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Letter dated 25 January 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (on behalf of the A3+1 — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)”, convened on Thursday, 21 January 2021. A statement was also delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

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

(Signed) Tarek Ladeb
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia**

I wish to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to present the Secretary-General's latest report on Colombia (S/2020/1301) and to brief the Security Council on developments since the issuance of the report. I welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Claudia Blum de Barberi and once again thank her for her support for the Verification Mission.

The past four years since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) have seen remarkable progress in terms of Colombia's path towards sustainable and lasting peace, even in the face of arduous challenges, including that of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The opportunities for peace and development that Colombians enjoy today would have seemed unthinkable only a decade ago, when the conflict between the FARC-EP guerrillas and the State was still raging. Colombians in rural areas, who suffered the brunt of the conflict, are beginning to see increased investments and State presence in their communities; Colombian society is coming to terms with its past through a transitional justice system centred on victims; and thousands of men and women who were in arms five years ago are now building better lives for themselves and their families, alongside local communities.

Credit for those strides forward goes to the two parties carrying out their commitments under the peace agreement and to the efforts being made alongside them by Colombian institutions and civil society, as well as to the international community for its support.

Indeed, 2021 is year five of the 15-year time frame envisioned for the implementation of the entirety of the peace agreement. It is incumbent to ensure that 2021 is remembered as the year in which bold steps were taken to bring to fruition the full promise of sustainable peace enshrined in the agreement. I urge both parties and all Colombian actors to work together to protect the achievements made so far and to accelerate momentum on pending issues, especially the five priorities outlined in the Secretary-General's report.

Violence against former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders and communities remains the most serious threat to peacebuilding in Colombia. While multiple measures have been taken to try to address that violence, every killing is a tragic blow to peace and a call to ensure that the security measures undertaken by the authorities translate into effective improvements in the territories.

Since the publication of the Secretary-General's report, four more former combatants have been killed, bringing the total to 252 since the signing of the peace agreement. The victims include a 22-year-old female former combatant, Yolanda Zabala Mazo, who was shot and killed along with her 17-year-old sister in Antioquia department on 1 January.

Social leaders, human rights defenders and members of political parties also continue, unfortunately, to be victimized. On Christmas Eve, Pedro Alejandro Pérez Doria, a municipal council member for the Conservative Party in Córdoba department, was killed, demonstrating once again the need for protection measures for members of all political parties. And on 11 January, Gonzalo Cardona Molina, an advocate for the protection of endangered species, was found dead in Tolima

department. His killing underscores the danger facing environmental activists across the country.

Some welcome steps have been taken during the last few weeks. On 5 January, Vice-President Marta Lucía Ramírez announced measures to increase protection for the members of the Special Forum on Gender, following threats reported against 10 of its 16 members. On 12 January, the Government and the United Nations country team in Colombia jointly announced a \$3.1 million investment from the United Nations multi-partner trust fund to support prevention and collective protection for former combatants, social leaders, human rights defenders and leaders of the illicit-crop substitution programmes in three priority regions: Chocó, the Pacific coast of Nariño and Catatumbo, in Norte de Santander.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly warned in his reports about the implications of continued budget shortfalls for the Specialized Subdirectorates for Security and Protection of the National Protection Unit, a unit that provides collective and individual close-protection schemes for former combatants. More than 550 vacancies remain for bodyguards, and more than 1,000 close-protection requests are still pending review. This issue should be prioritized, as it has direct implications for the safety of former combatants. It is also important to ensure that women former combatants have equal access to close protection.

Bringing to justice those responsible for these attacks is also critical. Support for the work of the Special Investigations Unit in investigating and prosecuting such crimes remains essential in that regard. It is also important to strengthen local judicial capacity, including through regional specialized judges focused on this type of crime.

Two weeks ago, four of the seven individuals arrested for the killing of former FARC-EP leader Alexander Parra were released after they were not brought to trial within the deadlines set by the Colombian legislation. Mr. Parra's killing, in October 2019, was especially notorious owing to his leadership in the reintegration process and because it is one of only two killings that have occurred within a former territorial area for training and reintegration. Although the trial remains open, the individuals' release on procedural grounds has prompted concerns and calls for a thorough review of what occurred and how such circumstances may be prevented in future.

Given the numerous killings of former combatants being reported at or near new reintegration areas, it is key to develop a focused strategy to provide security around those areas as well as the surrounding communities.

Regarding the second priority — the sustainability of the reintegration process — promising developments have occurred since President Duque Márquez's meeting in November with former combatants who marched to Bogotá from around the country in the "Pilgrimage for life and peace". In addition to the land purchased for the former territorial area for training and reintegration in Dabeiba, announced by President Duque Márquez, in December, the Government has announced that plots for five additional former territorial areas for training and reintegration will be purchased by mid-February. Recently, through a joint effort on the part of institutions at all levels, a plot of land was granted to 300 former combatants in Huila department to undertake cattle-grazing and other productive projects. I trust that this momentum will continue, including through the effective use of various avenues for granting land to former combatants and progress on formalizing land arrangements for the remaining former territorial areas for training and reintegration, in close consultation with former combatants.

I also hope that the forthcoming sessions of the National Reintegration Council in various departments agreed by President Duque Márquez and former combatants at their meeting will lead to progress in ensuring the same level of institutional support and productive opportunities for former combatants within and outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

As reported by the Secretary-General, several former territorial areas for training and reintegration, new reintegration areas and former combatants' productive projects have had to relocate or are pending relocation owing to threats by illegal armed groups. It is crucial for those relocations to proceed in an orderly manner so as to ensure that conditions in the new locations are apt for former combatants to resettle. Moreover, I urge the national and local Governments to ensure that the communities left behind in the former locations continue to receive institutional support.

That brings me to the third priority outlined by the Secretary-General: consolidating the integrated presence of the State in conflict-affected areas. For illegal armed groups and criminal organizations that profit from limited State presence, the implementation of the peace agreement represents a threat to their criminal activities. They are determined to drive out State institutions and stamp out the voices of social leaders through violence and intimidation. They cannot be allowed to succeed. Authorities must remain firm in the continued implementation of instruments such as the development programmes with a territorial focus, the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops and the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations in the territories. Consolidating the institutional presence, strengthening local protection and conflict-resolution mechanisms and providing lawful economic opportunities for vulnerable populations are the strongest bulwark against illegal armed groups and criminal organizations.

Sustained dialogue between the parties is fundamental to the implementation of all aspects of the peace agreement, which is why strengthening dialogue is the fourth priority mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. I welcome the parties' decision to extend the mandate of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, and I urge them to make increased use of the Commission this year, including with the support of the guarantor countries, to resolve their differences and find mutually agreeable solutions to implementation challenges. In addition, I urge the parties to spare no effort in working together, including through the tripartite mechanism with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, on issues such as those related to the former FARC-EP's assets, bearing in mind that the ultimate aim in this process is to contribute to reparations for victims of the conflict.

The final priority set out by the Secretary-General is to continue laying the groundwork for reconciliation across the country. Victims and Colombian society in general will be looking with great expectation this year at the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, with the first sentences set to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the continued work by the Truth Commission in supporting reconciliation efforts and advancing in its final report, and sustained progress by the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing. A few weeks ago, thanks to the testimonies of parties to the conflict, the participation of victims and strong inter-institutional coordination, the Special Unit found alive, and then reunited, a mother and daughter who had both been declared missing 17 years ago. That inspiring story is one of the many examples of the results of the work of the Comprehensive System and illustrates why it is so important for all actors to lend their full support to the System's three entities and for all those who

took part in the conflict to contribute fully to efforts to determine the truth and to undertake reparatory actions for victims.

In conclusion, the firm backing of the Council and of the international community at large remains one of the key factors allowing Colombia to continue to be a source of hope and inspiration for peaceful conflict resolution around the world. Its unanimous and unequivocal support will remain essential as Colombians continue to persevere in the full implementation of their landmark peace agreement.

Annex II**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese]

China welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Her Excellency Claudia Blum de Barberi, at today's meeting. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing.

As the Colombian peace process enters its fifth year, peacebuilding continues to make notable progress, and various tasks covered by the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, State governance, economic development and rural reform, are moving forward. That is a success story of the political settlement of a domestic internal conflict and peacebuilding with the support of the United Nations. China highly commends the Colombian Government and the parties concerned for their efforts.

Ensuring people's safety and maintaining social stability are key elements of the peace agreement. In several departments of Colombia, violent crime and violence against former combatants and civilians are still endemic. We support the Colombian Government in its efforts to improve governance capacity in rural areas, enhance security and protection measures and step up its efforts to fight illegal armed groups and criminal organizations.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/1301), extreme poverty is closely related to violence and other criminal activities, posing challenges to the reintegration of former combatants into society. We encourage Colombia to increase investment in development, address gaps and weaknesses in all areas of the economy and society and lay a solid foundation for lasting peace and security.

We appreciate the efforts being made by the Colombian Government to actively promote balanced, inclusive and sustainable development, with a particular focus on closing the gap between rural and urban areas and between various regions. We support Colombia in continuing the implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops and intensifying drug control so as to eliminate the breeding ground for crime. We are pleased to see that the Colombian Government's efforts to strengthen infrastructure, including that for transportation, irrigation and electricity, and improve basic public services such as education, health care and housing are producing tangible results.

China firmly supports Colombia's efforts to comprehensively implement the peace agreement. It is our hope that the Colombian Government will address the pandemic and economic recovery in a holistic manner while consolidating and advancing the peace process. Of course, implementing the peace agreement is a lengthy process, and peacebuilding requires persistent efforts. We trust that the Colombian Government will unite the people and lead them in properly addressing all difficulties and challenges.

China supports Special Representative Massieu and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in continuing their support for the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement. We hope that the Mission will, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of Colombia, enhance coordination with the United Nations country team to forge synergy.

Annex III

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing today and for his valuable work. I express Estonia's strong support for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I also warmly welcome the presence of Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Last year marked a significant milestone, namely, the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Much has already been achieved but more remains to be done. It is now crucial to stay on course and to continue the full implementation of the peace agreement. For that, the continued engagement of all parties remains crucial.

Colombia has been hit hard by the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences. We commend the efforts of the Government of Colombia to mitigate that impact. The year 2021 will be important for recovering from the pandemic and consolidating the achievements of the peace process, as well as addressing the root causes of the conflict. We encourage the Government to work together with the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) on essential elements to achieve progress in the implementation of the peace agreement. We are pleased to see the steps taken regarding access to land for the former FARC-EP combatants as part of the implementation of projects in the former territorial area for training and reintegration. It is essential to ensure the sustainability of the reintegration process, both economically and politically, and to address the pending issues.

The security situation remains the main challenge for the peace process. We are deeply concerned about the continued killings of social and indigenous leaders, human rights defenders and former FARC-EP combatants. Seventy-three killings of ex-combatants in 2020 is an alarming number. Violence represents a fundamental threat to the success of the peace agreement. It is essential to bring to justice those who threaten or kill and to prevent attacks against people implementing the peace agreement. We reiterate the need to increase the State presence in rural territories to protect communities. The finalization of the Government's public policy on dismantling illegal armed groups and their support networks would also represent an important step.

It is also important to make progress in implementing the gender provisions of the peace agreement, such as equal access to security and protection schemes for former female combatants, and to address the challenges faced by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

We encourage the Government to continue to make full use of all mechanisms and to guarantee the independent functioning of all institutions established under the peace agreement, including the transitional justice mechanisms, which play an essential role in guaranteeing the rights of victims to truth, justice reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. Progress can be achieved only through the support and full cooperation of all State institutions with the transitional justice mechanism. The year 2021 will be crucial for the issuing of the first sentences by the peace court and the final report by the Truth Commission. We support a role for the Verification Mission in verifying compliance with the sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as envisaged in the Final Agreement.

Building peace is hard work. The Colombian peace process has been steadily progressing; however, it remains fragile and requires our continued support. Estonia strongly supports the firm commitment of both parties — the Government of Colombia and FARC — to continuing the implementation of the final peace agreement.

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

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his comprehensive and enlightening briefing. I also welcome the participation of Ms. Blum de Barberi in our meeting.

It is now more than four years since the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was signed. Building peace is a long and demanding road. France therefore welcomes the progress made by the Colombian Government and people. But we must also look clearly at the road that remains ahead of us. With regard to the ambitions set in 2016, the implementation of several provisions of the agreement remains insufficient. I will come back to four specific aspects.

First, the continuation of violence is worrisome. It affects children, young people, former combatants, civil society figures, ethnic community leaders and human rights defenders. France calls for an end to the violence and for those responsible to be brought to justice. Colombian society aspires to greater security, which was the whole purpose of the marches and mobilizations we witnessed at the end of last year. As we know, the long-term solution is to strengthen the State presence throughout the country, including in the most remote areas.

Secondly, we welcome all the efforts made with regard to the reintegration of former combatants. That process is already bearing fruit. Efforts must continue, with a focus on former combatants who reside outside the former territorial training and reintegration areas.

Thirdly, comprehensive rural reform must be implemented. In that regard, it is important to overcome the long-standing issue of access to land. Achieving peace also means providing viable and fair socioeconomic opportunities for all and ending once and for all the grip of drug trafficking. The illicit crop substitution programme, which has demonstrated its effectiveness and represents immense hope for thousands of families, therefore deserves to be strengthened with additional resources. The sections of the agreement dealing with ethnic and gender issues should also receive special attention, as should those related to political reform, which unfortunately is progressing too slowly.

My fourth point is perhaps the most important. We note with great satisfaction that the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition has made progress. Many former combatants have engaged in a truth-finding process. That is to be welcomed. A few days ago, the Colombian Government sent a letter requesting that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. That is an extremely important gesture, which France welcomes, and to which we are prepared to respond favourably.

The implementation of the peace agreement is a 15-year process, as the Special Representative recalled. We are still at the beginning of that process, and there are many challenges. But, four years later, the assessment gives us cause for optimism. Colombia is an example for the international community. That is why France, as well as the European Union, will continue to support all those in Colombia who are mobilized daily to build peace.

Annex V

Statement by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations

I would like to begin by thanking Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to put on record our appreciation for his outreach to the incoming members of the Security Council and the willingness of the entire team to engage with us.

Colombia is witnessing remarkable progress in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The condemnation of violence, the laying down of arms by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and its transformation into a political party, and the commitment and resolve of the Government of Colombia to the agreement and the central role of the United Nations in its implementation have all positively contributed to the process of peacebuilding in Colombia.

Today democracy in Colombia is deepening through increased political participation. The transitional justice system to ensure truth, justice and reparations to victims is making headway, particularly under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission. The conflict-affected communities are witnessing the fruits of long-overdue investments in their regions, contributing to socioeconomic development. The extent of violence of this decades-long armed conflict is decreasing and the security situation is slowly improving in the rural areas. We therefore applaud the efforts of the people and the Government of Colombia in realizing the achievements of the past four years.

The implementation of the peace agreement has gained further ground in the past four months despite challenges, including those posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic. The Colombian leadership and authorities have continued to engage with former FARC-EP combatants to address problems in the reintegration progress. The process of purchasing land for ex-combatants living in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration has gained momentum. The National Reintegration Council has started holding sessions at the regional level. The National Commission on Security Guarantees is also expected to soon adopt a public policy for dismantling illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. We welcome each of those positive developments.

The path ahead in the implementation of the peace agreement remains both complex and challenging, especially given the interconnected nature of the issues involved. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, the long-standing gap in the integrated presence of the State between urban and rural areas, especially those affected by the conflict, needs to be addressed more effectively. There have been reports that suggest that during the pandemic security vulnerabilities have increased, especially in remote areas where State presence is limited. The enhanced presence of the State authorities will help tackle the challenges posed by organized criminal groups and drug traffickers.

Secondly, the recent killings of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders necessitate the strengthening of the Tripartite Protection and Security Mechanism. The transitional justice mechanism should be more responsive to ensuring justice for the victims of the conflict. Strengthening local judicial capacity, particularly in the regions most affected by the violence, is also key to combating such violence. The work of the Special Investigations Unit of the Attorney-General's Office, created by the peace agreement, therefore remains critical.

Thirdly, the implementation of holistic rural reforms, creating enabling infrastructure, reintegrating ex-combatants across the country, including those not

in the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, providing land and effectively implementing the illicit crop substitution programme are crucial in order to discourage the activities of FARC-EP dissident groups, which are threatening the reintegration process.

Fourthly, India supports the Secretary-General's five proposed priorities for 2021, focusing on the United Nations mission's verification of the sections of the peace agreement that concern reintegration and security guarantees.

Fifthly, we have taken note of Colombia's request to expand the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission to include the monitoring of sentences to be handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We look forward to working with other Council members during the mandate renewal of the Mission.

India has special relations with Colombia. In 2019, India and Colombia celebrated 60 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Over the years, the relationship has strengthened and diversified in various areas of mutual interest encompassing the political, cultural and commercial fields. That is evidenced by growing trade and investments from India and the increasing presence of Indian companies in Colombia. In 2018, the Indian Space Research Organization successfully launched the FACSAT-1 satellite, the first-ever Colombian Air Force nanosatellite. India offers more than 100 training slots to Colombian officials under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme annually. Also, every year, thousands of Colombians visit India for tourism, nature therapy and to learn yoga. As Colombia marches ahead as one of the major economies in Latin America, India, as a long-standing partner, remains willing to support Colombia in its journey towards peace, progress and prosperity.

Annex VI

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

I want to start by warmly welcoming Minister Blum de Barberi to the Security Council this afternoon and by thanking the Special Representative for his very comprehensive brief and, more importantly, for all the ongoing commendable work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

In November, we marked the fourth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The journey to peace has not been easy or without sacrifice, and we know that much remains to be done. But I want to say that the dividends of that work are being felt by more and more Colombians every single day, and we salute all who work for that.

Let me reiterate Ireland's well-known support for the peace process in Colombia. We welcome the continued commitment of the parties to the full implementation of the peace agreement. As in all our countries, the coronavirus disease pandemic has brought enormous challenges. But, notwithstanding those challenges, we recognize that significant progress continues to be made in implementing the agreement. The purchase of land for housing and productive projects for former combatants and the ongoing progress on truth, justice and victim reparation are just two examples of the determination that we see.

We also share the serious concern expressed by the Special Representative about the ongoing violence. The protection and security of former combatants and those living in conflict-affected communities, as well as social leaders and human rights defenders, are essential. We believe that the perpetrators of such violence must be brought to justice. Sustainable peace cannot be delivered if peacebuilders live in fear, suffer harm or, worse, lose their lives.

We are deeply concerned about reports of the continued forced recruitment of children, as well as threats against youth leaders by illegal armed groups and by terrorist organizations. The activities of those illegal groups pose an ongoing challenge to building peace. We encourage the rapid adoption and implementation of a comprehensive public policy to dismantle criminal organizations and their support networks. Effective strategies for continued reintegration, land redistribution and providing alternative means of economic activity, including effective crop substitution, are all vital to stabilizing areas that are still experiencing violence.

We also support all the Secretary-General's recommendations in his latest report (S/2020/1301), including those aimed at improving security and consolidating the progress towards peace. We hope and trust that they will bear fruit.

I want to highlight two areas of particular interest today, based on Ireland's own experience of conflict and peacebuilding on our island.

The first issue is transitional justice. An innovative approach to transitional justice is at the very heart of the Colombian peace process. Truth, justice and reconciliation efforts have been the bedrock of the transformation that has been achieved to date. Ireland welcomes the progress achieved by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission and for the families of forcibly disappeared persons. We welcome the request by the President of Colombia for an expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission. The verification of compliance with sentences issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace would help to further build the trust in the process of all parties at a critical juncture.

The second issue that I wanted to raise is that of women and peace and security. The Colombian peace agreement quite simply serves as an exemplary model for gender-inclusive and gender-responsive peacebuilding. Ireland applauds the progress reported by the National Reintegration Council's Technical Working Group on Gender and the Government's High-level Forum on Gender. This work is embedding women's full participation in the political process. We want to see this continue because we are ambitious for Colombian women. We also want to see full implementation of all the provisions, including on ethnicity and gender. That remains an important priority. We urge the allocation of sufficient resources — technical and financial — to allow completion of this vital work. We are particularly concerned about the gendered nature of violence perpetrated against women and girls, including social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants. The incidence of such violence, alarmingly, has increased in recent months. Both in our national capacity and through our broader work here on the Security Council on women and peace and security, Ireland will continue to work with all in Colombia to empower and protect women and girls.

In conclusion, the peace process in Colombia rightly stands out as an example, globally, of successful peacebuilding. It serves as an example for others affected by conflict. We in Ireland know that peace can be fragile and that building peace takes time, courage, forbearance and — always — just a little faith. I assure Minister Blum de Barberi that she can count on Ireland as a faithful friend on this journey. As a member of the Council, we will work with her and with our European Union partners, including the European Union Special Envoy for the Peace Process in Colombia, Irishman Eamon Gilmore.

As we start a new and, hopefully, brighter year, we encourage all to redouble their efforts to ensure the full, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the final peace agreement.

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

[Original: Spanish]

We warmly welcome Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to this meeting.

For Mexico, today's meeting is of the utmost importance, as it addresses the situation in a country very close to us, with which we are united by countless ties of friendship, history and cooperation. We have stood by the people of Colombia throughout the arduous process towards peace, always favouring dialogue between the parties.

Today, four years after the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, we congratulate our Colombian brothers and sisters for the steps they have taken towards building sustainable peace.

We recognize the progress made in reducing violence, promoting greater political participation and fostering the transitional justice system, which is essential to achieve the goals of justice and accountability.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1301) and are very grateful for the presentation made by the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, whose work we acknowledge, as well as that of the entire Mission team. The five priorities outlined in the report seem to us relevant and timely, and we urge all parties to move decisively towards their fulfilment.

We welcome the request made by President Iván Duque to expand the Mission's mandate and incorporate verification tasks into the sanctions issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. United Nations support should continue to strengthen the peace process, understood as a process focused on victims and national reconciliation. We recognize the effort and commitment of President Duque to continue the work of the Mission, and we take note that the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) also agrees that the mandate should be expanded.

I also note Colombia's exemplary commitment to multilateralism, as evidenced by its asking the Council for support to strengthen the peace and reconciliation process. We invite the members of the Council to heed Colombia's request and, once we have received the Secretary-General's recommendations, to establish that new component in line with what was agreed in resolution 2545 (2020) and the peace agreement.

It is very clear to us that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will have to issue its first judgments in the coming months, which we eagerly await.

The Secretary-General's report recognizes the progress made in Colombia with regard to peacebuilding, the expansion of spaces to promote inclusive political participation, as well as the process of social reintegration of ex-combatants through successful productive projects. In that context, we also highlight the importance of providing mental health services to overcome the serious psychosocial effects of the conflict.

We also commend the progress in public policy with regard to housing, and the legislative initiatives resulting from dialogue held in a spirit of cooperation between the parties.

In the area of rural reform, we recognize the implementation of development programmes with a territorial focus, and we trust that the road maps for the stabilization of the remaining regions will be finalized.

As an agent of change in reconciliation initiatives and through the active participation of young people in the implementation of the peace agreement, Colombian civil society has undoubtedly been instrumental.

Nevertheless, we regret the levels of violence that still persist in several areas of the country. We condemn, of course, the acts of aggression against ex-combatants, human rights defenders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and members of the LGBTI community.

We strongly condemn the murders of social leaders. We also condemn the recruitment of indigenous children by dissident groups of the former FARC. In order to consolidate the progress made, calls for greater protection and security must be heeded in order to provide development opportunities for communities.

With regard to gender, the final agreement clearly establishes an inclusive process. However, progress has been limited. We believe that more technical and financial resources will be needed to accelerate the implementation of the gender provisions on issues such as reintegration and security guarantees. We call for attention to be paid to the victims and for the necessary preventive policies to be implemented.

It is clear that the presence of illegal armed groups and organized crime is another crucial element underlying the violence. We recognize the progress made in disarmament campaigns, which have confiscated a considerable number of weapons. But no national action on that issue will be sufficient if it is not complemented at the international level by the fight against the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. The Council should take note of that.

We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the final agreement offers a series of instruments to provide opportunities for development, security and peace to the communities that were most affected by the conflict and are now suffering the effects of the pandemic. In that regard, we believe that the steps identified in the five priorities of the report will undoubtedly contribute to the strengthening of peace in Colombia.

Mexico will continue to support the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia through the Mexican observers and will undoubtedly continue to support the peace efforts of the Government of Colombia.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Massieu for the report (S/2020/1301) and for the concrete recommendations, which we support. The Security Council has been a leading guardian of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia. As a new member, we look forward to contributing to the Council's work to safeguard the integrity and ensure the implementation of the accord. We come to this role with the background of our long-standing contribution to the United Nations mission, and as a guarantor country to the peace agreement, together with Cuba.

Norway has long accompanied Colombia in its efforts to achieve peace and we greatly appreciate the trust that the parties have shown us. We join the Secretary-General in recognizing the significant results of the peace agreement during its first four years. From our perspective, the key achievements include the transformation of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) from a guerrilla group into a political actor; progress in reintegration, including through the establishment of productive projects for ex-combatants; progress made in rural development in conflict areas; and the substantial work of the transitional justice institutions in fulfilling their commitments towards the victims.

It is a remarkable achievement that the vast majority of former FARC-EP combatants remain in the reintegration process. That speaks both to the commitment of those former combatants, but also to the Government's commitment to reintegration. Moving forward, we encourage the authorities, in cooperation with the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), to take further steps in order to ensure access to land for housing and productive projects; to combat stigmatization and build trust between former combatants, State institutions and communities; to increase the institutional attention to the new reintegration areas; and to make sure that women ex-combatants have equal access to reintegration projects.

We remember that, during the peace negotiations, a turning point was reached when the victims on both sides of the conflict were placed at the centre of the discussions. Now, in 2021, the victims must again be placed at the centre. The Truth Commission will issue its final report, and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace will deliver its first judgments. We urge both parties and other actors to cooperate fully with these institutions and to enable them to carry out their work independently and without political interference. The principles of justice, truth, reparation and non-repetition must remain above ideologies and political polarization.

In support of that endeavour, the Security Council should swiftly consider the request for an expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to verify compliance with the judgments to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

At the same time, we express our deep concern about the security situation of former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders. Norway firmly believes that an inclusive political process, with respect for human rights — including women's rights — and with the rule of law at its core, is a prerequisite for achieving lasting, sustainable peace.

We remain particularly worried about the growing level of violence, threats, stigmatization, and discrimination against women, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, environmental and LGBTI activists and human rights defenders.

For the Council, which oversees the implementation of the peace agreement, it should be intolerable that more than 250 ex-combatants — signatories to the agreement — have been killed since its signing. Since the beginning of this year, four ex-combatants have already been killed. We recognize the efforts made by the Government to improve security, but these numbers demonstrate that more needs to be done.

We therefore echo the Secretary-General's call on the authorities to immediately redouble their efforts, including by bolstering protection and filling the vacancies in the National Protection Unit; enabling the National Commission on Security Guarantees to finalize and implement a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups; enhancing the capacity of the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General's office; and accelerating the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

Indeed, guaranteeing women full, equal and meaningful participation in all phases of implementation is fundamental for ensuring sustainable peace. We commend the efforts of the Government to trace gender-specific indicators, and we encourage the enhanced implementation of gender-related provisions.

Advancing the implementation of the peace agreement requires sustained and constructive dialogue between the parties. Norway encourages the Government and the FARC to make better use of the mechanisms for dialogue provided for in the agreement, including the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and the National Reintegration Council.

In that spirit, while we recognize the challenges related to the identification and handing over of conflict-related assets, we strongly encourage both parties to jointly ensure that those assets can be recovered for the benefit of the victims.

We commend the Government, the FARC and the Colombian people for the significant progress achieved. Nevertheless, important work remains. The accord calls for nothing less than comprehensive and structural changes to address the root causes of the conflict, including through the implementation of the provisions of the ethnic chapter, as well as rural reform, political participation and illegal-crop substitution. We urge both parties to honour to their commitments, increase efforts and work together to preserve progress towards sustainable peace for the Colombian people.

Let me end with an assurance that Norway will stand by its consistent and long-term commitment to peace in Colombia.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

We thank the Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the report on the situation in the country. We are also glad to welcome Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, to this meeting.

The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2020/1301) adequately reflects the developments in Colombia. It raises great concern, as we clearly see gaps in the Government's implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

This historic document, supported by the General Assembly and the Security Council, is, in itself, a road map for settlement, which means that it must be strictly upheld. However, the five recommendations that are presented in the report address almost every aspect of the peace process. It means that progress on all tracks is insufficient.

That conclusion is confirmed by the public discontent in Colombia that swept through the streets in recent months. Thousands of people from the indigenous population and participants of the peace process went on march, seeking governmental protection because it is the Government that bears the main responsibility for the security of the population.

According to the data provided by reputable non-governmental organization Indepaz, a systemic intimidation and extermination campaign was launched against the participants of the peace process. The position of civic activists and public leaders is no less gruesome. As a result, part of the population has to take up arms again. It is no coincidence that the report becomes more alarming when it touches upon those returning to the ranks of illegal armed formations.

Other priority tracks, such as comprehensive land reform, electoral changes, political and social reintegration of peace process participants, and drugs also require urgent progress. Statistical data indicates that in 2020 drug production volume remains unchanged, implying that in fact there has been zero progress. State agencies that are responsible for the peace process, including the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, still lack financing.

Assessments indicating low efficiency of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement raise particular concern. It is not seldom that the Government ignores Commission meetings, whereas that body is crucial, as it provides a platform for direct dialogue between the Colombian sides. Security Council members know from the cases of Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela that direct dialogue between sides is an indispensable part of any lasting settlement.

The final peace agreement is losing momentum. Against this backdrop, we are concerned at attempts to interpret and substitute provisions of the document with the "peace with legality" programme. Programme implementation at the local level sometimes looks like an attempt to revise the final agreement.

All of the foregoing takes Colombia further from its strategic goal of lasting national reconciliation. We expect that Bogotá will take the criticism contained in the Secretary-General's report in a constructive manner and forcefully start to fulfil peacebuilding tasks.

I would now like to make a couple more points on the report. First, we would very much like to see in future reports a dynamic headcount of illegal armed formations such as dissidents from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and members of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Those figures could be indicative of the level of public trust in the Government's efforts.

Secondly, we are surprised that the report contains separate statistics on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex representatives. This group is not considered vulnerable, so the inclusion of this kind of specifics in the report provides no added value. What the report really lacks is information on the social safety net and the security of families with children where the breadwinner has fallen victim to conflict or attack. In post-conflict situations, single-parent families constitute a vulnerable group.

Thirdly, we believe the report gives insufficient information on the resolution of disputes between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Lasting peace in Colombia is impossible without the participation of all key stakeholders. Russia is ready to offer its support for the Colombian peace process in order to ensure that peace is sustainable and irreversible.

In conclusion, let me touch upon an important regional issue, or, rather, a problem of global proportions. A short time ago Russia was intending to provide humanitarian financial assistance to the countries affected by tropical storms Eta and Iota. The money was intended to be spent on water filters to curb the spread of disease. However, the United States-based Citibank, which acted as mediator in the transaction, refused to transfer funds to the Central American Parliament. After two weeks of inquiries into the source of the funds, which was the Russian Foreign Ministry, Citibank returned the money. To date, we have received no explanation either from the bank or from the United States Department of State as to the reasons for the return of those funds. This refusal of our contribution inflicted harm on ordinary people who were merely waiting for urgent humanitarian aid.

That is one of many examples of destructive impact of illegal restrictive measures on humanitarian cooperation. I am pointing this out for our colleagues who justify their malevolent policies with the claim that their targeted sanctions have no impact on humanitarian issues. Pandemics and natural disasters put matters in perspective and prove that restrictive measures have become a major challenge to the sustainable recovery of States. This issue deserves the closest attention of, and a response by, the international community.

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

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his comprehensive briefing and acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Claudia Blum de Barberi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Five years into the final peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), the Colombian peace process continues to serve as a global exemplar. The A3+1 commends the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP for their renewed commitments to ensuring that the ultimate goal of lasting peace, stability and prosperity is achieved throughout the country.

We note the advances in the peace process as underscored in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1301), along with the challenges, which have been further aggravated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. It is critical that the final agreement be implemented comprehensively. We urge all stakeholders to capitalize on the positive momentum and fulfil their obligations vis-à-vis the final agreement. We also offer the following observations.

First, we remain extremely concerned about the dire security conditions confronting former combatants, women social leaders, human rights defenders and indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders. In this respect, we strongly condemn the senseless killings of 25 former combatants who were assassinated while awaiting a response to their protection requests by the National Protection Unit.

In addition, the A3+1 shares the Secretary-General's views that the greatest threat to the implementation of the final agreement remains the constant violence against those who laid down their arms in good faith and remain committed to peace, against the communities that have endured violence for decades and against the social leaders and human rights defenders who work on their behalf. As we have mentioned previously, the root causes of conflict need to be frontally tackled and the perpetrators of violence held accountable.

The A3+1 is encouraged by the meetings between President Iván Duque Márquez and former FARC-EP members, as well as those with indigenous leaders following the "Pilgrimage for life and peace" and *minga* marches last October. We welcome the Government's reassurances that enhance security guarantees and strengthen the reintegration process, and we look forward to the implementation of effective security measures. The A3+1 also reiterates its call for the regular convening of meetings of the National Commission on Security Guarantees in order to complete work on the public policy to dismantle criminal organizations and their support networks and to advance in the formulation of the Strategic Plan for Security and Protection.

Furthermore, we applaud the activation of the gender working group of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, which will prioritize protection measures for women politicians. We also urge the authorities to improve the implementation of the action plan of the Comprehensive Programme of Guarantees for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

While we acknowledge the parties' efforts aimed at ensuring the success of the final peace agreement, we repeat the importance of ensuring that the peace process is fully inclusive. In particular, it should include the meaningful participation of indigenous and Afro-Colombians as well as their protection.

Secondly, on the socioeconomic front, the A3+1 commends the Government's efforts aimed at making land and resources available to former combatants for productive activities. These laudable efforts are fundamental to facilitating the full reintegration of the former combatants into Colombian society and to discouraging their return to the illicit economy.

In addition, the A3+1 encourages the Government to advance in resolving the protracted challenges facing the 9,500 former combatants residing outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration, especially those associated with comprehensive rural reforms. To that end, we appreciate the call by the Inspector General's Office for scaling up the institutional response in new reintegration areas in its second report on the implementation of the peace agreement.

Thirdly, the A3+1 applauds the progress made within the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, especially the headway made on the seven macro-cases within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We underscore that durable peace cannot be attained without proper reconciliation, and we are therefore pleased that some former FARC members are accepting responsibility for their crimes. We also look forward to the mid-year issuance of the Special Jurisdiction's first sentences.

We are cognizant of the symbiotic relationship between the illicit trade in drugs, particularly of narcotics, and armed conflict, including terrorism. We urge the Government to prioritize the development of rural infrastructure as well as the implementation of the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops. The successful resettlement of former combatants can be sustained only if they are kept away from the illegal narcotics business.

We will continue to support all efforts aimed at consolidating the peace process, including through the incorporation of groups that are not parties to the final agreement. We are therefore hopeful that this year the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional will fully capitalize on this opportunity to engage in transformative peacebuilding and constructive dialogue in order to achieve a stable and lasting peace in Colombia. In this context, we commend the guarantor countries — Norway and Cuba — for their mediating efforts.

Finally, the A3+1 reaffirms its support for the peace process in the country and remains in solidarity with the Government and the people of Colombia in their pursuit of lasting peace. We also commend the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the country team for their tireless efforts in assisting the process, particularly in working towards the full implementation of the final peace agreement.

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

I offer many thanks to the Special Representative for his briefing and for his summary of the key priorities for 2021. The United Kingdom very much supports those recommendations. As has been noted, we are approaching a milestone: the fifth anniversary this year of the peace agreement. I think that Colombia has a huge amount to be proud of and to celebrate in terms of what has been achieved up to now. However, we cannot lose sight of the significant challenges to peace that remain. Indeed, during our visit in 2019, the Security Council saw both the achievements and the challenges.

I would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi to the Council today and thank her and President Duque Márquez for the letter the Council received requesting that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia be expanded to include verifying compliance with the sentences issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. We welcome this request, and I know that Council members will give it due attention. I will say more about that during our consultations.

The Special Jurisdiction's first sentences later this year will mark an important milestone in Colombia's reconciliation process and in securing justice for victims. As we have noted before, it is extremely pleasing that the three components of the transitional justice system have continued to make progress despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We encourage all parties to fulfil their responsibility to the victims of the conflict by acknowledging their role and ensuring as full a picture of the truth as possible, so as to pave the way for reconciliation and sustainable peace.

In contrast, reconciliation will be much harder for those communities that continue to be affected by insecurity and whose social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants continue to face serious threats and deadly violence from armed groups every day. As both the "Pilgrimage for life and peace" and *minga* marches show, there is rising frustration across Colombia at the risk that this instability is posing to peace and security. The United Kingdom welcomes the Colombian Government's willingness to engage with those airing these frustrations and hopes the commitments made will be implemented as soon as possible.

Sufficient resources must be urgently allocated to guarantee that social leaders and former combatants receive the necessary protection when they request it, and to ensure that women, indigenous and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex representatives community members in particular are not overlooked. A backlog of over 1,000 protection requests is a source of concern.

In addition, those who endanger Colombia's peace, both by arranging and carrying out those attacks, must be brought to justice as swiftly as possible to deter others. The Special Investigations Unit in the Office of the Attorney General is to be commended for its work and for the convictions it has secured so far, but greater cooperation from security forces and improved judicial capacity in the rural areas where this violence is concentrated will be essential for the success of many investigations.

As we have highlighted before, Colombia needs a realistic long-term plan to dismantle these armed groups and criminal organizations and to bring State services, security and justice to all citizens; otherwise, a lasting peace will remain out of reach in the areas where this violence is concentrated. It is extremely encouraging

that the National Commission on Security Guarantees continues to meet, but it is now time for serious action.

We were encouraged by the positive developments outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1301) on reintegration, and in particular the Government's commitment to accelerating the purchase of land for former combatants from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. Despite security challenges and the obstacles posed by COVID-19, the United Kingdom hopes these measures will continue to be prioritized as these thousands of Colombians seek to build a life away from conflict.

All parties to the final peace agreement have shown what can be achieved through constructive dialogue and cooperation. As COVID-19 continues to leave its mark around the world, a lasting and comprehensive peace will be vital not just for the safety and security of Colombians but for Colombia's own aim to build back better from this devastating pandemic. Colombia has been an example on the Council's agenda, and I wish to remind the Foreign Minister that she can continue to count on the support of the United Kingdom.

Annex XII**Statement by the Acting Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ruiz Massieu for his briefing and for the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. It is always an honour to have Foreign Minister Blum de Barberi with us; we thank her for joining today's meeting.

The Verification Mission has played a vital role in supporting Colombia's peace and reconciliation efforts, and it should be proud of its contributions. In this context, the United States also wishes to acknowledge the Government of Colombia's commitment to the implementation of the final peace agreement, particularly in the face of the daunting public-health challenges posed by coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and as Colombia continues to generously host the 1.7 million Venezuelans who have been forced to flee disastrous and repressive conditions in their own country.

As all the members of the Security Council know well, the pandemic in Colombia continues to worsen an already complex humanitarian situation and to strain available health-care and social services, particularly in conflict-afflicted communities and for members of vulnerable populations. The United States has provided more than \$23.5 million in assistance for Colombia's response to COVID-19, and we will continue to stand with the country in its fight against the pandemic.

As many of my colleagues have mentioned, more than four years have passed since the signing of the peace agreement. As the Security Council has adopted five Security Council mandates in connection with the work of the Verification Mission, now seems to be an excellent time to reflect on what Colombia has achieved since November 2016 and to focus on urgent and ongoing challenges.

What can often be often lost, I think, in the specifics of our discussions on this topic is the magnitude of the peace agreement, and the profound impact it has already had on Colombian society. In comparison to previous decades, we must say that Colombia has witnessed a significant nationwide decrease in violence, including in rates of homicides, kidnappings and other conflict-related indicators. Against the backdrop of a conflict that raged for more than 50 years, and that was unsparing in its violence, that is no small accomplishment.

Yet, as the Secretary-General's reports have also confirmed, during the same period since the signing of the accord, hundreds of human rights defenders, social leaders and former combatants have been killed, with 21 killings of former combatants in just the most recent reporting period, as we have just heard. Members of Colombia's indigenous, Afro-Colombian, LGBTI and other vulnerable populations that have been among those most affected by the ongoing violence, as have Colombians who are working to address land and environmental issues.

As the most recent report (S/2020/1301) indicates, those attacks have been concentrated in the rural areas where there is very limited State presence and there are illegal armed actors and illicit economies. While there are no simple answers to address those complex underlying issues, that violence has a direct and damaging effect on the reintegration process and the implementation of the peace agreement, and we join our other Council members and colleagues in saying it must end.

The United States applauds President Duque's November 2020 meeting with former combatants, during which he reinforced his commitment to the reintegration process and to strengthening security measures for former combatants. It was a

very important and vital step forward in addressing issues facing the reintegration process and security guarantees for former combatants.

The United States urges the Colombian Government to continue to strengthen its presence in those rural areas and to hold those responsible for violence accountable. Accountability in all forms is essential to implementing the peace accord. In particular, transitional justice is at the heart of the peace process and will be central to its success in the coming years, particularly with the first sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace expected later this year.

Colombia's transitional justice system is trying something truly innovative: to guarantee the rights of victims and support efforts to provide reparations, while providing some space for Colombian society as a whole to come to terms with the painful legacy of this conflict. The United States urges all parties to fully participate in truth and reconciliation efforts and to help ensure accountability so that Colombia can heal. We certainly welcome President Duque's recent letter to the Council in connection with a potential role for the Verification Mission, and we look forward to the Council's consideration of that request and the supporting details.

In conclusion, let me say, implementing the peace accord was never going to be easy, or take place overnight. In the face of enormous obstacles, Colombia has continued to move forward with that essential task. The United States will continue its partnership with Colombia in the service of a peaceful and prosperous future.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Phuong Tra Nguyen**

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

It is encouraging to witness the positive and remarkable developments in Colombia since the conclusion of the final peace agreement in 2016. Violent incidents have decreased significantly while the reintegration process has expanded at all levels. The Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) and other relevant parties have had more opportunities to participate in the political life of the country. The Government has made great efforts to promote socioeconomic developments, including a comprehensive rural reform.

We, however, remain concerned that the terms of the agreement have not been fully implemented, and as a result, among others, the reintegration process is still facing multiple challenges. In that regard, we would like to stress the following points:

First, we call on all relevant parties to engage in constructive dialogue to address various challenges and differences in the peace process, especially through the mechanisms established by the agreement.

The year 2021 plays a very important role for Colombia, especially in terms of preparations for the 2022 elections. Every effort should be made to create the most favourable conditions for the organization of and participation in the elections. The United Nations and the international community should support Colombia's efforts towards that end.

Secondly, with regard to security, according to the Government of Colombia, illegal organized armed groups are the greatest perpetrators, with nearly 77 per cent of the attacks against former combatants and social leaders. They have also targeted their influence in conflict-affected areas where most of the crimes are against civilians. In that connection, we urge the National Commission on Security Guarantees to adopt the necessary policies to dismantle those organizations and to strengthen the investigation and the application of justice. We call upon the relevant parties to make full use of the security guarantees mechanisms provided for under the final peace agreement to protect civilians, especially women and children, in conflict-affected areas.

Thirdly, reintegration is a long-term process, requiring patience, political will and practical steps. We take note of the efforts undertaken by the Government of Colombia and the progress achieved so far in the socioeconomic and political fields. That process should continue to be implemented in a comprehensive manner to be politically and socioeconomically sustainable.

Therefore, we emphasize the need for further measures to promote economic and inclusive development, social cohesion, rural development, housing and education access, job creation and so forth. The development plans of the country need to take into account the particular needs of its communities.

We expect to see a greater role played by the Government, FARC, the National Reintegration Council, together with the United Nations, regional and international organizations, in developing a joint strategy for strengthened socioeconomic

development, which lays out concrete measures to assist former combatants in attaining sustainable livelihoods.

Last but not least, we would like to commend and reiterate our support for the unceasing work of the United Nations Verification Mission and the United Nations country team in contributing to the process of peace, security, unity and development in Colombia.

Annex XIV

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, Claudia Blum de Barberi

[Original: Spanish]

I thank the presidency for convening this meeting and the members of the Security Council for their constant support to Colombia.

I welcome the new members of the Council, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway, and wish them success in carrying out their duties.

The Government of Colombia is grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1301) and thanks his representative, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which he leads.

The Secretary-General recognizes the significant decrease in violence in my country in the past four years. That is a trend that Colombia has been building on since 2002. His report also underscores the results of social investments to benefit communities affected by decades of violence. And it describes the progress achieved in the reintegration of former combatants and other aspects of the implementation of the 2016 agreement. Those achievements demonstrate President Iván Duque's unwavering commitment to peace in Colombia, the strengthening of the rule of law and the development of territories that have endured poverty and vulnerability.

The report documents progress made on the priorities identified by the Secretary-General for 2020 and identifies additional challenges for 2021.

I would like to address several of those issues.

First, our greatest challenge continues to be the security of communities, social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants.

The international community understands that the agreement was signed between two parties in 2016, in the midst of other sources of existing violence. Illegal armed groups that remain in several areas of the territory, and others that have emerged, all fuelled by drug trafficking and other illegal economies, are a threat to Colombians' security.

The findings of the Office of the Attorney-General show that those organized armed groups, especially the dissidents and splinter groups, are the main perpetrators of attacks on former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). They appear to be responsible for about 77 per cent of the cases.

In 2020, the national Government consistently implemented measures to strengthen the protection of former members of the FARC-EP. A total of 272 individual and collective security schemes have been implemented.

The Special Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General is also making progress in cases of attacks against former combatants. Of the 291 cases under its jurisdiction, 34 have resulted in convictions, 21 are in the trial stage, 40 are under investigation and arrest warrants have been issued in 48 cases. That represents progress in more than 50 per cent of the cases.

For their part, the security forces have stepped up efforts to fight criminal structures in the territories.

The State has made progress in the public policy guidelines for the dismantling of criminal organizations. However, we have not waited for the public policy to be

adopted in order to implement the necessary measures to guarantee the security of Colombians. The initiatives developed under Decrees No. 601 and No. 965 of 2020 to confront illegal organizations have already yielded positive results. An example of that are the operations against the Clan del Golfo, one of the illegal groups that profits the most from illicit drug trafficking; 412 members of that group have already been arrested.

In 2020, the number of people in the reintegration process who were killed was 12 per cent lower than in 2019. Colombia will continue to work decisively to prevent and combat those crimes and threats against vulnerable communities.

The socioeconomic efforts of programmes, such as the development programmes with a territorial focus, have made it possible to strengthen the rule of law and transform the territories most affected by violence and poverty.

The integrated presence of the State in those areas is another priority identified by the Secretary-General. The progress achieved in the stabilization of the 170 municipalities that have benefited from the development programmes with a territorial focus is evidence of the momentum, commitment and effectiveness of the Government in the implementation of the 2016 agreement. Those areas represent one third of the national territory and are home to nearly 7 million Colombians.

In the past two years, there have been many changes in rural areas. The provision of electricity has been extended throughout the country; 8,348 housing solutions have been provided; 6,140 housing subsidies, with an investment of \$52 million, have been granted in municipalities where development programmes with a territorial focus are being implemented.

We also know that transformations towards a more equitable, peaceful, just and inclusive society require long-term effort. For that reason, the Government has developed a judicious planning initiative, with 15-year regional implementation road maps that are irreversible and guarantee the continuity of the actions undertaken. In addition, 13 sectoral plans have been adopted in different areas of government to address the needs of the country's rural areas.

The sustainability of the reintegration process is another priority of President Iván Duque. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Government continues to fulfil its commitments even beyond what was agreed. The National Development Plan 2018-2022 includes measures to make reintegration sustainable for additional time beyond that of the agreement, as long as former combatants remain in the legal system.

The detailed registry of persons in reintegration enables the establishment of a sustainable strategy, with a holistic approach towards its economic, housing, family, education, health, and psychosocial and community well-being components.

Although the agreement did not provide for access to or ownership of land specifically for former combatants, the Government has identified that need. For 2021, we have committed \$4.2 million towards land acquisition.

Through inter-institutional agreements, we also strengthen the sustainability of productive projects. The national Government, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the Multi-donor Trust Fund and other cooperating partners, has developed a strategic alliance to strengthen reintegration through collective productive projects.

The national Government has supported the dialogue bodies provided for in the agreement and its regulatory development. Among them, the Commission for the

Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, which was extended for an additional period of time beyond that initially agreed.

Those spaces exist to resolve disagreements with regard to the implementation of the agreement. It must be understood that they are not alternative venues for dialogue between the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común opposition party on issues that do not correspond to the implementation of the agreement. Congress and the democratic forums are the appropriate forums for debates unrelated to the implementation of the agreement.

I would also like to stress the role of women and the focus on gender. The Council has witnessed Colombia's commitment to the women and peace and security agenda. We continue to work to meet the 51 gender indicators included in the framework plan for the implementation of the final agreement, and that is monitored by the Special Forum on Gender and the High-Level Forum on Gender of the Government. Victims are at the centre of all our efforts. I am pleased to report the recent 10-year extension of the Victims and Land Restitution Act. President Duque's Government has delivered more than 220,000 individual compensations to victims for a total of \$498 million, in addition to collective reparations.

The transitional justice system was established to guarantee the rights of victims to truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. The Government has continued to support all its mechanisms, ensuring adequate funding.

In 2020, \$148.4 million were allocated to the system and distributed as follows: \$82.7 million for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; \$39.8 million for the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing; and \$25.9 million for the Truth Commission. Between 2019 and 2020 there was a 28 per cent increase in funding of the system, despite the impact of the pandemic and budget reductions to other State institutions.

I would like to report that President Iván Duque recently sent a letter to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, asking them to consider adding to the mandate of the Verification Mission. The purpose of this request is to ensure the reparative element of truth and justice, which must be undertaken by those who have committed crimes and been punished. The Colombian people must be able to trust the justice system to advance reparations for victims and national coexistence.

As mentioned in the report, last November President Iván Duque received representatives of the Pilgrimage for life and peace. The President ratified the Government's commitment to the reintegration of ex-combatants. He emphasized the importance of continuing to work for respect for life, justice and the generation of trust, and he praised the role of the public forces that confront criminal groups and protect former combatants and all citizens.

The effective implementation of an ambitious agreement requires political will and strategic planning based on the principle of national ownership. Although we still have a long way to go, the peace with legality policy is helping us to advance towards a more just and peaceful society. The support of the international community is essential in this process.
