly, we stress once again the necessity of ensuring adequate representation of Kosovo-Serbs and other minorities in local and judicial institutions. In that regard, it is important to accelerate the organization of local elections in the northern municipalities of Kosovo and undertake the necessary measures to establish the association/community of Serb municipalities. Equally important is the strengthening of the rule of law in Kosovo, including by granting Kosovo Serbs access to key positions in judicial institutions, such as judges' and prosecutors' positions.

Thirdly, we appreciate the vital role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, in stabilizing the situation on the ground. We encourage the Mission to continue its efforts towards building trust and bridging divides across communities to ensure stability and avoid any potential clashes.

Fourthly, the EU-facilitated dialogue aimed at advancing the political process towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict remains critical. We encourage the parties to favour diplomacy and negotiations to reach a prompt, just and peaceful solution that guarantees a prosperous future for all.

Finally, Algeria reiterates its support for all efforts towards a mutually acceptable solution within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) and with full respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Sangjin Kim** (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh for her important and informative briefing. My delegation also welcomes His Excellency Mr. Marko Đurić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Her Excellency

Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, to the Council.

The Republic of Korea supports a peaceful resolution of issues related to Kosovo and Serbia through political dialogue and negotiations. When Serbia and Kosovo agreed to resume negotiations last year to normalize relations, we hoped that the foundation had been laid for peace. However, discussions to implement the 2023 agreement have not made substantive progress yet, and a tense atmosphere between Belgrade and Pristina continues to prevail.

According to the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/741), provocative unilateral actions have served to further undermine any positive steps made thus far and erode trust among communities. Such actions include the closure of several Serbian financial and postal institutions, attempts to reopen the Mitrovica bridge in northern Kosovo, as well as the implementation of new currency regulations, which have been disruptive for the local population.

Against that backdrop, I would like to focus on the following points.

First, we call on all parties to refrain from any provocative statements and unilateral actions that could ignite further conflict. Such activity not only impacts the daily lives and socioeconomic rights of those affected, but also jeopardizes the opportunity to achieve the peace and stability crucial for a prosperous future. For normalization to take place in the region, there can be no impunity for crimes regardless of the identity of the perpetrators. That includes the attacks against the Kosovo police in Banjska village last year.

Secondly, we encourage both sides to constructively re-engage in European Union (EU)-facilitated negotiations towards achieving the goal of normalized relations and lasting peace. Kosovo and Serbia must focus on narrowing their differences regarding the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. A road map exists. Now it is up to both sides to take the next steps on the path towards peace.

My delegation reiterates that EU-facilitated dialogue is the best platform to bridge gaps between the two sides and firmly believes that contentious issues should be discussed within that framework in good faith. In that regard, we welcome last week's trilateral meeting in Brussels, among the EU facilitator and chief negotiators from both sides.

Lastly, my delegation commends the staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for the invaluable contribution it has made to maintaining stability in Kosovo and the surrounding region and to building trust between local communities, in conjunction with international partners such as the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. A more efficient division of labour among the institutions will benefit all interested parties.

In conclusion, it is our sincere hope that the Western Balkan region, whose recent past has been one of violence and tragedy, will soon achieve reconciliation, peace and prosperity. The Republic of Korea stands ready to cooperate with all stakeholders to help ensure that the future of the region is one of peaceful coexistence.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the presence of Serbian Foreign Minister Đurić at today's meeting. I have listened carefully to the briefer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh.

The issue of Kosovo bears on peace and stability in the Balkans and Europe as a whole. China's position on the Kosovo issue is consistent and clear. We believe that any unilateral action will not contribute to the settlement of the Kosovo issue. Nor will it be conducive to regional peace and stability. We support the parties concerned, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), in reaching a mutually acceptable political solution through dialogue and consultation. In that process, the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Serbia must be fully respected.

In the light of the recent developments and the briefing just now, I would like to highlight four points.

First, for some time now, tensions in northern Kosovo have escalated with a high incidence of violent security incidents, the responsibility for which lies with the Kosovo authorities. The Kosovo authorities announced a ban on the Serbian dinar, forced the closure of Serb-run institutions, conducted violent searches of Serbs in northern Kosovo and planned to open the Ibar River bridge. Those unilateral actions have a serious impact on the livelihoods and security of Serbs, triggering their fear and exacerbating confrontation. Many countries have expressed concerns and disappointment over them. China is also greatly concerned. We urge the Kosovo authorities to stop the above-mentioned unilateral actions and return immediately to the right

track of dialogue and consultation. The Kosovo Force should effectively respect Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and truly do what is conducive to peace and stability in the Balkans.

Secondly, tolerance, reconciliation and harmonious coexistence among all communities not only are a prerequisite for the stability in Kosovo, but also serve the long-term and fundamental interests of all parties. We note with concern the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/741), which indicates that the Kosovo authorities frequently intimidate and arrest Serbs, and there is a persistent lack of representation of the Serb community in the municipal institutions in northern Kosovo, resulting in repeated violations of their fundamental and legitimate rights and interests. We urge the Kosovo authorities to put people first, put reconciliation first and resolve differences through pragmatic and constructive dialogue and negotiation.

Thirdly, the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities is an important element of the 2013 Brussels Agreement. The Kosovo authorities should implement the commitments through practical actions, instead of continuously making new demands and conditions. We hope that the new European Union (EU) leadership will maintain its neutrality on the Kosovo issue and use its good offices in a fair and impartial manner. We expect all parties, with EU facilitation, to continue to engage in discussions on a political solution to the Kosovo issue.

Fourthly, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) plays an important role in maintaining stability and promoting national reconciliation, among other things. The United Nations and the Council should continue to maintain the attention to, and input in, the Kosovo issue, support UNMIK in the full implementation of its mandate and support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh in her work.

Today's changing and turbulent world cannot afford more upheaval. Reality tells us that, if security antagonisms are allowed to accumulate, they will eventually lead to the outbreak of a crisis. Given the region's history of tragic wars, the international community has a responsibility to work together to explore the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture and prevent the Balkans from being plunged into turmoil again. China is ready to work with all the parties concerned

to make continued efforts to enhance dialogue, engagement and peaceful coexistence among the ethnic communities of the region and to promote an early political settlement of the Kosovo issue.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Ziadeh for her briefing. We would like to acknowledge the efforts that she and her team at the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have made in advancing interethnic dialogue and the rule of law reform in Kosovo.

We are duty-bound to also acknowledge that there are other United Nations resident agencies in Kosovo that are more appropriately doing that type of work. After a quarter of a century, UNMIK has long outlived its original mandate, and the United States calls for the Council to review UNMIK in Kosovo and work towards its eventual sunset. There are much greater demands on the Security Council's time, as we all know, and these briefings should be reduced to annual, private meetings. We also urge UNMIK, in future reporting, to retain a neutral viewpoint in order to better reflect UNMIK's impartiality.

It has been more than a year since the Serb paramilitary attack on the Kosovo police station near the Banjska Monastery in northern Kosovo, and Serbia has made no meaningful progress on holding accountable those involved, including the self-proclaimed leader of the attack, Milan Radoičić. We urge full accountability, in accordance with the rule of law. We also remain concerned about uncoordinated actions taken by the Government of Kosovo, which are inconsistent with Kosovo's commitment to work through the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue. Those actions affect the welfare of vulnerable and non-majority communities and undermine the path to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia.

The United States shares the aspiration of the people of the Western Balkans, including Kosovo and Serbia, to build greater regional economic integration; foster regional stability, democracy and multi-ethnic societies; and enshrine the rule of law. The EU-facilitated dialogue is the agreed path for normalization between Serbia and Kosovo and progress towards membership in European institutions.

The United States continues to work with the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO partners to keep tensions low in

the north of Kosovo, to deter escalatory measures by either party and to push forward on implementing all dialogue commitments between Serbia and Kosovo, including the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities. We caution both sides against uncoordinated or escalatory actions and urge them to resolve issues within the dialogue's framework. The ultimate goal of the United States remains eventual mutual recognition.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ziadeh for her briefing. I also welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo in today's meeting.

Malta welcomes the recent positive developments and the breakthrough agreement reached at the Berlin process summit. The unblocking of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and the lifting of restrictions on imports from Serbia into Kosovo is a positive step towards the normalization of relations and allows both sides to reap the benefits of the CEFTA framework. The official registration of the property of the Visoki Dečani Monastery is also worth mentioning and commending. However, we remain concerned about the latest developments highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in her briefing. Actions that risk escalating the situation on the ground must cease. They undermine regional stability and endanger peace and security. Divisive rhetoric should be avoided at all costs. Dialogue and good-faith cooperation are essential in resolving differences and ensuring stability.

We call on both sides to look for and work towards compromise solutions that lead to sustained peace and economic and social progress. We support all ongoing efforts to facilitate a peaceful and sustainable solution that addresses the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved. However, dialogue is not an end in itself. It is now time for action. We urge both sides to take concrete actions that ensure de-escalation and safeguard the safety and interests of all residents. We call on parties to respect their obligations stemming from the agreement on the path to the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo and to take actions that address those obligations. Upholding existing agreements and commitments is crucial for any progress to be achieved. All parties need to prioritize respect for human rights and the protection of the civilian population in all decisions. We remain concerned by the lack of progress

on the formation of the association of Serb-majority municipalities. That would be instrumental in this normalization process, and we call for swift progress to be achieved on that in the coming months.

A year has passed since the terrorist attacks on the Kosovo police force. Unfortunately, there have been no significant developments on the case. The perpetrators of the September 2023 attacks are still to be brought to justice, and those responsible must be held accountable. The European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue remains the best platform to facilitate dialogue between both sides. We encourage better use of that framework to ensure that decisions taken do not pose unnecessary hardships on communities.

Malta firmly believes that the future of both Kosovo and Serbia lies within the EU. We invite both countries to pursue the crucial reforms that lead towards EU integration, based on the full participation of all relevant stakeholders from within civil society, including vulnerable and marginalized communities. The full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in the political sphere and the decision-making process is crucial. Malta also acknowledges the importance of the role of UNMIK in promoting security and stability and commends the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We continue to fully support the Mission's presence in Kosovo and its commitment to the preservation and promotion of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and youth.

In conclusion, I express our hope that both parties can overcome the current stalemate, characterized by ongoing provocative actions, dangerous rhetoric and unkept promises. We urge both parties to direct all efforts to avoiding backsliding on the progress achieved, and we encourage leaders to uphold their commitments and deliver tangible actions that are crucial for finding a mutually beneficial, long-lasting, peaceful solution.

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

Like my colleagues, I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo.

Switzerland has deep and long-standing ties with the Western Balkans, whose diaspora plays an essential

role in Switzerland by acting as a bridge between our societies and promoting mutual understanding. From the time we joined the Security Council, we have witnessed tense situations in the four municipalities of northern Kosovo. Challenges to stability and good inter-ethnic relations persist. Unilateral action taken over the past six months has led to considerable insecurity, affecting the daily lives of citizens, and of Kosovo Serbs in particular. Switzerland underscores that peaceful and inclusive coexistence is essential to ensuring lasting stability. Respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, and adherence to democratic principles and the rule of law are essential. The participation of Kosovo Serbs in local and national governance and community life is vital to a more peaceful coexistence.

Moreover, delays to the investigations into the attack in Banjska and the clashes in May 2023 that injured Kosovo Force soldiers compound concerns. One year on, it is important for justice to be swifter in taking its course. Those developments serve to underscore the importance of taking forward the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. We reaffirm our support for the process and our commitment to contributing to it. Outstanding issues should be addressed within that framework, in a constructive fashion and a spirit of trust. If lasting solutions are to be found, the process should, however, be more inclusive by ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

It is regrettable that, after the impetus created by the Brussels and Ohrid agreements in early 2023, the dialogue has run out of steam. The political leaders of Kosovo and Serbia must show political will and commit themselves fully to implementing it. We call on both parties to honour their commitments without delay or preconditions. Doing so means that Kosovo must establish the association of Serb-majority municipalities promptly and that Serbia must not oppose Kosovo's membership of international organizations. Honouring past commitments lays the foundations of future progress.

Twenty-five years have elapsed since the war ended. We acknowledge the pivotal role that international organizations have played in the stabilization and development of Kosovo, notably the Kosovo Force, in which thousands of Swiss soldiers served. We also commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for the considerable work it has accomplished since 1999 and, in our view, a constructive discussion on a possible strategic

review could be beneficial to its future endeavours. The international community continues to have a role to play in supporting regional stability. Nevertheless, responsibility for defusing tensions and forging neighbourly relations rests with Kosovo and Serbia. To that end, political solutions must be found, requiring sustained commitment and pragmatic efforts.

We welcome the recent outcome of the Berlin process but point out that regional integration is a prerequisite to the region's prosperity. We further underline the importance of fostering trust between the parties, including through reconciliation efforts. Cooperation on the fate of missing persons is a step in that direction, and Switzerland is playing its part in the form of an expert mission of experts to look into the possibility of using new technologies to find missing persons. By supporting those efforts, Switzerland is contributing to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. We will continue to strive for peace and prosperity in the Western Balkans beyond our role in the Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Before I give him the floor, I would like to inform Council members that, as part of routine preparations for this meeting, we agreed with the two delegations that they could exceed the standard five minutes' speaking time and speak for up to 20 minutes. I am delighted that they kept assiduously to that commitment, and I thank them both for doing so. We further agreed that, should they so wish, the delegations could take the floor a second time and for no longer than seven minutes. I trust that they will also honour that further commitment.

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

**Mr. Đurić** (Serbia): What a sad message from the representative of Kurti's regime we had the opportunity to hear today. We heard a steady stream of insults and lies aimed at the Republic of Serbia and our President — defamatory language that does nothing but deepen inter-ethnic tensions and bring the region back to the past. To my concrete and well-documented concern about the position of the Serbian people in Kosovo and the hand of cooperation extended to the Albanian people here, the representative of

Kurti's regime responded, yet again, by rejecting the normalization process with unacceptable and insulting language. I want to reiterate once again that we have no conflict with the Albanian people. We have issues only with the regime, which systematically oppresses the Serbian and other non-majority communities in Kosovo and Metohija. I will try to quickly reflect on just a few things that Kurti's representative said.

First of all, the obsession with President Vučić tells us a number of things. The first is that the President is leading Serbia well and that the strengthening of our economic security and foreign policy position is making some bitter and furious. And they are disrespecting the victims of conflict and genocide by using that term inappropriately, especially considering that more than two thirds of the Serbian community were in fact forcibly expelled from Kosovo and Metohija. Whereas they may be trying to create a different reality on the ground and expel all the Serbs through actions that are unacceptable in the twenty-first century, under public international law — in this Chamber — President Vučić is their President too. It is inappropriate and insulting to many people for the President to be treated and spoken about in that way.

She mentioned an alleged lack of support in the Serbian community for the Serbian Government and for Serbia's President. That reminds me of something very significant: for three election cycles in a row, Kurti's regime has prevented Serbs from participating in Serbian elections. It is preventing them from exercising their basic democratic rights — something that has been repeatedly condemned by the international community, including by some of the Council members that are the strongest advocates of a so-called independent Kosovo.

The third, and of particular significance, is the fact that Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz uses a well-known technique of dehumanization through discrediting and labelling, diminishing empathy and creating an unacceptable context entailing harm to, or the forcible removal of, individuals who are the target of such techniques. Let us desist from such defamatory language.

Before I finish, I also want to say that I do not hide the fact that, as part of my work in Kosovo over the years, I met Milan Radoičić, just as I have Albin Kurti, just as I have met Ramush Haradinaj, Hashim Thaçi and many others who are now in prison for war crimes against the Serbian community. I unequivocally condemn any violence committed against any ethnic community in

Kosovo and Metohija. But I have a question: why is the Government of Albin Kurti withholding evidence about the incident in Banjska? That evidence was requested many months ago by the Serbian prosecution office through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Everybody in Kosovo knows that his Government is withholding that evidence. And, as we join in the mourning for all of the victims in Banjska, including Mr. Afrim Bunjaku, whom President Vučić has mentioned publicly, we demand evidence about the killings of Igor Milenković, Bojan Mijailović and Stefan Nedeljković. Please remember those names. Their families and the public deserve answers. Was excessive force used against them in a murderous and criminal way? The public deserves answers.

Among many other defamatory things, she called Serbia fascist. As a descendant of a family of Holocaust survivors, I want to draw the attention of the international community to the fact that the Government of Albin Kurti has finished renovating the house of Xhafer Ibrahim Deva in southern Mitrovica. He was one of the founders of the SS Skanderbeg Division, as recently stated by the German Ambassador in Pristina, and was one of the most prominent Albanian Quisling associates during the Second World War. He initiated and committed crimes against many Serbs, Jews and Roma. However, today Pristina authorities perceive him as a national hero, with schools and streets being named after him. And now he has his own memorial as well in Mitrovica, built by Kurti's Government.

Finally, I wish to conclude by saying this: I dare to imagine that we can create a totally different future if we agree to work together to protect human rights, to reject extremism and to uphold international law. That future demands a different mindset. It demands action, not words. It demands that we hold all those who violate human rights accountable and that we ensure a Kosovo and Metohija where Serbs and Albanians alike can live in peace and dignity.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

**Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz**: Please allow me to repeat my invitation to Council members to come to Kosovo and see with their own eyes after this meeting. Here, we are dealing with what the Security Council is all about. We are dealing with the biggest security risk in Europe

after the war in Ukraine. I am convinced that the resolve of the West will decide the fate of the Balkans.

With respect to the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosova, let me just repeat that our offer is open. We are ready to sign the documents that the European Union has proposed signing. We are just waiting for the signature of Mr. Vučić, which is not forthcoming. Instead of that, he simply repeats that the agreement contains no obligations for Serbia. That is a bad sign. I really hope that in 2025 we will have a new start in the dialogue, with a clear objective and strategy that enable us to take small steps, when possible, with a view to overcoming the blockage created by Serbia.

The participation of Serbs in the institutions of the Republic of Kosova is a question that is very sensitive to us because nobody expelled the Serbs from the institutions. Serbia asked them to leave the institutions. Serbia threatened those who did not want to leave. And Serbia made it impossible for them to remain in the institutions in Kosova. And so, to be better integrated, to have a stronger voice when it comes to their needs, their everyday lives and their families, Serbs in Kosova have started — and I believe they will continue — to integrate more and more into the institutions. The threats from criminal structures — and directly from Belgrade — to those who are already doing that will not be able to stop those who want to live in a democratic, free Kosova — in a country that will enable them to become citizens of the European Union faster than if they were living in Serbia itself. I believe that the message has been understood by them, as opposed to the threats Vučić expressed in recent measures and which have been criticized today and yesterday very strongly by the European Union. Nothing will be able to stop them from trying to build a better future in the country of Kosova. There, they have the full support of the Government — not only the Government, but the institutions of the Republic of Kosova.

In November 2022, only 17 per cent of Serbian citizens in the four municipalities in the northern part of Kosova told the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that they trusted the Kosova police. That was in 2022. Today we have not only doubled the trust of the citizens of our country in the four municipalities, but we are working to ensure that that trust increases every day. There are no complaints at all from citizens of those four municipalities against the central authorities. Private businesses that are already there provide services to all citizens, not only

to some ethnic groups. Not a single piece of property has been damaged by the Kosova police. I invite Serbia and all those who are critical to observe minority rights in Kosova. In particular, I invite Serbia to level up the rights of minorities in Serbia itself. We have already expressed that we are ready to apply the principle of reciprocity with regard to minority rights with Serbia. I am referring to the rights of the Albanian minorities in Serbia, who face discrimination and the kind of treatment that should not be allowed in countries with an expressed wish to join the European Union. We are watching very carefully in the Preševo Valley. If Serbia means to say that the rights of Serbs in Kosova are not respected, then we are ready to apply reciprocity and to see which is the better example.

Speaking of which, the representatives of Serbia and Russia spoke of 83 attacks, and only they did so. Let me assure the Council that not a single one of those was an inter-ethnic attack. Those were just ordinary crimes that the Kosovar police is trying to manage in the proper way, as should be the case in every country where the law rules. I know that the Russian representative, who left us, does not like what I said. Just four weeks ago, he was highly decorated here in New York during the General Assembly by Alexander Vučić. Let me be very clear about what he said with respect to *persona non grata* and the rest: representatives of this aggressive Russian Federation, which started a terrible war against Ukraine, with the aim of erasing Ukraine as a country, are not welcome in the Republic of Kosova. We will therefore continue to watch very carefully who is there and to examine very carefully whether they present a threat to our national security, and then we will act with the instruments that a democratic and free State has at its disposition.

The representative of the Russian Federation also mentioned the Kosovo Liberation Army, again to give the impression that there are only criminals on the Kosovar side and none on Russian and Serbian side, just Mother Teresas. Let me say something: together with NATO, we defeated Milošević, and together with NATO, we stopped genocide and the killing of thousands of civilians. There were a lot of brave, sincere boys and girls defending their own families and their country. I know that the representative of the Russian Federation does not understand that because his country deals with mercenaries. But in our case, we are very clear on that.

Let me conclude with a few more sentences. Members will find that the document known as the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1986 is a fundamental document that served Milošević for the four wars that he waged in the former Yugoslavia. Mr. Žbogar will know what I mean. And members will have heard the Serbian representative using that same kind of language today. In 1986, Serbia was ruling in Kosovo — and members will find that there are four mentions of “Albanians committing genocide” in the Memorandum. It is the same strategy. That is the same language as we have heard before. I once again ask members to please double check the information they are dealing with because — given that they are so present as the international community in our country — they are able and capable of dealing with information and of helping us to combat the disinformation.

**The President:** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would of course like to respond to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, who was invited to this meeting under rule 39 of the Security Council’s provisional rules of procedure as the person who is to brief the Council on the agenda item under consideration.

However, this is the second time she has told us about Milošević, about the historical background, various military honours and other conflicts. At the same time, she cannot concentrate and answer the questions that were put to her regarding the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels agreements of 2013 and 2015. And neither can she answer the question as to why the community of Serb-majority municipalities has not been established; why the rights of the Serb population in the province are violated; why Serbs who are detained are subjected to violence — including minors, for example, for singing songs in Serbian —; why the houses of returning refugees are set on fire; and why Orthodox churches are being desecrated. Those are the questions on which our briefing should focus, but apparently there are no answers.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*