



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8452nd meeting
Saturday, 26 January 2019, 9 a.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Vargas Maldonado/Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Duncan
United States of America	Mr. Pompeo/Mr. Abrams

Agenda

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation cannot support the attempt of our American colleagues to conduct a discussion of the situation in Venezuela. Generally speaking, it is a gross abuse of the prerogatives of one member of the Security Council — more importantly, a permanent member — to introduce issues formulated in this way to our agenda.

The internal situation in that Latin American country is not an item on the agenda of the Council. We see no external threats arising from what is taking place in Venezuela. Venezuela does not represent a threat to peace and security. If anything does represent a threat to peace, it is the shameless and aggressive actions of the United States and its allies aimed at ousting the legitimately elected President of Venezuela.

Essentially, what we are seeing is an unceremonious attempt by Washington, D.C., to engineer a coup d'état in that country, in breach of all norms of international law. This situation, concerning which we will undoubtedly hear the views of the people of Venezuela and Latin American States, and which the Council should consider to be a threat to Venezuela, leads us to request a procedural vote on the agenda before us. We do not agree to discuss the item entitled "Situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela", all the more so as there is no such item on the agenda of the Security Council. In our view, it would be more appropriate to conduct a discussion on the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security", in the light of this violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. We call on all who share our point of view to support us.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Secretary of State of the United States of America has asked for the floor.

Mr. Pompeo (United States of America): The focus of the Security Council is to safeguard international peace and security. The former Maduro regime oppressed its people for years, forcing millions of Venezuelans to flee the country merely to gain very

basic access to food and water. That has overwhelmed the capacity of regional countries to adequately address the urgent humanitarian needs. Former President Maduro bears full responsibility for that tragedy, allowing Venezuelans to languish without food and humanitarian assistance.

On 10 January, the Organization of American States (OAS) passed a resolution that refused to recognize the illegitimate Maduro regime and called for further attention to address the suffering of the Venezuelan people. Last week, we all received a letter under Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations from OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro Lemes, which specifically described the destabilizing impact of this crisis on the region. And yet, despite this tragedy and despite the calls from regional bodies for it to be given more attention, the United Nations has yet to hold a formal meeting on this subject.

We now have a new leader, Juan Guaidó, in Venezuela, who has promised to bring elections and constitutional order back to Venezuela and security back to the region. We cannot delay this critical conversation, which has the world's attention. For the sake of Venezuela and the region, we must support the Venezuelan people and do so right now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In view of the request and the comments made by members of the Security Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the provisional agenda for today's meeting. I shall put the provisional agenda to the vote now.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China, Equatorial Guinea, Russian Federation, South Africa

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The provisional agenda received 9 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 2 abstentions.

The provisional agenda has been adopted.

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The situation in Venezuela is cause for serious concern. The protracted crisis in the country has had a grave impact on the population, with high levels of political polarization, growing humanitarian needs and serious human rights concerns. The economic situation in the country has become dire. Repeated efforts to bring the Government and the opposition to the negotiating table have not led to concrete agreements. The Secretary-General has consistently stated the need for a credible and inclusive political process that has the interests of the Venezuelan people at heart.

The situation has both an economic and a political dimension. The population has been affected in a systemic way. Nearly all 30 million Venezuelans have been affected by hyperinflation and the collapse of real salaries; shortages of food, medicine and basic supplies; the deterioration of health and education services; and the deterioration of basic infrastructure, such as water, electricity, transport and urban services. Drastic reductions in production capacities in the agricultural, pharmaceutical and other sectors have aggravated the supply situation.

The drop in oil prices recorded in recent years continued in 2018, with a decrease of approximately half a million barrels per day from 2017 and a consequent fall in revenues. The International Monetary Fund reported that the inflation rate hit 1.37 million per cent

last year and has projected a fall in real gross domestic product of negative 18 per cent in 2019. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, between 2015 and 2017 there were 3.7 million undernourished people in the country. Infant mortality rates have doubled in recent years. According to United Nations estimates, over 3 million Venezuelans are now living abroad, including approximately 2.3 million who have left the country since 2015, going mostly to other South American countries.

In the parliamentary elections of December 2015, the opposition won a large majority of seats in the National Assembly. Subsequently, the Supreme Court ruled that the Assembly was in contempt and that all of its actions were null and void. In 2017, a National Constituent Assembly was established through elections in which the opposition parties did not participate. The National Constituent Assembly took over key functions of the legislative branch and undertook a process of constitutional reform that remains inconclusive and is not recognized by the opposition parties.

Attempts to bring about political dialogue started as early as May 2016, through an initiative facilitated by three former Presidents from the Dominican Republic, Panama and Spain, under the auspices of the Union of South American Nations. Despite some initial progress, no concrete agreements were reached through that initiative, which was suspended by the beginning of 2017. By mid-2017, there were efforts to resume dialogue, and formal talks began in September 2017, hosted by the Dominican Republic and with international accompaniment. The talks ended in February 2018, without agreements having been reached. One of the major areas of disagreement was the electoral calendar and guarantees to ensure free, transparent and credible elections. Subsequently, the Government went ahead with presidential elections in May 2018. President Nicolás Maduro Moros was declared the winner over two other candidates. Most of the opposition did not participate in the elections or recognize the results.

On 10 January, Nicolás Maduro was sworn in as President for a second six-year term. On 23 January, large-scale opposition protests culminated with Juan Guaidó, President of the opposition-led National Assembly, announcing that he did not recognize President Maduro or his Government. Mr. Guaidó proclaimed himself interim President, pledging to form a transitional Government and call for elections.

While the protests were largely peaceful, there were incidents of violence. The Secretary-General has expressed strong concern over reports of casualties among demonstrators and has called for the transparent and independent investigation of these incidents. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), credible local sources have reported that at least 20 people have died in the unrest. Many more have reportedly been injured and detained in violent incidents.

The High Commissioner stated yesterday that any violent incident resulting in death or injury should be subject to an independent and impartial investigation to find out whether there was excessive use of force by the authorities or if crimes had been committed by members of armed groups — pro-Government or otherwise. She said that she was extremely concerned that the situation in Venezuela could rapidly spiral out of control, with catastrophic consequences. The High Commissioner also stressed that it is of utmost importance to uphold the right to peaceful assembly and to refrain from excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force.

In a statement on 24 January, the Secretary-General emphasized the urgent need for all relevant actors to commit to inclusive and credible political dialogue to address the protracted crisis in the country, with full respect for the rule of law and human rights. He has offered his good offices to help resolve the crisis. The main concern is the well-being of the Venezuelan people and their ability to enjoy their full rights.

The United Nations has been providing assistance, particularly in the areas of health and nutrition, and the Secretary-General had asked the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to establish a mechanism to support Venezuelans leaving the country. The IOM and UNHCR appointed Mr. Eduardo Stein, former Vice President of Guatemala, as their joint representative to work with regional Governments to ensure that support to these individuals is in place.

As the Secretary-General has stated, at this crucial moment it is important that all actors exercise maximum restraint to avoid an escalation of violence and confrontation. There are divergent visions of what the future should hold for Venezuela, but we must all be guided by the pursuit of the well-being of the Venezuelan people and work together so that their needs are fully

met. We must do all we can to prevent the worsening of tensions and we must try to help bring about a political solution that will allow the country's citizens to enjoy peace, prosperity and all their human rights.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

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

I call on the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Pompeo (United States of America): On behalf of President Trump and the American people, I first want to thank Foreign Minister Miguel Vargas Maldonado of the Dominican Republic, the current President of the Security Council, for scheduling this meeting. My former colleague, Ambassador Haley, lobbied for a year to get the Council to address Venezuela, but her pleas fell on deaf ears. This meeting is long overdue and Council members all know why it is overdue.

Take Carlos Aquino, a 37-year-old construction worker weeping over the tiny coffin of his deceased infant son, who died of starvation. Such scenes of misery are now the norm in Nicolás Maduro Moros's Venezuela, where millions of children are suffering from malnutrition and starvation thanks to a socialist experiment that caused the economy to collapse. This human misery is not a secret. Stories like this are well documented by our press corps. We can read about men like Carlos every day. People like him are why the United States called for this meeting.

We are here because Maduro has reduced ordinary Venezuelans, who once lived in prosperity, to rooting through dumpsters to find something to eat. We are here because scores of Venezuelan women — some of them teenagers — have fled Maduro's madness to other countries and, in desperation, turned to prostitution to survive. We are here because of Maria Vielma, a school psychologist who said, through tears, "We have a Government that is dedicated to destroying, not constructing". Another man — a farmer named Vladimir Sequera, who never got more than a sixth grade education — hoped that his stepdaughter Gabriela could fulfil her dreams of being a lawyer. She now says that their whole future has been taken away. That future — for her and for all Venezuelans — did not magically disappear on its own. The Maduro regime's

failed policies, oppression and corruption stole that future.

The United States is helping to recover a brighter future for Venezuela. We are here to urge all nations to support the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people as they try to free themselves from former President Maduro's illegitimate mafia State. The humanitarian situation demands action now; it demands action today. Today, 9 out of 10 citizens live in poverty. Millions lack access to drinking water and food. Three out of four hospitals have been abandoned. Three million Venezuelans have been forced to flee their homeland, thereby flooding the region and threatening international peace and security. Maduro's prisons are full of political prisoners, unjustly behind bars, and the graveyards hold dissidents and protesters who have been killed by that regime.

I want to talk to the Council about just one of them — a member of the City Council of Caracas named Fernando Albán Salazar. Just four months ago, he came here to this city to meet with the world's representatives, who gather here every year during the general debate of the General Assembly. He came here to speak about the failures of the Maduro regime and about his hopes for a more democratic and more prosperous future for his country. After that, he went home to the country that he loved. Maduro's secret police arrested him at the airport as soon as he landed. He died in their custody three days later and the pathetic explanations for this death have convinced absolutely no one.

The time is now to support the Venezuelan people, recognize the new democratic Government led by interim President Guaidó and end this nightmare. There are no excuses. The United States stands with the Venezuelan people. So far, many other nations have chosen to do the same and they, too, have recognized the legitimate Government of interim President Guaidó. The United States stands proudly with him as we stand together in support of Venezuela. He knew the Venezuelan people did not have a moment to spare.

Now it is time for every other nation to pick a side. There can be no more delays and no more games. Either a nation stands with the forces of freedom or it is in league with Maduro and his mayhem. Some countries have publicly taken former President Maduro's side; China, Russia, Syria and Iran are just four of them. Just this morning, we tried to find a way for the Council to speak with one voice in support of the Venezuelan

people and the democratic ideals through a presidential statement of the Council. But our Russian and Chinese colleagues refused to let this move forward. It is not a surprise that those who rule without democracy in their own countries are trying to prop up Maduro while he is in dire straits. Nor are these countries supporting international norms, as they cynically claim. China and Russia are propping up a failed regime in the hopes of recovering billions of dollars in ill-considered investments and assistance made over the years. This money was never intended to help the Venezuelan people; it lined the pockets of the Maduro regime, its cronies and its benefactors.

But no regime has done more to sustain the nightmarish condition of the Venezuelan people than the regime in Havana. For years, Cuban security and intelligence thugs, invited into Venezuela by Maduro himself and those around him, have sustained this illegitimate rule. They have trained Maduro's security and intelligence henchmen in Cuba's own worst practices. Cuba's Ministry of the Interior even provides former President Maduro's personal security. Members of this body often use their microphones here to condemn foreign interference in internal affairs. Let us be crystal clear. The foreign Power that is meddling in Venezuela today is Cuba. Cuba has directly made matters worse. The United States and its partners are the true friends of the Venezuelan people.

On Wednesday, the Venezuelan people chose to take their country back on the anniversary of the day that the dictator Marco Pérez Jiménez was forced out of power back in 1958. We call for Venezuelans to now work together to peacefully restore the constitutional Government and return the country to a secure, democratic and prosperous path. As we read reports of peaceful Venezuelan protesters being killed or wounded, we also repeat our insistence that Venezuelan security services show restraint.

I want to be 100 per cent clear. President Trump and I fully expect that our diplomats will continue to receive the protections provided for under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Venezuela must not test the United States resolve to protect its own people.

We hope that the international community will support the people of Venezuela and the transitional Government led by Juan Guaidó. On 23 January, Guaidó declared himself interim President of Venezuela, in

accordance with Venezuela's own Constitution. He made that declaration with the full support of the National Assembly and the Venezuelan people. Our nations must stand up for the rule of law and support the leader whom the Venezuelan people have affirmed as their legitimate interim President. It is our hope that free and fair elections happen as soon as possible.

Back in 1961, President Kennedy spoke in Caracas. He declared, "We will be partners in building a better life for our people". America's ambition has not changed since that day. We stand with the Venezuelan people as they seek to build a better life for themselves. We cannot ignore the suffering or tyranny taking place in that proud nation, and neither should other countries that care about freedom and prosperity. Today, we call on all members of the Security Council to support Venezuela's democratic transition and interim President Guaidó's role in it.

Mr. Duncan (United Kingdom): There are probably only a few moments in history when a country's rate of inflation has had to be measured in millions of per cent. But in the case of Venezuela, this is such a moment. Beneath that stark statistic rests a scene of total economic collapse and, with it, a comprehensive picture of human misery and degradation from which only the corrupt Venezuelan elite are able to escape. People are starving, children are malnourished, essential items are absent from the bare shelves of bankrupt stores and, from that wretchedness, millions have fled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they have been rescued by an outpouring of human generosity.

That inexcusable and wholly avoidable wasteland is entirely the creation of one man and his cronies. The ranting socialism of Nicolás Maduro Moros has destroyed an entire country and, despite his self-congratulatory moral posturing, his enduring legacy will be to have made the poor not just poorer, but also destitute. It is our concern for the plight of Venezuela and the country's people that motivates us here today, not the sentiments of anything that can possibly be described as "colonial". How, indeed, can any self-respecting Government possibly justify supporting the poisonous regime of the nation-destroying Mr. Maduro?

But, in addition to holding the opinion we do because of our concern for the people of Venezuela, the United Nations and we, the Security Council, are also here to resolve the world's worst sins. To do so, we must all uphold the rule of law, which we firmly

believe should govern the affairs of all. That rule of law has collapsed in Venezuela. Worse, it has been continuously eroded, undermined and eradicated by the dictatorial abuses of Nicolás Maduro.

Hand in hand with the economic devastation caused by that man has come the parallel removal of liberty, justice and freedom. We have seen the theft from the Venezuelan people of its democracy. Maduro has attempted to delegitimize the National Assembly, he has created the artificial and illegitimate Constituent Assembly, and he has ruthlessly put an end to free and fair elections by stuffing ballot boxes and corrupting democratic decision. The political opposition has been suppressed and intimidated, its leaders have fled or been imprisoned, and we will never forget that opposition activist Fernando Albán Salazar, mentioned just now by Secretary Pompeo, was detained and then found dead beneath the windows of the National Intelligence Service facility. The world can now see that the presidency of Nicolás Maduro no longer rests on democratic foundations. The presidency of Nicolás Maduro is not legitimate.

We, the United Kingdom, unreservedly praise and support the extraordinary courage of Juan Guaidó in his stand against Maduro's fraud, corruption and undemocratic status. We applaud Juan Guaidó's decision to assert the legitimate authority of the National Assembly. It is therefore right that we should now respond robustly to the courageous steps taken by the Venezuelan people and the political opposition by bringing this critical issue here to the Security Council. Council members must recognize their responsibility to ensure that the United Nations uses its leadership to help achieve positive change in Venezuela. Our efforts must now focus on finding a way out of the crisis that has devastated the country.

Let me make our position clear. The United Kingdom stands with the European Union in demanding urgent, free and fair elections at the earliest opportunity and in calling for a legitimate Government to be established. We stand with the Organization of American States and the Lima Group, whose members last September referred the Venezuelan Government to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity. Citing over 8,000 extrajudicial executions, 12,000 arbitrary arrests and the detention of 13,000 political prisoners, they made history by making it the first ever case in which an entire State has been referred to the ICC.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States in saying that the National Assembly and its President, Juan Guaidó, are best placed to lead Venezuela to the restoration of its democracy, its economy and its freedom. Therefore, we believe that Juan Guaidó is the right man to take Venezuela forward and we will recognize him as constitutional interim President if new elections are not announced within eight days.

Today, we should all stand together against the tyranny of Nicolás Maduro and in support of legitimate democratic forces in Venezuela. Venezuela can and must recover from the depths of its current despair. To do so, it needs an end to tyranny, an end to corruption and an urgent return to freedom, democracy and the rule of law. The Security Council must make its view clear and we must urgently help to pave the way to a brighter future for the Venezuela that Maduro has so culpably ruined.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the important information provided by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo. We particularly welcome the presence of the high-ranking officials who are with us this morning.

It is important that the Security Council discuss the situation in Venezuela, in accordance with Article 34 of the Charter of the United Nations, which authorizes it to address any situation that is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as our commitment to the preventive diplomacy efforts that the Council must undertake.

Peru notes with alarm that the rupture of constitutional order in Venezuela has given way to a serious political, economic and humanitarian crisis, which represents a threat to regional peace and security. The policy of repression instituted by the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro Moros against his own people fuels the prospects of renewed escalations of violence, the consequences of which the Council must prevent and address, in line with its great responsibilities.

Reality for the Venezuelan people, which some countries seek to qualify as an internal matter, is reflected in a massive and historic exodus of around 3.3 million people resulting from the anti-democratic, oppressive and dictatorial acts and policies of the Maduro regime. Conservative projections point to an increase of 2 million in this figure in the short term in the light of the escalation of violence and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. We note that the

pace and complexity of that phenomenon are creating a situation of crisis and regional tension, which some countries must urgently address in order to meet the most basic needs of the diaspora. Peru alone has to date received some 700,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants, whom we have welcomed and supported.

The humanitarian crisis and political repression in Venezuela are not recent. The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have determined that there is evidence pointing to the systematic and strategic use of murder, incarceration, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence in order to terrorize the Venezuelan people and crush the opposition to the regime. Before the commission of those serious crimes, in September Peru, together with Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay, under Article 14 of the Rome Statute, asked the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to initiate an investigation into the crimes against humanity committed by the Maduro regime in Venezuela since 12 February 2014.

The political and security crisis has continued to deteriorate since the illegitimate inauguration of Nicolás Maduro, which was based on an electoral process that did not meet international minimum standards in terms of participation, justice, transparency and international observation to be considered democratic, free, fair and credible. For that reason, the Lima Group, a mechanism made up of States in the region whose objective is to seek a peaceful solution to the situation in Venezuela, did not recognize the legitimacy of the 20 May 2018 electoral process.

The illegitimacy of the regime is also the result of a continuous process of the dismantling of democracy and fundamental freedoms, accompanied by the regime's systematic and proven lack of commitment to the promotion of peaceful solutions through dialogue with the opposition. We must condemn the fact that the response of the dictatorial regime of Nicolás Maduro to the demonstrations of the Venezuelan people in this crisis has been the disproportionate use of violence, political persecution and repression. We therefore reiterate our call for an immediate end to the violence and for the release of all political prisoners in Venezuela.

In that regard, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that there 180 popular demonstrations

were held this week, leading to the loss of human lives and large-scale arrests by security forces and pro-Government armed groups. We demand an independent investigation to bring those responsible to justice. In that regard, we highlight the resolution adopted by the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, dated 10 January, in which it resolved not to recognize the new regime of Nicolás Maduro and in which its member States are urged to adopt measures that contribute to the prompt restoration of the democratic order. That regional position coincides with the declaration issued on 4 January by the Lima Group, in which Nicolás Maduro was urged to provisionally transfer the executive power to the National Assembly until new elections could be held in Venezuela.

Peru, as well as other countries of Latin America and other regions, has recognized the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in strict adherence to the provisions of the Constitution of that country. Likewise, we affirm the constitutional authority of the National Assembly of Venezuela, the sole democratically elected body, and strongly support the actions it has undertaken, including the authorization of international humanitarian aid.

Peru is of the view that a democratic transition process must be initiated immediately under the leadership of President Guaidó. That is the only way for Venezuela to overcome this severe crisis. That requires the holding of new, credible and transparent democratic elections that are protected by the rule of law, that respect the constitutional guarantees and fundamental rights of all Venezuelans, and that allow for unrestricted participation, under observation and consistent with international standards.

Finally, I reaffirm our commitment to and solidarity with the brotherly Venezuelan people and reiterate our willingness to contribute to the restoration of democracy in that country.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We want to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We also want to welcome the ministers present here in the Council today, as well as the briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo.

In any country, like all the countries represented around this big table, political parties choose the provisions by which to conduct elections. Venezuela is no different, and it held its presidential elections on

20 May 2018 on the basis of its national laws governing such elections. Those elections also took place in accordance with the agreement of electoral guarantees that was signed by all political parties shortly before the elections. The elections were further overseen by Venezuela's National Electoral Council, as in any other country, whether developed or developing. It was on that basis that South Africa's President, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, congratulated President Maduro following his inauguration for a second term as President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

A founding principle of South Africa's constitutional democracy, which we hold very dear, is respect for the rule of law. We are therefore deeply concerned by what is a clear attempt, in Venezuela, to circumvent the constitutional legal mechanisms of the country that govern its elections. Any grievances or disputes should be resolved in a peaceful manner through the proper mechanisms and processes provided for in the Constitution of Venezuela and its electoral laws, without external influence. That is standard practice everywhere, in every country, and indeed the best practice in all democracies that subscribe to the rule of law.

South Africa echoes the statement made by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in Davos on 24 January, where he urged a de-escalation of tensions to prevent further violence. We further support the Secretary-General's call referring to

“the urgent need for all relevant actors to commit to inclusive and credible political dialogue to address the protracted crisis in the country, with full respect for the rule of law and human rights”.

South Africa therefore calls on all parties to participate in a national dialogue process to ensure unity and reconciliation and for the furtherance of a political solution to the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We would like to reiterate that any further action by or grievance of either party should be resolved through the due legal processes of the country.

We are also concerned about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the resultant migration that has taken place. We call on the entire international community, as well as the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, to work with the Venezuelan Government and its neighbours in order to assist those in need.

I wish to stress that South Africa is firmly against any attempts aimed at undue or unconstitutional changes of Government in Venezuela. The Security Council should never be an instrument that validates unconstitutional changes of any Government — anywhere, at any time. Instead, the Council should promote avenues that create environments conducive to inclusive dialogue and cooperation, which would ease the challenges and hardships faced by the Venezuelan people.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for the overview that she has just provided on the current situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has been closely monitoring developments in Venezuela, and in particular the trends reported by the media during the past week, which are of concern to us given that they may reach a level that would cause further suffering to the population. Our delegation underscores the urgent need for all interested parties to refrain from carrying out acts of violence and provocation, and calls on the Government, the opposition political parties, civil society and the people of Venezuela to summon the courage, wisdom and good sense to overcome the situation and find a reliable solution in the interest of peace and security, with due respect for human rights and the freedoms of its citizens. Such a solution, in addition to being peaceful and democratic, should be based on the framework of the Venezuelan Constitution.

Equatorial Guinea believes that the situation in Venezuela is an internal matter and that it does not pose a threat to international peace and security. We therefore urge the Security Council and the international community to be sufficiently cautious and to take into account recent experiences in the Middle East and Africa in order to avoid a spillover of the situation in the country. The main role of the United Nations and the international community in this situation should be focused on supporting the country's efforts in promoting a frank and inclusive intra-Venezuelan dialogue that allows the parties to negotiate the differences that tend to undermine Venezuela's fate.

In other words, the neighbouring countries and those of the region and the wider international community must not pour fuel on the current fire in Venezuela, turning it into a large-scale conflagration, but rather

serve as firefighters to put out that fire, facilitating an inclusive and peaceful intra-Venezuelan dialogue as a way of finding a solution to the prevailing situation, given that neither external interference nor violent and extreme positions would facilitate such a solution, but rather would aggravate the situation. We must give Venezuelans the space to engage in dialogue and find a solution. The call of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for internal dialogue is based on the following realities.

In the context of recent developments in the Middle East and Africa, specifically in Libya, we are today experiencing the spillover of a situation generated by foreign intervention as a result of an appeal and the ill-intended implementation in 2011 of a Security Council resolution based on the right to protect. Let us compile the statistics and establish the figures on the current suffering and the number of human lives that have been and continue to be lost, not only in Libya, but the entire subregion of Western and even Central Africa, due to terrorist activity, organized crime and the creation of numerous armed groups as a result of that external interference, which focused solely on regime change without regard for what would happen later in the country.

Respect for the rule of law is rightly considered a dogma of the Security Council and the United Nations. In Venezuela, all judicial bodies recognize and resolutely support the current Government in power, which is why the international community must also support that position in respect of the rule of law. Last but not least, the kind of change of Government being considered by some with respect to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would set a very dangerous precedent that could have disastrous consequences in many countries following the holding of electoral cycles.

For all of these reasons, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea recognizes, respects and adheres to the constitutional order of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and expects the parties to resolve their differences through dialogue, while refraining, as we stated earlier, from carrying out violent actions that could contribute to further exacerbating the vulnerability of the prevailing situation.

That is why, in recognition of the principle of subsidiarity, we ask that the actions of organizations and stakeholders in the region be in line with international law and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we call on the Secretary-

General, Mr. António Guterres, to use his expertise and diplomatic experience to discharge his good offices as a facilitator and mediator amid this crisis.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing on the tragic situation of the Venezuelan people.

Indeed, for nearly three years, Venezuela has been plunged into an unprecedented crisis — with a depleted economy, a population deprived of basic necessities and the tyrannical and brutal repression of opponents and peaceful protesters, as well as the exodus of more than 3 million Venezuelans, both migrants and refugees, eager to flee a situation that is, quite frankly, chaotic. The problem goes beyond the borders of Venezuela itself and is a destabilizing factor for regional security. It is therefore perfectly legitimate for the Security Council to address this issue as part of its role in conflict prevention. In that context, I would like to emphasize two priorities in moving towards a resolution of the crisis.

The first priority is nothing less than respect for the will of the people. In that regard, France applauds the bravery of the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who have been taking to the streets of Venezuela since 23 January. As said by the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, democracy must be restored in Venezuela. Nicolás Maduro, who seeks to undertake a second term on the basis of a mockery of an election, must immediately announce the organization of new presidential elections. They must be democratic — that is to say, free and transparent — and in accordance with the Venezuelan constitutional order and under international observation. France has campaigned tirelessly for a negotiated political solution to the crisis, and the European Union has repeatedly offered its help to achieve that goal. Nicolás Maduro must understand that he must now seize this last opportunity.

If such elections are not announced in a timely manner, the European Union, in accordance with the declaration that has just been adopted by its 28 members in Brussels, will take new measures, concerning in particular recognizing the Venezuelan authorities in accordance with article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution. As President Macron announced this morning, France is therefore ready to recognize Juan Guaidó, within 8 days, as interim President of Venezuela in order to initiate a political process.

Furthermore, France urges the Venezuelan authorities to respect the rights of the National Assembly, the only democratically elected institution, especially the principle of the immunity of its members, and to cease all acts of repression against the population.

Apart from its institutions, the men and women who are politically engaged in the defence of human rights and Venezuelan democracy must be able to pursue their activities without fear of threats or reprisals. The excessive use of force is simply unacceptable, especially against democratically elected representatives, civil society representatives and peaceful protesters. The Venezuelan people have the right to make their voices heard. In that respect, France recalls its commitment to the freedom of the press and the protection of journalists, who must be able to exercise their profession freely.

The second, and equally urgent, priority is to put an end to the humanitarian crisis. Millions of Venezuelans have had to leave their country in the absence of a State capable of providing basic services, including medical care and basic necessities. The solidarity of the countries of the region — in particular Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil — in the face of this human tragedy is to be welcomed. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, which have appointed a joint special representative, are also doing an outstanding job. France, in its national capacity, and the European Union are also contributing to this humanitarian effort to mitigate the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

As the situation continues to deteriorate, France urges the Venezuelan authorities to allow and facilitate the work of international humanitarian actors and non-governmental organizations that seek to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable men and women in society, in particular children, people with disabilities and the elderly. As a staunch proponent of freedom, equality and fraternity in accordance with its national motto, France stands alongside the Venezuelan people and hails the courage of all those who stand ready to defend the freedom and democratic institutions of their country.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the participation of the Ministers present at today's meeting. We listened carefully to the briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and

Peacebuilding Affairs, and we appreciate her valuable information regarding the recent developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We took note of the two letters addressed to the President of the Security Council from the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Chargé d'affaires of the United States delegation regarding the decisions taken by the OAS on the current crisis in Venezuela.

We have committed ourselves to fully implementing the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in order to maintain international peace and security. We must therefore work together to address the challenges and crises facing our world today. Chapter VI, Article 34, of the Charter states:

“The Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.”

That is why the Security Council has a fundamental role to play in implementing preventive diplomacy in order to prevent conflicts and address crises at an early stage, should there be any early signs of a situation leading to a threat to international peace and security. That would be in accordance with the mandate given to the Council based on Chapter VI, Article 34, of the Charter.

Since joining the Council, the State of Kuwait has sought to implement all our priorities based on the fundamental principles of international law while promoting the role of preventive diplomacy and stepping up our efforts to prevent conflicts and settle them peacefully. We strongly believe that preventive diplomacy is one of the main pillars at our disposal when dealing with unrest and crises at an early stage in order to avoid significant economic and political losses, as well as losses of human life and property.

It is with concern in mind that we are following the recent developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and regret recent reports regarding many casualties among civilians during demonstrations in Venezuelan cities. The State of Kuwait stresses the need to respect the freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration as guaranteed by international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1966. Inter alia, the Covenant guarantees the rights to the freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly according to national laws.

The current political crisis in Venezuela requires all the relevant stakeholders to prioritize national interests over personal or partisan ones. They must commit to an inclusive political dialogue to resolve the current crisis. We call on all the relevant parties to exercise self-restraint, reduce tensions, reject violence and make every effort to prevent any further human losses. In that context, we support the statement issued by the Secretary-General on 24 January.

We belong to a region where over the past two years certain countries, such as Syria and Libya, have seen demonstrations and protests that started peacefully but, unfortunately, became violent, leading to grave losses in human lives and the destruction of infrastructure. Some of them have even led to the tragedies that we are witnessing today, including the suffering from their repercussions, which affect the security and stability of the region and the world. We must therefore step up our efforts to prevent such events from reoccurring, whether in our region or in any other part of the world.

Before concluding I would like to stress the importance of the Security Council addressing such situations by utilizing the well-established and recognized principles of relations among nations, which are built on those of the Charter of the United Nations that call on nations to respect the sovereignty of States, not interfere in their internal affairs and respect the competencies of various United Nations organs mandated by the Charter. Those are the principles that govern relations among nations, and they should be the principles on which we rely when addressing such situations.

We hope that Venezuela will be able to peacefully overcome this crisis, while ensuring security, stability and prosperity for its people.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

We have no doubt that today's meeting was called for by the United States delegation for the sole purpose of continuing to destabilize the situation in Venezuela by imposing its own approaches and methods to resolve the problems that the country has recently been facing.

This meeting, which we all have to attend, is another element of the United States strategy to carry out regime change in Venezuela. We regret that the United States is drawing the Security Council into its unscrupulous games. However, since we are all gathered here, we would like to share with the Council our principled views on what is taking place.

Let us speak frankly. The topic of today's meeting is not the situation in Venezuela, as the organizers would like Council members — who are, incidentally, clearly divided on this issue — to think. Unfortunately, today we are considering the most typical case of what is called a “threat to international peace and security”, one that has been created by the threat or use of force against the political independence of a State. The authors of the Charter of the United Nations, among which, I must note, the United States prominently figured, included a warning in the Charter — in Article 2, paragraph 4 — in an attempt to save the world from such events. However, it seems that Washington has not opened that treaty for quite a long time.

Such flagrant United States interference in the internal affairs of another State is nothing new. The Americans have not changed, and apparently do not intend to change, their attitude to Latin America as an area of exclusive interest to them — a backyard of sorts, in which they can do anything they want, without taking into the account the interests of its inhabitants. This is a reincarnation of the so-called Monroe Doctrine, on which President Trump spoke openly during his statement at the high-level segment of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.6). Back in 1913, President Woodrow Wilson spoke about how the United States intended to teach the South American republics to elect good people. Today that lesson is being taught to Venezuela, which recently dared to pursue an independent policy that does not coincide with the economic and political interests of the warden that watches over the western hemisphere.

I would like to quote the words of another American President, which were spoken in Congress on the eve of the creation of the United Nations, of which he was one of the founding fathers. He considered the United Nations as his main political project and truly believed that its creation was capable of saving humankind from wars and conflicts. That President was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who said:

“The Yalta Conference ought to spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the spheres of influence, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries — and have always failed.”

Unfortunately, the real policy of the United States in the western hemisphere — and not only there — is in striking contrast to those noble and just ideals. Regime change is a favourite geopolitical game of the United States.

Washington's attempts to undermine Nicaragua are no secret. The fact of open United States interference in the internal affairs of that State was confirmed by the 1986 decision of the International Court of Justice at The Hague in the case regarding the Iran-Contra affair. At the time, the United States tried to finance Nicaraguan rebels. Cubans still remember the Bay of Pigs invasion, and Chileans will never forget the role of the United States in overthrowing Salvador Allende. Before our eyes, the attempts by the United States to impose its will on other nations is being supplemented with a new chapter. That is just a brief glimpse into what Washington has done in Latin America alone. The nations of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific region and aEurope have quite a bit to add to that list. Against that backdrop, inventing so-called evidence of interference in United States elections out of thin air and accusing other countries of malicious policies is not only absurd, but also laughable.

The Venezuelan people once again supported the candidacy of Nicolás Maduro as President of the State by giving him almost 68 per cent of the vote on 20 May. Anticipating that scenario, from the start Washington did everything it could to discredit the vote and cast a shadow over the re-elected authorities of the country. In particular, there is enough evidence that a number of opposition candidates were subjected to the most severe pressure, which forced them to withdraw their candidatures and refrain from competing in the elections.

Ultimately, using the opposition's partial boycott as a pretext, the United States and several of its allies set about implementing a plan to overthrow the legitimate authorities of the country. As we know from the American press, prominent members of the United States Congress actively participated in that venture. The attempt to overthrow the Government immediately after the election was unsuccessful. Washington

therefore tried to destabilize the situation step by step, including through the Organization of American States (OAS) and a number of Venezuela's neighbours. However, as is well known, the United States did not succeed in pushing through an anti-Venezuela draft resolution at the OAS Permanent Council on 24 January. There is not enough support within the Organization for those plans, which is quite a telling sign.

We are now witnessing the culmination of those efforts, which were timed to coincide with the inauguration of the legitimately elected President. Extremist opponents of the legitimate Government, having failed to defeat Maduro, including by physically eliminating him, chose the most confrontational scenario. On 23 January, the President of the National Assembly proclaimed himself interim President of Venezuela. The United States and a number of other countries immediately recognized him, thereby confirming that they had either abetted or were directly involved in the creation of an artificial parallel Government, which now threatens to seriously destabilize the situation in the country. National Security Advisor John Bolton made a Bolshevik-style statement on the expropriation of all Venezuelan property in the United States, while allies from the opposition were promised financial support.

We strongly condemn those who are pushing Venezuelan society towards the precipice of a bloody feud. The United States is painting us a picture of confrontation between the Maduro regime and the people of Venezuela. That picture is far from the reality. In spite of everything, the leader of Venezuela clearly enjoys broad support among the population. Incidentally, according to sociological studies conducted in October 2018 by an organization close to the opposition, the National Assembly, the leader of which Washington is currently positioning as the so-called President, is not supported by approximately 70 per cent of the people of Venezuela.

Again on the matter of the elections and being informed, the representative of the United Kingdom spoke about stuffed ballot boxes in Venezuela, suggesting that the elections were rigged. I would recall that there are no ballot boxes in Venezuela; it uses an electronic system of voting.

In support of Venezuela, we are first and foremost against gross violations of international law, in particular those provisions of the Charter of the United Nations that clearly condemn any interference in the

internal affairs of independent States. Furthermore, the American leaders are making obvious hints regarding the use of force when they talk about all options being on the table. Taking advantage of the presence of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, I want to ask Mr. Pompeo directly if that means that the United States is ready to use military force against a sovereign State under a bogus pretext? We need to hear a clear answer here in the Chamber: Does Washington intend to once again violate the Charter of the United Nations?

Secretary of State Pompeo claims that only China, Russia, Cuba, Syria and Iran are supporting Maduro. However, if the Secretary of State were to spend a little more time in the Chamber, he would hear first-hand the true stance of the overwhelming majority of a sovereignty State and the policy of overthrowing unwanted regimes. The countries mentioned are not in support of the Maduro regime; instead, they support international law, and I think the Secretary of State already had a chance to hear that. In the context of the notion of a rules-based order, which has been promoted by our Western colleagues, perhaps the act of overthrowing unwanted regimes is welcome to them. However, international law quite clearly classifies such actions as a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular in Article 2, paragraph 4. We consider such behaviour unacceptable. It undermines the principles of the Charter and the basic norms of international conduct.

We would also like to address our Latin American partners. Do they understand that if they condone such actions, tomorrow any other Latin American country could find itself in the place of Venezuela? The illegality of what is taking place in Venezuela is flagrant, and the leadership of the Organization of American States supports this and, following Washington, rubber-stamps threats against an independent State.

We are convinced that resolving the Venezuelan crisis requires taking several obvious and simple steps. First, there needs to be an end to all external interference and to the propping up of the leaders of the opposition. Secondly, every effort should be made to launch an inter-Venezuelan dialogue and facilitate reconciliation. In that regard, Venezuela's neighbours can — and should — play a determining role. We know that similar initiatives are already being put forward. Thirdly, we should refrain from discriminatory economic measures against Venezuela. It is no secret

that, to a great extent, the current economic crisis was provoked by those countries that cry out most about the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

I would like to correct something that Secretary of State Pompeo said. We did not block the draft presidential statement proposed by the United States. We made certain constructive amendments that we were sure would be wholeheartedly supported by the majority of the members of the Security Council. Some members have already voiced their support. As such, the ball now is in the hands of the American delegation. It is up to them. However, we are not sure that this kind of statement, which is based on a carefully weighed assessment of the Secretary-General and which reaffirms the sovereignty of Venezuela, the inadmissibility of interference in its internal affairs and respect for its Constitution is something that the delegation of the United States is striving for. We believe that it is now more important than ever to ease up on the rhetoric and refrain from threats and ultimatums, as well as to contribute to beginning a dialogue within a legal framework and ensure the stabilization of the situation in Venezuela. We are ready to contribute to that end. We call on everyone to do so as well.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): Germany very much appreciates the fact that this item is on the agenda today. With respect to what my Russian colleague said at the beginning of this meeting — that this item was put on the agenda by the United States — I want to remind him that this item was put on the agenda by the South American countries in the Council — Peru and the Dominican Republic — and the United States. It is therefore not only the concern of the United States. Rather, it is clearly also the concern of the countries in the region.

Moreover, with regard to the question of whether this issue is a threat to international peace and security, the Russian representative probably heard the statement by the Ambassador of Kuwait. Although far from the region, he clearly said that preventive diplomacy is something that we have to put on the agenda of the Security Council. That was also said by our colleagues from Peru and France. There is a potential threat to international peace and security, and it is right, with regard to conflict prevention, that the Security Council deal with this issue.

In the statement made by the representative of Russia, I did not hear anything about the South American

countries that are suffering right now. We have heard the figures, and I would like also to thank Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. We have heard the figures about the impact of the crisis on the region. More than 3 million Venezuelans have fled their country. Peru is taking care of 700,000 refugees. We have the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia here, who will say later on what the situation means for his country. The same holds true for Brazil. I think we should really commend those countries for what they are doing: hosting the people who have fled their country because the living circumstances are what they are in Venezuela.

Germany stands in solidarity with Venezuela's neighbours. They bear the burden of receiving the displaced population in dire need of shelter and humanitarian assistance. Germany commends their tireless efforts and commitment to providing a safe haven for those who seek refuge from the catastrophic humanitarian conditions and the lack of food and health services in Venezuela.

Let me recall what led to this massive movement of refugees: it is the severe violation of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated. This is a situation where women and children in particular are most affected.

The Russian representative mentioned Roosevelt. Let me come back to Eleanor Roosevelt. She inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25, paragraph 1, of the Declaration states:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.”

Sadly, at this moment we have to say that does not hold true for the people of Venezuela, where a box of pills costs more than the monthly minimum wage, and baby formula costs more than two months' salary. Protesting against such an impossible situation can land a person in jail in Venezuela.

We also heard the reports coming out of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights about the detentions that have taken place during the past few days, as well as about the deaths of more than 20 people. Let me repeat what the High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President

of Chile, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, said yesterday. She urged the Venezuelan authorities to exercise restraint and respect everyone's fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and the freedom of expression, issuing a reminder that excessive and disproportionate or indiscriminate use of force is clearly and unequivocally prohibited under international law. I would also like to support what Ms. Bachelet demanded, and what Ms. DiCarlo said at the beginning of this meeting, which is that the violent deaths that have occurred over the past days must be the subject of independent and impartial investigations. Given the massive violations of human rights and the threats to international peace and security, it is right that the Council discusses this.

What needs to be done? We call on all stakeholders to respect the Venezuelan Constitution and the National Assembly. That is the only democratically elected institution, the constitutional powers of which must be respected. On President Maduro and his election: he was not freely elected. To quote the Organization of American States (OAS), "we do not recognize Mr. Maduro as the legitimate President of Venezuela." The OAS also called the Maduro election day an "infamous day for democracy in the Americas". A further quotation from the OAS stated that "there can be no democracy without elections, but Maduro showed that elections can be held without democracy."

In conclusion, we urge all parties to refrain from the use of force. We call for the organization of free and fair elections, with international observers and all candidates allowed to run for office. Until then, there is only one credible and legitimate institution, that is, the National Assembly, which was democratically elected. That is why Germany supports the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as the representative of that institution, and his call for new elections in order to re-establish constitutional order in Venezuela.

Germany, along with the United Kingdom and France, expects the holding of free, transparent and credible elections. If such a step is not announced within eight days, then we are ready to recognize Juan Guaidó as interim President. Germany will not leave the Venezuelan people alone.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing to the Security Council. I also welcome the Ministers present in the Chamber today.

Poland supported the request made by the United States and other countries for today's briefing because we believe that the scale of Venezuelan migration and the humanitarian crisis — both resulting from the oppressive regime of Nicolás Maduro — have an undeniable impact and tremendous consequences on the situation in neighbouring Latin American countries. That situation de facto poses a threat to the stability and security of the region. We remain in solidarity with those affected.

Poland aligns itself with the common European Union approach to the recent events in Venezuela.

We consider the National Assembly to be the only legitimate power that has a democratic mandate in Venezuela, won in free and fair elections, in line with the Venezuelan Constitution. We also recognize its constitutional prerogatives, its members and its leaders. We repeat the call that civil rights freedoms and the safety of all National Assembly members, including its President, need to be observed and respected. We fully support the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people, expressed during the most recent mass demonstrations.

Furthermore, we recognize Juan Guaidó as the legitimate, democratic voice and leader that may initiate the transition process in Venezuela. We join him in calling for the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections, in accordance with international, democratic standards and the Venezuelan constitutional order. Finally, it should be heard by the Venezuelan authorities that, in the absence of an announcement on the organization of fresh elections with the necessary guarantees over the coming days, Poland will take further action, including on the issue of recognition of the country's leadership, in line with article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution.

There are certain challenges ahead. The main objective is to guarantee — together with the relevant regional organizations, their member States and the support of the European Union — the peaceful character of the transition process taking place in Venezuela. We call for respect for democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and expression, and above all for parties to refrain from violence. We condemn the indiscriminate use of force, which has already led to an increasing death toll, injuries, arbitrary detentions and other forms of repression. Furthermore, we call

for the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees. There have been at least 26 people killed and more than 340 detained in recent days. That situation is unacceptable.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the demands of civil society cannot be left unanswered. People have amassed and called for democracy; their voices should not be ignored.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

We have been closely following the situation in Venezuela. We call on all the relevant parties in the country to be rational and calm, taking into account the fundamental interests of the country and its people in seeking a political solution to the issues through peaceful dialogue, within the framework of the Venezuelan Constitution. China supports the efforts made by the Venezuelan Government to uphold national sovereignty, independence and stability. China maintains that all countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially the norms governing international relations and the principles of international law, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and refraining from the threat of the use of force.

China always upholds the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and therefore opposes foreign interference in Venezuela's domestic affairs. The situation in Venezuela is a domestic matter. It does not constitute a threat to international peace and security and is not on the agenda of the Security Council. China is opposed to adding the situation in Venezuela to the Council's agenda. Venezuelan affairs must be handled and dealt with by the Venezuelans themselves. We call on all the relevant parties to respect the will of the Venezuelan people. Maintaining stability and development in Venezuela serves the interests of all parties. We hope that all parties can contribute more to the stability of Venezuela and that the international community can together create favourable conditions to that end.

The representative of the United States just made unreasonable accusations against the position held by China. China is firmly opposed to such accusations. It is well-known that China has always been committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United

Nations and respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of all countries. China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. We hope the country that accuses others of doing so will practice what it preaches.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, I would like to welcome the Ministers present with us today in the Chamber. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

Indonesia abstained in the voting based on the following considerations.

First, we believe that today's briefing should be considered under a different agenda item, namely, the agenda item "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security".

Secondly, Indonesia has always been consistent in upholding and respecting the principles of non-interference, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of all countries, including Venezuela. But at the same time, we are also cognizant of the fact that the humanitarian situation in Venezuela is of concern and requires proper attention. The fact that millions of Venezuelans are seeking refuge across the border shows that Venezuela is facing serious conditions. According to data provided by United Nations agencies, more than 3 million Venezuelans have left the country. This situation should not be left unattended. The safety and prosperity of the people of Venezuela are at stake and should be prioritized.

Indonesia hopes that today's meeting of the Security Council could make it its main priority calling on all parties to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid the escalation of tensions and further exacerbation of the situation. The Council must also encourage the promotion of a political solution involving all the relevant stakeholders to conduct a national dialogue through a credible, transparent and democratic process. The inclusion of Venezuela on the Security Council's agenda must reflect a commitment to supporting the realization of sustained peace and stability in the country.

It is high time for the Council to play its pivotal role in bridging differences. With this approach, we would find solutions to problems without creating new ones or further complexities and without contradicting

the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): When 3 million people flee their country because of its economic and political collapse, the threat to the stability of the region becomes evident. For Belgium, it is clear that the Security Council has a responsibility to address the situation in Venezuela, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security. In order to prevent further deterioration of the situation, we call on all members of the Council to work together to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

I also wish to commend the countries of the region for showing great solidarity and generosity towards those Venezuelans seeking refuge in their countries. Belgium expresses its support for those countries, as well as for Mr. Eduardo Stein, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Organization for Migration, in their work to help Venezuelan refugees.

As the situation on the ground is most unstable, I would like to echo the statement issued today by the European Union to make four main points: first, to call for restraint and the de-escalation of the situation; secondly, to stress the need to restore constitutional order in Venezuela and begin a process of reconciliation; thirdly, to emphasize the importance of listening to the Venezuelan people themselves; and, fourthly, respect for their fundamental rights.

First of all, I would like to urge those who bear influence over these events to exercise restraint. Mass protests in Venezuela over the past few days have been the subject of indiscriminate violence by the authorities, resulting in the tragic deaths of many people and leaving many injured. Belgium extends its sincere condolences to the families of those deceased. We strongly condemn the excessive use of force by the security forces and, like Ms. Bachelet, we call for an independent investigation to be conducted.

Secondly, Belgium calls for the restoration of the constitutional order. The presidential elections that took place in May were neither free and fair nor credible, thereby depriving Nicolás Maduro's Government of democratic legitimacy. Venezuela urgently needs a Government that truly represents the will of the people and can initiate a process of reconciliation. Belgium recognizes and fully supports the National Assembly as a democratically elected institution. We implore that its

powers be restored and respected. Furthermore, I call on the authorities to guarantee the civil rights, liberty and security of all members of the National Assembly, including its President, Juan Guaidó, while respecting their immunity as enshrined in the Constitution.

Thirdly, we must listen to the people of Venezuela. The citizens of this country have bravely made their voices heard on many occasions in recent years. Some have paid with their lives. When they voted for change, their voices were not heard. Today they are in the streets of Caracas to claim the right to choose their future. Belgium reiterates its deep conviction that a peaceful and inclusive democratic solution is the only sustainable way out of the current political stalemate and the serious social crisis it has caused. Alongside the European Union, we call for the urgent holding of free, credible and transparent presidential elections with full respect for the Constitution and in accordance with democratic standards. If the organization of new elections with the necessary guarantees is not announced within the next eight days, we will take additional measures, including recognizing the constitutional role of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in line with article 233 of the Constitution.

Fourthly, the fundamental rights of the Venezuelan people must be respected. The detention of demonstrators and acts of violence against them are a source of serious concern. Belgium calls on the authorities to put an end to the arbitrary detention of demonstrators and political opponents and to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of detainees. The freedom of the press must be guaranteed. In the same vein, we call on the authorities to take concrete measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis and facilitate access to humanitarian aid in order to meet the most urgent needs of the population.

In conclusion, we call for a non-violent and democratic solution to the crisis to be found. We recall that this crisis can be resolved only through dialogue and that dialogue alone can lead to a process of reconciliation.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing and welcomes the Ministers who are attending this meeting.

My delegation is concerned about the latest developments in the political and institutional crisis that has shaken Venezuela in recent years. While compounded by economic difficulties, the situation

has provoked a humanitarian crisis and an exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries.

In the light of that situation, my country calls on the international community to mobilize efforts by implementing all the mechanisms provided for by the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to the peaceful settlement of the crisis, thereby alleviating the suffering of the Venezuelan people, who aspire to better living conditions. In that regard, my delegation urges all stakeholders to exercise restraint and resolutely engage on the path towards dialogue and consultation in order to resolve their differences. We also call on them to use all legal and peaceful means to find appropriate solutions to the institutional and political conflict, which has entered a critical phase in recent days.

My country also calls on actors in the region to support all peaceful initiatives that can contribute to the resolution of the crisis. Venezuela's stability is essential for both its inhabitants and the region as a whole. In that context, the United Nations must play a leading role in supporting the efforts of the subregion, within the framework of preventive diplomacy.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its consistent position that only a path of dialogue and spirit of compromise allows for the lasting settlement of any dispute. We therefore again urge all stakeholders in the Venezuelan conflict to overcome their differences and engage in frank negotiations to end the crisis.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing and the information she shared with the Security Council on the issue of Venezuela.

The Dominican Republic has very closely followed the development of events in Venezuela — a country with which we have lasting historic ties. Juan Pablo Duarte, our founding father, lived and died in Venezuela. Countless Dominicans found political asylum in Venezuela. And the country hosted thousands of migrants at the height of its oil boom. Those are facts that have left the Dominican Republic with an eternal debt of gratitude to the Venezuelan people. For those and many other reasons, we have a special bond with that South American country, and we therefore wish it the brightest future.

I must remind the Council that the Dominican Republic hosted a dialogue between the opposition and the Venezuelan Government, which took place in 2017 and 2018 and was attended by various countries of the region. For several months, representatives of the two sides sought to forge an agreement to resolve the Venezuelan political crisis. That dialogue did not achieve its desired goal, due to the fragmentation of the opposition and because its leaders prioritized their personal interests. It also failed because the Government was inflexible in providing space for the holding of competitive and credible elections, while refusing to allow any opposition leader wishing to take part from doing so.

The bloody-mindedness of both the Government and the opposition meant that a valuable opportunity provided by the Dominican Republic to achieve a peaceful, democratic and stable exit to the crisis was wasted. There was a lack of political will and extreme inflexibility from both sides. The Venezuelan Government and the opposition are both well aware that the Dominican Government did its utmost to try to ensure that that dialogue would lead to a lasting solution. We were advocates for elections that would guarantee the participation of all political actors, with international support, in a climate of respect for human rights, which would have allowed for the true voice of the Venezuelan people to have been heard. It is obvious that holding elections in Venezuela on the fringes of even the minimum standards required for a democratic process could not lead to the election of a legitimate Government. A growing global consensus has emerged that disregards those electoral results and, in turn, the Government that ensued.

During the deliberations of the Organization of American States (OAS), we once again underlined what has been a core principle of our foreign policy — dialogue as an acceptable mechanism for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Indeed, that was reiterated in the form of a second instrument — a Dominican proposal for a resolution of the OAS Permanent Council on 10 January, which stated:

“only through ... dialogue with the participation of all Venezuelan political actors ... can national reconciliation be achieved and the necessary conditions agreed upon for holding a new electoral process that truly reflects the will of the ... citizens and peacefully resolves the current crisis in that country.”

In order to prepare for that process of transition and hold credible and competitive elections, the support of the international community will be needed to help political stakeholders in Venezuela convene a dialogue that will ensure free and competitive elections as soon as possible. In that regard, we advocate the support of the United Nations and other international bodies, which must be accepted by both sides in the process.

There is no doubt that the situation in Venezuela has deteriorated and reached a point of serious concern. The crisis is threatening stability and has forced millions of Venezuelans to emigrate, creating serious problems for many Latin American countries. Most important, those who are suffering most are the Venezuelan people, who are the victims of a worrisome shortage of basic goods and medicine and a general climate of insecurity. Venezuelan human rights are being threatened, which has compelled the international community to become involved in this unwelcome drama.

The Dominican Republic hopes for a democratic, peaceful and consensual outcome in Venezuela. However, it is vital that the rules of the game that are the hallmark of genuine democracy be respected. In that regard, new elections need to take place as soon as possible, with the participation of all political parties and leaders, to make the institutional changes necessary and ensure the impartiality of the electoral council and the independence of the judicial system. It is also important that conditions be fostered to ensure the adequate flow of medicine, food and other basic goods in order to mitigate the negative impact of the shortages and the critical economic situation. We maintain the same concern for the Government and the opposition that we did during the dialogue we hosted in Santa Domingo. However, above all, we are most concerned for the Venezuelan people, who are caught up in a seriously difficult situation.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Since the representative of Germany devoted a major part of his statement to speaking specifically to me, I would like to make a few comments.

The use of preventive diplomacy is excellent. It is of course better to prevent a crisis than to resolve

it. However, putting forward an absurd eight-day ultimatum is a very strange way of proposing how to prevent the crisis. Some States did not even need eight days to reject recognizing the legitimate authorities of Venezuela. They completely disregard the sovereignty of Venezuela, while imposing decisions on it that they prefer. They have refused its people the right to resolve their problems on their own. They are not calling on the political forces in Venezuela to find common understanding with a view to achieving internal peace and stability. Rather, they are calling on the legitimate authorities to simply acknowledge their defeat and transfer power to the opposition. That is not called prevention; it is known as incitement.

How would they feel if the Russian Federation proposed discussing in the Security Council the issue of the situation in France and the protests staged by the gilets jaunes — approximately 22,000 people took to the streets over the past weekend? Would that be considered prevention? I would like to reassure the representative of France that we do not intend to propose such a discussion. Unlike France, however, we are not trying to recognize or not recognize anyone. Nonetheless, we recognize the legitimate authorities of Venezuela. We call for, first, respect for legitimate authority; secondly, non-interference in the domestic affairs of the country; and, thirdly, the non-imposition of outside solutions on Venezuela. Instead, we propose that we help its people find a peaceful resolution to their problems on their own.

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

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I do not want to prolong the meeting. I would just like to respond to my Russian colleague. Unfortunately, in his intervention he did not respond to any of my comments on the serious human rights violations. He mentioned that 22,000 demonstrators took to the streets in France, but not that more than 3.3 million Venezuelans fled their country because of the situation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is finally our turn to speak. We have a written statement, but I would like to make a few preliminary remarks.

We would also like to thank Mr. Mike Pompeo because, in the light of the failure on Thursday, 24 January, at the Organization of American States, the United States was bold enough to impose a draft resolution and request that the Security Council convene today's meeting. Both President Maduro and I had also been thinking about calling on the Council to debate, not the situation in Venezuela but rather the unconscionable intervention of the United States in our country using the crudest means. We must point out that, on this occasion, the United States is not behind the coup d'état. I admit that it is not behind the coup d'état. It is in front of the coup d'état. It is spearheading the coup d'état. It dictates orders not only to the Venezuelan opposition but also to the satellite Governments of the United States in the region, and apparently in Europe and other parts of the world as well.

We have all kinds of proof: tweets, social network posts, calls from Secretary of State Pompeo and Vice-President Pence to the security forces and the National Bolivarian Armed Forces to speak out against the legitimate authorities and the constitutional Government of President Nicolás Maduro. It was a tweet with a video from Vice-President Pence on 22 January that gave the green light for the coup d'état in Venezuela and also, according to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, for someone to name himself as President. He was not sworn in by any institution or formal process or ceremony, but by means of the self-proclamation of a member of Parliament in a crowd, at one of the many peaceful public rallies held in Venezuela over the past few years.

I therefore ask, if we consider article 233 the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, word for word, provision by provision, sentence by sentence: where is the legality? And going beyond our internal legal order, where is the legality with regard to the fundamental principles of public international law? Or are we now discarding international relations based on international law and imposing international relations based on the use of force, while bending multilateral institutions to our arbitrary goals and objectives? If any of this meeting's participants were to ask, in what article or provision of the Charter of the United Nations can the legal basis be found for the self-proclamation of an individual who was not elected by anyone as President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we would have a legal debate, but I do not think that is going to be possible.

We also have to ask ourselves, when is this all going to end? Mr. Rex Tillerson, former Secretary of State of the United States, and then President Trump himself, on the first day of the general debate of this session of the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.6), on the sacred podium of multilateralism, not only announced sanctions — unilateral coercive measures in contravention of international law — but also had the nerve to announce a series of measures against Venezuela that blatantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, the sacred charter of multilateralism. How is it possible that a President who threatened to use military force — not John Bolton, not Mike Pence, not Marco Rubio, but Donald Trump himself — against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has not been challenged by global multilateral institutions and now takes it upon himself to accuse the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela because its Government and its people have strictly adhered to their Constitution and to international law?

In 1911 there was a military invasion in Mexico. In 1912 United States Marines invaded Nicaragua, which then led to an occupation that lasted almost continuously until 1933, when Augusto César Sandino and the Nicaraguan people threw them out of the country. In 1914 the United States invaded Mexico; in 1915 Haiti; in 1916 the Dominican Republic; in 1918 Panama; in 1924 Honduras; in 1925 Panama; in 1926 and 1927 Nicaragua; in 1930 the Dominican Republic; in 1933 and 1934 Nicaragua; and in 1941, Panama. Then came the School of the Americas, followed by the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and Cuba in 1952. Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown in 1954 in Guatemala. In 1956 the United States invaded Nicaragua. In 1960 President Eisenhower authorized a large-scale covert operation to topple the Government of Fidel Castro, and then came Girón beach in 1961. I could go on. João Goulart in Brazil in 1964. How many people, Mr. President, died in the Dominican Republic in 1965 following the invasion, supported by the Organization of American States, to topple a Government that did not suit its members or whose ideology they did not like — a Government let by the great Dominican, a great Latin American, Juan Bosch?

With respect to the Monroe Doctrine, the United States should have been the country scrutinized and subjected to ongoing review, given its perpetual disregard for international law, interference in the internal affairs of countries and its invasions following

coups d'état. Then came the 1973 coup d'état against President Salvador Allende, following the invasion in Guatemala. In 2002, under President George Bush, there was a coup d'état in Venezuela. It failed, but the dictator was recognized. What occurred in 2002 set the precedent for the situation in Venezuela today. At the time the United States was behind the coup d'état, it was not in front of it like it is now. It recognized the Carmona dictatorship, which lasted 47 hours. An investigation conducted by United States experts proved, through a series of declassified documents, that the United States had been involved in the coup attempt.

Something similar occurred in 2004 with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti, and in 2009 in Honduras, where at first no one had even suspected that the United States had been behind the coup attempt, until Hillary Clinton admitted in a book that she had given the order to topple the then President of Honduras because she wanted to encourage the formation of a constituent assembly. Meanwhile, other Presidents in Central America have been elected without even being candidates in elections. They have lost elections. There were even reports by the European Union and the Organization of American States citing election fraud. But then Donald Trump makes a call; and they promise him that they will move their Embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. And then that is recognized not only by Trump but by all of the satellite Governments in the region of our America.

I simply wanted to illustrate the pattern we see in social media, which really see. And I refer only to Twitter, not other social media, and to official spokespersons of the Government of the United States. Note how the trend ticked up dramatically in January. The United States was expecting a coup d'état and military uprising on 22 or 23 January, which was not in the offing because the National Bolivarian Armed Forces put their lives on the line to defend the Constitution. The United States could not, through extortion, financing or incitement, convince our military forces to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro, and it will not be able to do so. It was yet another misstep by the Government of the United States and those who joined them.

This is just incredible, like recognizing a new State at the United Nations: when President Trump tweeted that he recognized the member of Parliament as the dictator of Venezuela, immediately Colombia, Chile, Argentina and Guatemala were all waiting for the order to recognize him too. It is very clear and shameless:

you can see through this coup d'état from every angle. This cannot be accepted by the United Nations. Rather, it must be condemned. I wish there were a Security Council meeting to determine who was behind the coup d'état and punish them. It would not take too much judging to do that, for the proof abounds on social media and in press releases.

I have here today's *Wall Street Journal*, which, as *The New York Times* did in September 2018, shows that members of the Venezuelan military held meetings with United States officials to supposedly overthrow President Maduro. That is not coming from the intelligence services of Venezuela, Cuba or Russia; it is *The New York Times*, and also newspapers in Spain. Today it is in the *Wall Street Journal*. It is right here very clearly. The only missing piece to the strategy for the coup d'état was an oath. The Associated Press, which is also a United States news agency, very clearly today came out with information that the member of Parliament in question made covert trips to Colombia and the United States to meet with officials. The strategy was very well put together, but ham-fisted. The carried it out quite badly, leaving too many trails.

One almost has to be sorry — we understand that satellite Governments in the region have as Presidents business persons who are subordinated to the interests of the United States. But not so with respectable Governments. Many small States of the Caribbean — respectable States — have not yielded to, or been blackmailed by, the United States, not at the United Nations, in the Organization of American States or anywhere else, despite even public threats by Vice-President Pence, the Secretary of State and by some in Congress. Not them. It is understandable that satellite Governments in Latin America would yield to the United States in that way. But it is surprising that Europe falls in line behind the United States — and not so much the United States, but the Government of Donald Trump. Europe is giving us eight days? For what? How do they think they have any power to impose deadlines or ultimatums on a sovereign people? How do they come up with such a meddlesome action — I would even call it puerile? As President Nicolás Maduro asked yesterday, why does not Pedro Sánchez hold presidential elections? Who elected him? Dare to hold elections in the United Kingdom. Why is President Macron focusing on Venezuela, instead of devoting his time to the ongoing yellow jacket protests and the French working class? As soon as someone

wearing a yellow jacket approaches the Élysée Palace, the guards all come out because they are afraid of the people. Mind your own business. We do not interfere in yours. Respect and comply with the Charter of the United Nations. Respect the self-determination of peoples.

Candidate Henri Falcón was here last year; you know him well, Mr. President. He led Henrique Capriles' presidential campaign in 2012. Mr. Capriles lost to Comandante Hugo Chávez. Oh, how they pressured Henri Falcón to withdraw his candidacy. Even European Presidents pressured him, as did, of course, every United States spokesperson. He did not withdraw it. But do you know what he did? He came to the United Nations and told Secretary-General António Guterres that it was essential that the United Nations send observers to monitor the elections. That did not take place. Why? Why were there no observers from the United Nations? He was even in contact with Federica Mogherini. I myself took Ms. Mogherini an invitation to request that observers be sent to monitor the elections in Venezuela. They refused outright. And why? Because the plan for the coup d'état was already under way. Three months prior to the elections Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan was the first to say that the elections would be fraudulent. Presidents then came forward — from Colombia, Chile, Europe — to say that they would not recognize the results of the elections. Again, that was months before the elections took place. When has that ever happened? How many cases of the elections in Venezuela being impugned have there been? Go for yourselves. Show me there was fraud, even one vote. Mr. Duncan said that there was vote stuffing, and yet Venezuela uses an automated electronic voting system, and that includes verification. The system produces a receipt that is then compared with the electronic tally. And the tally matches up 100 per cent of the time.

The United States wants to build a physical wall on the border with Mexico, but it is really building an ideological wall. Many of the points made by Secretary Pompeo today are reminiscent of the rhetoric used during the Cold War and by Senator McCarthy and President Nixon. They are trying to bring back the Cold War and the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. It is not for nothing that, in 1929, Liberator Simón Bolívar said that the United States appeared to be destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of liberty. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, it was

a prediction, because that is exactly what the United States has done.

Do you know what the cost has been to Venezuela since 2017, when the United States started to implement unilateral coercive measures against it, in contravention of international law, and up until December 2018? It amounts to \$23 billion, thanks to the blockade and persecution of the property and resources of Venezuela. Would the Venezuelan economy be in its current problematic state if it had been able to count on those resources? An offer of \$20 million was made at the Organization of American States, which they then took from us. At Euroclear alone, in Belgium, there is \$1.2 billion in frozen funds — Venezuelan wealth. We cannot conduct any banking transactions. Any transaction that is conducted through New York or London cannot take place; the funds are either returned or they freeze the money. Is that really fair to the Venezuelan people? The representative of Russia was very clear here — but for others there are no so-called sanctions; there is no blockade. That is a lie. There have been 18 or 19 rounds of sanctions against Venezuela, but according to them they do not exist. We must think about that. There is an ideological wall being erected around Venezuela.

We support the dialogue initiative that was proposed earlier by the representative of the Dominican Republic. But that did not come out of nowhere. President Nicolás Maduro appointed me — if I may be allowed to speak of myself — as Foreign Minister in August 2017. Two days later I met with you at your home, Minister Miguel Vargas, and after that with President Danilo Medino at the presidential palace, and called on the leaders of the opposition and President Maduro to carry out a dialogue in Venezuela. And what happened? We reached an agreement. You know that, Sir. A document exists, likely stored away in the archives of the presidency of the Dominican Republic, that contains a signed preliminary agreement. When we were about to sign the agreement, President Medino and former Spanish Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero, along with other Foreign Ministers supporting them and other supporters in Venezuela, were made to look like fools. They did not sign the agreement. By coincidence, Rex Tillerson was in Bogotá at the time. According to reliable sources, the head of the delegation of Venezuela, who today is taking refuge in Colombia, received a call instructing him not to sign the agreement and to further complicate the situation. These are truths.

Furthermore, let me say that, without rigorous substantiation, many untruths have been spoken here. I would say with respect: ask the International Monetary Fund about the information provided by Venezuela and whether or not its statistics on inflation are anywhere close to the statistics we heard today. Ask the Director of the International Monetary Fund. Be a bit more rigorous in your investigations when speaking to the world from this forum, which is essential when it comes to the future, peace and security of humankind.

But ask about the 3 million migrants as well. As mentioned by the Foreign Minister of Colombia, there is indeed a problem with migration, one that we have not seen before. But it has a lot to do with the financial persecution of Venezuela and the economic situation, which we do not deny. We are working with our people to try to restore the economy, with plans to boost economic growth and achieve social and economic prosperity. However, how many times have we asked the Governments of Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Argentina for data? How many times have we said, send it to us? We know that a Venezuelan might leave through a bridge to Colombia and then end up in Chile. How do I know that? You know what happened in recent days? The President of Ecuador, Lenin Moreno, called for the establishment of brigades to go after Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador. Our Embassy in Ecuador filled up with migrants asking us to help them leave Ecuador because they were facing xenophobic, fascist persecution in Ibarra, in the north of the country. It was very painful. And do you know what happened this Wednesday? Three planes, including the presidential plane, went to pick up more than 230 Venezuelan migrants. Three planes were sent again today, as our Embassy is full. We are paying for hotels, even with the difficulties in sending money to our diplomatic missions because of the blockade. Yet overflight authorization was not granted to aircraft on a humanitarian mission to pick up Venezuelans so they could return to their homes and families. This is persecution. What is it about, this war against Venezuela? We are awaiting a visit from Mr. Eduardo Stein, which should take place this week. We are also awaiting a visit from a former President and our friend, Michelle Bachelet.

With regard to the violence, you here are saying that the dictatorship is repressing and killing people. Please study the history of Venezuela over the past few years. The insurrectionist marches by the opposition,

with dead put in place by them, facilitated the 2002 coup d'état. Sharpshooters were also used. Look into how many of the people who died in recent days died in genuinely peaceful demonstrations. Who killed them? The Venezuelan judiciary and Public Prosecutor's Office are investigating those incidents. The judiciary has sovereign authority and needs no intervention from any independent body. We will tell the truth about each and every one of the dead, for in Venezuela we respect each other. Those of you who sponsored the coup d'état of 23 January were expecting tragedy and bloodshed in the streets of Caracas, but it did not happen because measures were taken; despite the fact that groups of 12 or 13 people went out in the night in the heavily populated areas of Caracas to loot and destroy private property, wherein we prevented a recurrence of the tragedies that occurred on 11 April 2002, in 2014 and in 2017, when extremists of the Venezuelan opposition, who were funded by some countries represented here today, took to the streets in an attempt, by way of mob force, to overthrow first President Chávez and then President Maduro.

We support dialogue initiatives just as we supported the earlier initiative of the Dominican Republic. We support the fact that Mexico, Uruguay and the Caribbean Community have expressed a desire for Venezuelans to sit together, with their facilitation, to find our own way out, without being imposed upon. No one is going to set deadlines for us, or tell us if there will be elections or not. Any decisions will be taken by Venezuelans, with members of the opposition and the Government seated at the table.

The President of the National Constituent Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, met with deputy Juan Guaidó on 22 January to establish a channel for dialogue. Compromises were arrived at, with Mr. Guaidó then doing exactly the opposite the other day. After all, well, he was under pressure — the tweets from Pence and Trump and all the pressure from his people. What do they want, to start a civil war in Venezuela? They will not succeed. Presidents of the United States will, at times, declare war when they face domestic problems. President Trump already regrets saying that Iraq was better off with Saddam Hussein and that Libya was better off with Muammar Al-Qadhafi — whom they brutally overthrew and assassinated, with the Secretary of State at the time laughing about it. Savagery and force cannot be permitted in today's world. The United States is even withdrawing its troops from Syria; is

it now going to look for a war in Latin America? Is Venezuela Mr. Trump's war trophy? We will not give Donald Trump a war in Venezuela. Peace, stability and understanding will prevail in Venezuela, in spite of the efforts of many of the countries represented here looking for a war.

With regard to the deadline Europe is trying to give us, we recall the Liberator Simón Bolívar in the year 1818 and the first dispute he had with an official of the United States. Remember that the United States did not support our countries' struggles for freedom. It had already gained its independence on its own, winning a war against the British Empire. But when the colonies of South America confronted the Spanish Empire, the United States declared itself neutral. Is that not interesting? And then afterwards, not only did they declare that they were neutral, but they actually secretly helped the royalists, the Spaniards. In one such instance of clandestine support, at the Orinoco River in Venezuela, they violated the decrees of the legitimate Government of the then-President of the nation, Simón Bolívar, and American ships with ammunition and supplies were stopped, leading to a dispute. Ultimately, the Liberator informed Irvine, the United States agent, that it made no difference to Venezuela whether it fought Spain or the whole world if the whole world offended it. We take the same position again today. Fortunately, we have great friends, who have spoken here in the Council. However, whoever offends Venezuela will find the people of Venezuela — along with President Nicolás Maduro, the communal councils, the Poder Popular and the armed forces — standing ready to defend our sovereignty and integrity.

Allow me to conclude by reading from my prepared statement and mentioning an article in our Constitution. An effort has been made, surely hatched in laboratories in Washington, D.C., to give a constitutional veneer to the self-appointment of an individual whose name is just becoming known in Venezuela — even the President of Paraguay could not pronounce his last name correctly the other day. Allow me therefore to read article 233 of our Constitution.

“The President of the Republic shall become permanently unavailable to serve by reason of any of the following events: death; resignation; removal from office by decision of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice; permanent physical or mental disability certified by a medical board designated by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice with the approval

of the National Assembly; abandonment of his position, duly declared by the National Assembly; and recall by popular vote.”

A recall referendum is held mid-term in Venezuela if the people are unhappy; it happened in 2004 with Commander Hugo Chavez, and he was retained.

“When an elected President becomes permanently unavailable to serve prior to his inauguration, a new election by universal suffrage and direct ballot shall be held within 30 consecutive days. Pending election and inauguration of the new President, the President of the National Assembly shall take charge of the Presidency of the Republic.”

Did not an inauguration take place in Venezuela? Were there no elections?

If there is a discrepancy at one of the branches — and there are five in Venezuela, all of them legitimate — such as at the National Assembly, then go to the other institutions. Go to the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. But how can it be that because an individual deputy proclaims himself as the interim President, Governments throughout the world begin to recognize him, Governments that are taken seriously, with legal departments in their ministries that uphold the Charter of the United Nations and are familiar with States' Constitutions? To do so is to subject the rule of law to force, and that is dangerous for humankind. We must stop that today, here at the United Nations.

I think that what I have outlined is sufficient. To the Venezuelan people, who are listening to us, we say that we have seen here that Venezuela is not alone, a fact that will continue to be demonstrated at this meeting, as it has been in other international organizations, including at the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which Venezuela chairs. The reason Venezuela is not alone is because it upholds its Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations.

We will continue following the path of our democracy. We will not allow any decision or order to be imposed on us by anyone. Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo herself said that this individual deputy proclaimed himself President. Where is self-proclamation mentioned in this Constitution? I ask those present to find it in the Constitution and show it to me, and then we can debate it. On behalf of President Nicolás Maduro, the public authorities, the people, the Poder Popular and the communes and communal

councils, we insist that Venezuela is, as the Constitution says, irrevocably free and independent and that no Power, however powerful, can dictate to our country its destiny or the steps to follow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States of America has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Abrams (United States of America): I had not intended to speak, but it seems to me that it is worthwhile, and indeed necessary, to respond to the statements made on behalf of the regime in Venezuela. I cannot respond to every attack that was made against every country here, such as the insults that were made by calling many countries here satellites. In fact, it was interesting that every single country that the previous speaker attacked or criticized was a democracy. Every single one that was criticized was a democracy. It was just a series of insults that reflects the fact that today there is a satellite present here, and it is Venezuela, which, unfortunately, has become a satellite of Cuba and Russia.

The regime and its spokesman are hiding behind the laws and Constitution of Venezuela while imprisoning opponents, preventing free elections and killing democrats like Fernando Albán. This is not about foreign intervention in Venezuela. It is not an attempt to impose a result on the Venezuelan people. Democracy never needs to be imposed. It is tyranny that has to be imposed. This discussion in the Security Council is about the right of the Venezuelan people to direct their own internal affairs and choose the future of their own country democratically.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I was not going to speak again either. However, the response by the representative of the United States, and by extension whatever constituency he is representing, has forced me to take the floor again.

For the information of the members of the Security Council, Russia, unlike the United States, has no satellites. Venezuela is not a satellite of Russia, and neither is Cuba. We do not even utilize that kind of terminology. It does not exist in our foreign policy or our diplomacy.

It may surprise the representative of the United States to learn that, when we discuss certain issues at the Security Council, we never try to force any country to conduct itself as we would like it to or as would be in our interest. We always respect the sovereignty of every country, whether it is a member of the Security Council or not, and we always respect its opinions and policies. If its policies or views correspond with our own, we are happy. If not, we respect that every United Nations Member is entitled to its own views and positions and has the sovereign right to have its own foreign policy.

Unfortunately, there are many instances of the country that the representative of the United States represents not only using its satellite States to promote its own interests but in fact forcing them to be in lockstep with it. To discuss who has and who does not have satellites is therefore not something I suggest he do.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela to make a further statement.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): With regard to what Mr. Elliott Abrams said, it is sometimes difficult for some spokespersons to speak with moral authority, especially in view of their background and track records. We respect the ability he has demonstrated in negotiating many difficult cases, but he was tried and pardoned for this very type of intervention in Latin America — for the Iran-Contra incident and for collaboration with dictators such as Rios Montt. In other words, perhaps, such words would be more fitting for a spokesperson from another generation.

In any case, insults are levelled at Venezuela daily, including the words “dictatorship”, “regime”, “torture”, “murderer”, “corrupt”, “drug trafficker”. For God's sake, why hurl such insults? These are standing insults against Venezuela. Fortunately, the Federal Government of the United States has reopened, as I believe it has nothing better to do but focus its attention on Venezuela. We can be thankful that its Government has reopened as it will have more work to do.

Mr. Pompeo, who did not want to stay for our statement. It is a pity that he left, as we have made clear here — and as President Maduro has also made clear — our intention to establish and maintain open communication and dialogue with the Government of President Trump. That is what we have tried to do since

the first day Commander Chávez came to power, on 2 February 1999, and since President Nicolás Maduro has been in power. What we have received in response to our offers of dialogue has been blockades, persecution, sanctions, violence, aggression, insults, interventions and now this coup d'état. However, the channel remains open so that we can conduct dialogue and treat each other in a civilized way, as indicated in the Charter of the United Nations, which we all have to respect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mr. Trujillo García (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I commend the high-level authorities for their presence here today and express my gratitude for the briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. I also thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Let me begin by welcoming the transition process and the re-establishment of the constitutional order that, under the leadership of Interim President Juan Guaidó and the National Assembly, propelled by the exhilarating democratic political forces and the broad and eloquent citizen mobilization, is taking place in our brotherly country in this new phase that began on 23 January. Colombia asked to take the floor in this meeting to join the just call of the Venezuelan people and express its firm and determined support for the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, and the legislative competency of the National Assembly, elected to power on 6 December 2015. Our actions therefore reflect the fulfilment of our duties as a State Member of the United Nations, a member of the Organization of American States and a signatory of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

It bears recalling that such duties compel us to act within the mentioned legal frameworks when irregularities impede the democratic process, as was the case in Venezuela as a result of the May 2018 electoral process, which lacked legitimacy. For the same reason, together with other democracies in the hemisphere and acting in the framework of the Lima Group, Colombia has taken the political decision to firmly commit its Government, under President Iván Duque Márquez, to supporting fostering conditions that will enable the brotherly people of Venezuela to live again in democracy and freedom.

The dictatorship in Venezuela has posed a threat to peace, security and stability in the region, while running contrary to international law, in particular inter-American law. As a country neighbouring Venezuela, Colombia has experienced and suffered its consequences. This same dictatorship has appropriated properties in which Colombian businessmen had legitimate interests, has all but destroyed commercial exchange that was profitable for and mutually beneficial to both countries, and has harboured terrorist groups that violate the right to and threaten, the life, property, security and well-being of citizens in Colombia.

The destructive consequences of the dictatorship's actions in the economic, political and social realms have been such in scope that they have led to the exodus of more than 3.5 million people, who have abandoned their land in desperation and despair in search of peace and opportunities. In the spirit of responsibility, solidarity and sense of humanitarian obligation, Colombia has welcomed more than 1 million migrants from Venezuela, despite its limited capacities and resources. We will therefore continue to participate actively in building a regional and global response to adequately manage the migration crisis.

What moves us in humanitarian terms in the current situation is ensuring that, upon reopening the doors closed off by the dictatorship — thanks to the first steps taken by Interim President Juan Guaidó — aid reaches those in need. The international democratic community has the moral and political duty to diplomatically and politically mobilize without hesitation or delay support for the efforts of a people who are reclaiming their right to freedom and prosperity.

President Iván Duque Márquez once said that what destroys Venezuela destroys us and what strengthens Venezuela strengthens us. What Colombia has therefore come to ask of the international community at this historic Security Council meeting — very respectfully, yet eagerly — is to support ending the usurpation and starting the transition process with the holding of free and transparent elections, with every guarantee, under the leadership of Interim President Guaidó. Colombia has come to ask for support for rejecting insincere dialogues that the dictatorship has used to stall processes, buy time and prolong the suffering of the Venezuelan people. Colombia has come to ask for support for the entry of humanitarian aid into Venezuela. Colombia has come to ask that the international community demand respect for the life and integrity of

Juan Guaidó, the members of the National Assembly, those fighting for democracy and all Venezuelans who are dedicating their efforts to building a better future. Colombia has come to ask that more members of the international community join in the referral of various States to the International Criminal Court so that the serious events that have taken place in Venezuela can be investigated. Colombia has come to ask for support for measures for the protection of assets confiscated by the dictatorship and corruption. Colombia has come to ask for political support from every corner of the world for the developments that have restored hope to a people who see the gleaming promise of a better future. Colombia has come to ask for support for the decision to move towards a transparent and secure electoral contest in which the brotherly Venezuelans can choose the Government that they want.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister Adviser to the President of Nicaragua.

Mr. Oquist Kelley (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua is participating in today's Security Council meeting to reaffirm its commitment to peace and reiterate its solidarity with the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its legitimately elected president, our brother, Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros. The Government and the people of Nicaragua believe that Venezuela in no way represents a threat to international peace and security, and we therefore demand and urge that the sovereign decisions of the Venezuelan people be respected.

The Venezuelan people have already exercised their sovereign right by electing our brother Nicolás Maduro as their legitimate constitutional president, and not just for one, but for two consecutive terms. We must recall and share with the international community that the former President of the United States, Mr. Jimmy Carter, described Venezuela's electoral system as the best in the world. We recall this in case anyone has doubts about the accuracy and transparency of the results of all the elections held in Venezuela in the past 20 years. By the way, it is important to point out that no people in our Americas have exercised their sovereign right to choose their leaders as many times as the people of Venezuela have in these past two decades, which serves as an important lesson for all peoples — a lesson of sovereignty, social justice and democracy, conceived by the Venezuelan people.

The request for convening today's meeting is a clear interference in the internal affairs of States and a violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. The interest in and insistence on including the issue of Venezuela on the Council's agenda by the United States is another form of interfering and intervening in Venezuela's internal affairs, the clear objective of which is to impose a change of Government and to replace the Constitutional Government of President Nicolás Maduro through a coup d'état. These actions do not contribute to a political and peaceful solution that specifically fits the Venezuelan people, who are the ones who should exercise their rights to sovereignty and self-determination within the framework of their domestic jurisdiction.

It is essential and urgent that the will of the people be respected, that policies that violate international law definitively cease, and that hostile actions, including all unilateral coercive economic measures that threaten economic development and hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, thereby violating the human rights of the entire Venezuelan people, are stopped. What characterizes the situation in Venezuela are the shameless concrete attempts to destroy the social gains in health, education, housing, reduction of poverty and hunger achieved with great effort by the Bolivarian revolution launched by the timeless Commander Hugo Chávez Frías.

Nothing should derail the zone of peace in Latin America and the Caribbean proclaimed by the Heads of States and Governments of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in 2014. Accordingly, any threat or act of military aggression is unacceptable and reprehensible. Our Commander President Daniel Ortega Saavedra has effectively summed up what is happening in this sister nation as follows:

“And in these days, when it initiates hostilities against peoples and nations like Venezuela, it is launching an openly interventionist policy of interference. What we are seeing is an action and an attitude of arrogance and disrespect for international law by a Power that, as history has shown, cannot coexist with or abide by international law. Whenever it wants to, it disregards international law, including United Nations Security Council resolutions, and takes unilateral actions, because it decides to do so, based on the power it has.”

Venezuela is all of Latin America and the Caribbean; Venezuela is the whole world, because, in Venezuela, the principles of non-interventionism and a multilateral order based on the independence, sovereignty and equality of States are being defended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today, Latin America and the Caribbean is the setting for persistent threats that are incompatible with the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, which was signed by Heads of State and Government at the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, in January 2014. This commitment enshrines a duty to fully respect and uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law; to refrain from interfering, either directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State; and to uphold the principles of national sovereignty, the equality of rights and the free self-determination of peoples.

The current Administration of the United States of America has declared the Monroe Doctrine to be in effect and, in a fresh extension of its imperialist policy in the region, it is threatening Venezuela with particular malice and has declared that all options are on the table. The region today is like a vast prairie in a time of drought. A single spark could set off an uncontrollable fire that would damage the national interests of all.

We categorically reject the statements made by the representatives of the United States of America in the Council Chamber today. We regret the fact that the Government of the United States of America is seeking to exploit the Security Council in order to legitimize its international campaign against the constitutional Government presided by Nicolás Maduro Moros. The main threat to peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean is the bullying of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the United States and its allies, which is a flagrant affront to the will of the people and to the institutional framework of Venezuela, which were expressed in the elections held on 20 May 2018, in which the Venezuelan opposition voluntarily refrained from participating.

We reiterate our unwavering support to the Chavista and Bolivian revolution, to the civil-military union of the Venezuelan people and to their legitimate and democratic Government, led by the constitutional

President Nicolás Maduro Moros. We vigorously condemn the attempt to impose, through a coup d'état, a Government that will serve the interests of the United States in Venezuela and the recurrent calls to Bolivarian military members to join that effort. The sovereignty of our peoples is seen in the attitude towards Venezuela. Support for the legitimate right of our sister nation to define its own future is to defend the dignity of all.

We must not forget other attempts, such as the 2002 military coup and the 2003 oil coup; the United States aggressive executive order, which described Venezuela as an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of that super Power; the unilateral corrective measures; the call for a military coup d'état against the constitutional Government of Venezuela; the warning of the President of the United States with regard to the possible use of a military option; and the attempt to assassinate President Maduro on 4 August 2018.

The acts of a group of countries and the shameful role played by the Organization of American States constitute a new and desperate attempt to implement a failed policy of regime change, which has been frustrated time and again by the unbreakable resistance of the Venezuelan people and their determination to defend their national sovereignty. We reaffirm our unwavering respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the non-use or non-threat of use of force in international relations and the non-interference in the internal affairs of States. The sovereign will of the people of Venezuela will prevail in the face of imperialist intervention. History will judge those who encourage and recognize this coup.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Bynoe (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): At the outset, permit me the opportunity to convey appreciation to Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for the briefing on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been monitoring very closely the recent developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at the bilateral and multilateral levels and, like many countries, we too are deeply concerned and apprehensive about the events unfolding in our neighbouring Caribbean country.

Let it be abundantly clear that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines adheres to and upholds the fundamental principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of States; respect for sovereignty; adherence to the rule of law; and respect for human rights and democracy, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Cognizant of the complexity of the long-standing political crisis in Venezuela, which has been exacerbated by recent events, we stress the need for meaningful dialogue among all stakeholders in the country to de-escalate the contentious and conflictive situation.

We are undoubtedly living in an unpredictable era and must categorically reject all attempts to aggravate dangerous situations or engender change of democratically elected leaders through impositions, interventions and interferences that veer away from the basis of lasting peace and security. In the history of Latin America and the Caribbean, the imposition of the mighty against the meek is far too well known. The history of Latin America and the Caribbean is indelibly scarred by military interventions and imposition of dictator Governments. That egregious history and the need to triumph over its lingering remnants drives the countries in the hemisphere to regard any semblance of its re-emergence as viscerally abhorrent. In our Caribbean subregion, we have witnessed the urgent fury of military intervention, while our consciousness remains aware of the uninvited and illegal interference in electoral processes as a result of cold war proxy battles.

Let us not lose sight of the forest for the trees and be mindful that the region of Latin America and the Caribbean remains a zone of peace as proclaimed by the heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in 2014. Let Venezuela not relive the systematic act of terror and attempted coup d'état that created bloodshed on the streets of Caracas on 11 April 2002.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines laments the convening of this meeting today, especially against the backdrop of an unambiguous irony. Constitutionally, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has a duly elected President in the person of His Excellency Nicolas Maduro, who was officially inaugurated for a second term on 10 January. Regrettably, however, an unconscionable crusade against the legally and legitimately elected president, orchestrated by the Organization of American States (OAS), the oldest hemispheric organization, aims to erect, unilaterally

and extraterritorially, a parallel unelected presidential Government and to destabilize order and the rule of law in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Presently, the OAS has abdicated its role of arbiter and indeed any serious leadership responsibility in the hemisphere to defuse the impasse in Venezuela, especially since it is revisiting its deplorable history of being a conduit for imperialist aggression and hegemonic ambition in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thankfully, many member States within that organization have not exhausted the option of dialogue, nor have they abandoned the bedrock principles of the OAS and United Nations Charters. Effectively and more pointedly, Mexico and Uruguay have expressed their willingness to mediate the political crisis, while regional groupings such as the Caribbean Community and the European Union have offered their good offices to serve as honest brokers to facilitate dialogue among all parties and resolve the crisis. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines supports these responsible initiatives.

We affirm unequivocally that Venezuela is not a threat and represents no danger to international peace and security, even though the Government has been subjected to a systematic campaign of aggression. Undeniably, the country is confronted by a plethora of complex challenges which must be tackled head-on by democratic means and within the confines of the supreme law of the land, its Constitution.

As always, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stands ready to constructively assist our beloved brothers and sisters in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and bring about a rapprochement between the contending forces. We must not abandon dialogue as it is essential in multilateral diplomacy. History teaches us that the rejection of dialogue is often the precursor to unilateralism and war, an option that we cannot countenance in our zone of peace.

Let us be guided by the central tenets of this Organization and its Charter.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Canada welcomes the opportunity to discuss Venezuela in the Council. Given the severity of the worsening crisis and its grave impacts on the people of Venezuela and on the security and stability of the region, our discussion today is timely.

Together with democratic countries around the world, including most countries of the Americas and the Organization of American States, we have firmly rejected Nicolás Maduro Moros's illegitimate claim to power. The presidential elections in May 2018 were not free and fair; in fact, they were fraudulent and for that reason the Maduro regime has no authority to govern Venezuela. Canada stands by the democratically elected National Assembly and Venezuela's constitutional order.

Canada reiterates its full support to Juan Guaidó, President of the National Assembly, as the interim President of Venezuela. We support his commitment to lead Venezuela to free and fair presidential elections, to invite the international community to support his efforts and to respect Venezuela's Constitution and democratic institutions.

Canada watched this week as thousands of Venezuelans took to the streets in a powerful and peaceful demonstration of their commitment to democracy. We have faith that a durable solution to the crisis in Venezuela will be achieved through the leadership and courage of the Venezuelan people.

(spoke in French)

While the international community forms a common front to denounce Nicolás Maduro's dictatorship, we must not lose sight of the critical circumstances in which millions of Venezuelans find themselves. They are suffering from horrific human rights abuses and as a result of the economic and political crisis, are unable to meet their most basic needs, such as obtaining food and access to health services and medicines. The urgent nature of the humanitarian situation should leave no one indifferent.

If Nicolás Maduro is turning a deaf ear to the calls of the Lima Group and the international community, perhaps he will listen to the more than 3 million Venezuelans who have fled their homeland in search of a better life, and who in many cases have fled in order to survive. This exodus is already the largest in the modern history of the region.

Many transit to or reside in neighbouring countries, which have shown extraordinary generosity towards our Venezuelan brothers and sisters. Canada expresses its solidarity, gratitude and support for each of the countries that have been forced to host hundreds — in some cases hundreds of thousands — of Venezuelans. If the situation persists, it is estimated that there will

be 5.3 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela by the end of this year. This situation poses a serious threat to the stability and security of the region.

(spoke in English)

How can there be any doubt that the movement of more than 3 million refugees so far — with the potential of that number soon becoming 5.3 million — constitutes a threat to regional security? In the face of this catastrophe, we as the international community must stand in solidarity with the democratically elected National Assembly, with Interim President Juan Guaidó, and with the Venezuelan people in pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the current crisis. It is with this goal in mind that Canada has taken such concrete action as to impose targeted sanctions on 70 regime officials and, along with Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru, referred the situation in Venezuela to the International Criminal Court.

Canada is also pleased to host the next meeting of the Lima Group in Ottawa. Canada stands proudly with Venezuelans. We commend their courage and reiterate our own unwavering commitment to the universal principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the manner in which you are conducting this meeting of the Security Council.

The decision of my delegation to participate in this meeting was motivated by its attachment to international law and the principles of self-determination of peoples and respect for the sovereignty of States.

At the outset, we wish to express our solidarity with the Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros and with the Venezuelan people. We would also like to underscore a point that has been raised previously in this Chamber. My region — the region of Latin America and the Caribbean — has proclaimed itself a zone of peace.

We have taken the floor to express our concern over the convening of this Security Council meeting today. This body is called upon to look into matters related to threats to international peace and security, and Venezuela does not in any way constitute a threat

to either the region or the world. On the contrary, as has been stated in this very Chamber, the aggressions of which Venezuela has been on the receiving end are what constitute a threat to international peace and security.

The members of the Security Council, and particularly the permanent members, have the duty to avoid the political and ideological instrumentalization of this body. We therefore consider this attempt to bring the internal situation of a State Member of the United Nations to our attention absurd. On the contrary, we call on Council members to encourage respect for international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which were the basis for the establishment of our Organization and include explicitly the non-interference in the domestic affairs of States and respect for their sovereignty.

The meddling policies used by the Government of the United States of America to control this situation, far from helping, are only making it worse. Convening a meeting of the body dedicated to the preservation of international peace and security only weakens the efforts that multilateralism, especially the Security Council, must develop. It erodes the dynamics of preventive diplomacy, further distances the possibility of dialogue between the parties and violates the principles of equality of States, as well as the recognition of the will and sovereignty of peoples.

The subject of the humanitarian situation experienced by many Venezuelan citizens has come up numerous times. I wish to make two remarks in that regard. The first has to do with the illegality of unilateral sanctions. The international framework makes it clear that any sanctions imposed by any State on another, outside Security Council resolutions, are illegal. Furthermore, those who impose unilateral economic and financial sanctions claim to be providing a method of resolving the humanitarian crisis. Allow me to read an excerpt from a report of the Congressional Research Service of the United States on the sanctions situation.

(spoke in English)

“Analysts are concerned that stronger sanctions could exacerbate Venezuela’s difficult humanitarian situation, which has been marked by shortages of food and medicines, increased poverty and mass migration. Many Venezuelan civil society groups oppose sanctions that could worsen humanitarian conditions.”

(spoke in Spanish)

If we are going to talk about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, then let us talk about who is responsible. Let us talk about who is behind the illegal unilateral sanctions.

Unfortunately, we see that the real purpose of those who requested this meeting is not the defence of democracy or human rights; the real purpose is to promote situations of instability and to use those situations to push regime-change and natural-resource-control policies. There are three motives. The first of course is oil, of which not much has been said during this meeting. The second is geopolitical control. The third is the warning to those States that do not align themselves with the policies of the United States.

I wonder, what country is better off after the intervention of the United States? Have we not discussed repeatedly in this very Council the seriously adverse consequences being experienced in Iraq, Syria or in Libya? I reiterate that the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States has proclaimed that Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace. The real purpose is to intimidate democratically elected Governments that have manifestly rejected its policies, considering those policies a threat to the sovereignty and free determination of their peoples.

Finally, we call on the members of the Security Council, who have a great responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations, to allow themselves to be guided by the Charter and its principles, and in the framework provided by the same to avoid situations of uncertainty and confrontation. On the contrary, they should promote spaces of dialogue and peaceful mediation that allow lasting solutions to be reached.

We may have ideological differences, which is natural. We may also have political differences. But we must not differ in our interpretation of international law. In the same way that unilateral sanctions are illegal, threats are also illegal. Threats of use of force are illegal. Interference in internal affairs is illegal. If we remove those variables from the security equation, then we might find a satisfactory solution to the situation in Venezuela, in particular in the framework of solutions that have been put forward by States such as Mexico and Uruguay. However, we will not find a solution in the systematic and widespread violation of the norms of international law.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Paraguay.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and for convening this open meeting on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to the principles of international law and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and regrets the breakdown of the rule of law, democracy and respect for fundamental human rights in Venezuela, as well as the humanitarian crisis it has generated.

The new presidential term of Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros is the result of an illegitimate electoral process, which did not include the participation of all Venezuelan political actors, nor the presence of independent international observers, and lacked the international guarantees and standards of a democratic, free, fair and transparent process. For this reason, the Paraguayan Government was the first to break off diplomatic relations with regime of Nicolás Maduro on 10 January.

Paraguay has been denouncing the deterioration of the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in Venezuela since its very beginning, and has led support for the innumerable initiatives, appeals and efforts for an effective dialogue between Government of Nicolás Maduro and the various political sectors that make up the opposition, in coordination with the member countries of the Lima Group and the Organization of American States. Accordingly, I would like to emphasize that Paraguay was one of the six States that last September requested the Prosecutor's Office of the International Criminal Court to commence an investigation into the commission of possible crimes against humanity in Venezuela.

Paraguay reaffirms today in the Chamber of the Security Council its full support for and recognition of the National Assembly, legitimately elected in December 2015. The Paraguayan Government reiterates that it recognizes Mr. Juan Guaidó as interim President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in accordance with the constitutional provisions of that sister country. We trust that President Guaidó will begin the process of democratic transition in Venezuela within the framework of its Constitution, with the participation of all political actors and with the necessary international guarantees and standards for a democratic process, thus calling for new elections as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we urge the regime of Nicolás Maduro to avoid all acts of violence and reiterate our admiration for the courage of the Venezuelan people, as well as our unconditional solidarity and support for that suffering people. Paraguay will continue to advocate in all multilateral forums a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in Venezuela. Our commitment to continue working for the full restoration of the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights in the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remains firm.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Suriname.

Mrs. Sweeb (Suriname): First, we would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her extensive briefing.

As so many others on our continent and throughout the Americas are doing, the Government of Suriname is following with great concern the situation in and regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Recent developments are particularly troubling as they negatively affect the stability and tranquillity in that sister country, while possibly steering the region away from the ideals of a zone of peace.

As it has done in other forums, Suriname reiterates its strong commitment to the guiding principles of international law, as enshrined not only in the Charter of the United Nations and various other international agreements, but also in our own Constitution. It is the principled position of my delegation, as stipulated by our Constitution, to strive for peaceful coexistence and resort to dialogue in any existing conflict — irrespective of its nature, whether national or international — and to uphold those internationally accepted principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, non-intervention, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

The Government of Suriname therefore rejects any armed aggression, any form of political or economic pressure, as well as any direct or indirect interference in the domestic affairs of other States. Furthermore, based on our principled position, Suriname cannot support any Government that is not elected through democratic processes and procedures in accordance with countries' respective constitutions. The rule of law must be respected.

In the light of the foregoing, the Government of Suriname restates its recognition of His Excellency

Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros as the democratically elected president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. With respect to the internal conflict that has arisen in Venezuela, Suriname calls for inclusive and meaningful dialogue, which, we believe, is the only way to lasting and peaceful solutions, including to addressing existing humanitarian needs. We implore all parties concerned to engage in such a dialogue and indeed to secure and sustain the whole of the Americas as a zone of peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the organization of this meeting, as well as the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo.

Argentina, along with a large part of the international community, repudiated the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduro Moros's mandate initiated on 10 January as a result of the electoral process of 20 May 2018 that did not meet the requirements to be considered free, democratic and transparent. On 10 January, Argentina announced concrete measures against the Maduro regime, including, inter alia, a ban on the entry of high officials of the regime, suspension of the application of the visa exemption agreement in diplomatic and official passports, and alerts to banking and financial institutions about the risks of working with the Venezuelan Government or with companies that are owned or controlled by the Venezuelan State.

As is well known, Juan Guaidó, President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, took office as Interim President in accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution, in the context of the massive demonstrations by the Venezuelan people on 23 January, whose clamour for democracy and freedom has been clear and forceful. The Government of the Argentine Republic recognized Juan Guaidó as Interim President of Venezuela, as did many other States.

On 24 January, at the behest of Argentina and other countries, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States met in extraordinary session to consider recent developments in Venezuela. As a result of these deliberations, 16 countries signed a declaration ratifying the constitutional authority of the National Assembly and recognizing Juan Guaidó as Interim President of Venezuela. In recent days, several

international actors have again proposed dialogue initiatives to overcome this crisis.

Argentina always bets on dialogue, but to be conducive to positive results, dialogue requires the good faith of the parties involved. Accordingly, Argentina would like to recall that the Santo Domingo dialogue process failed, owing to Maduro's lack of real willingness to engage in dialogue. Therefore, Argentina warns of the risk that dialogue initiatives promoted in good faith by various international actors could be manipulated by Maduro's regime, turning them into delaying tactics.

Argentina believes that the United Nations and its States Members should provide support to facilitate a peaceful transition to free, democratic and transparent elections as soon as possible. That is the only way to deal with the serious political, economic and humanitarian crisis that has plagued Venezuela for too long.

By October 2017, the Lima Group, of which Argentina is a member, had already requested that the Secretary-General and the United Nations system contribute to addressing this crisis and the continuing violations of human rights taking place in Venezuela. Indeed, the crisis is regional and global in scope. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, 3 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees have been forced to leave their country because of a political, economic and humanitarian crisis that seriously impacts their human rights. Of those, 2.4 million are now in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Argentina once again strongly condemns the repressive actions of the Maduro regime against the Venezuelan people. The Argentine Republic will continue to denounce the human rights violations perpetrated by the regime, as it has been doing since our President, Mauricio Macri, took office. In line with this position, the Government of Argentina joined other countries in requesting that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court initiate an investigation into allegations of the commission of crimes against humanity in that country, and promoted the suspension of Venezuela's membership in the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), pursuant to the Ushuaia Protocol on the Democratic Commitment in MERCOSUR, the Republic of Bolivia and the Republic of Chile.

In conclusion, Argentina believes that the Security Council should reaffirm its role as a guarantor of international peace and security. The very relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations are being assessed by our peoples and by the international community in the light of its capacity to act in the face of this complex crisis that is unprecedented in the Americas. The Council cannot remain indifferent in the face of this tragedy, which, in our view, is a threat to international peace and security because of its tragic consequences, particularly for the Venezuelan people and the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Gómez Camacho (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a country with a legitimate interest in Venezuela, a sister nation, Mexico is grateful for the invitation to participate in today's Security Council meeting pursuant to rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Mexico reiterates its concern about the deterioration of the situation in Venezuela and regrets the loss of life resulting from the most recent events. We support the Secretary-General's statements and approach — that all of the actors involved reduce tensions, do all they can to prevent an escalation of the conflict and reject all violence.

We must exhaust all avenues for dialogue and conciliation that promote respect for human rights. Mexico takes this opportunity to demand finding a peaceful and democratic solution to the complex situation facing Venezuela. The Venezuelan people must choose their own course without interference.

In keeping with a long diplomatic tradition, Mexico trusts that there is a negotiated solution based on dialogue among all those involved, including the options set forth in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. The Governments of Mexico and Uruguay have therefore proposed a new inclusive and credible negotiation process that fully respects the rule of law and human rights. We reiterate our full support, commitment and willingness to work together for the stability, well-being and peace of the Venezuelan people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country is grateful to the Dominican Republic for having convened this open meeting of the

Security Council amid the grave political, economic and social crisis in the brotherly country of Venezuela. I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

Ecuador reaffirms the right of all the peoples of the world to democracy and the obligation of their Governments to promote and defend it. For that reason, we echo the pronouncement of the Venezuela's National Assembly, which, within the framework of the norms of the Venezuelan Constitution, has declared that a presidential changeover is necessary. As such, the Republic of Ecuador recognizes the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim President of Venezuela.

Ecuador endorses the statement made yesterday by the Argentine Republic in the Organization of American States, on behalf of a group of countries, including my own. Echoing that position, we wish to reiterate the constitutional authority of the democratically elected National Assembly of Venezuela and our firm support for the actions taken to secure international humanitarian aid, the release of political prisoners, the freezing of the assets of corrupt Government officials and the provision of guarantees to civilian and military officials who support the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela.

Our country has always shown its solidarity with the Venezuelan people, which is why we have welcomed more than 240,000 Venezuelans into our territory, of whom 100,000 already have a long-stay visa, thus helping the 3 million Venezuelans, to date, who have been forced to emigrate. We call for continued efforts to help return Venezuela to the path of democracy via a peaceful transition while safeguarding and guaranteeing the integrity, exercise and full respect of the human rights of its people, especially the rights to life, integrity and personal freedom. Ecuador hopes that the new interim president, within the context of the law, will call as soon as possible for free and transparent elections, with broad international monitoring, and thus inaugurate a new era of democratic prosperity and fraternity in his country.

I want to address the references to the public reactions to the death of Diana, a 22-year-old pregnant woman, at the hands of her Venezuelan partner. We regret that, but I want to assure the Venezuelan people that my people consider them brothers and sisters, which is why, as I said before, more than 240,000 are

now living in my country on the path to being granted full permanent residence. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans have been able to enter and leave my country, to whom we have given medical care and support that they had not received in their country.

In April, Ecuador convened the third meeting on the problem created by the migration of 3 million Venezuelan brothers and sisters in order to seek solutions to the greatest humanitarian problem in our region. A democratic solution to the Venezuelan crisis will be achieved only through dialogue and compromise, and cannot be imposed through terror, torture and murder. Instead of succumbing to the chaos of unarmed innocents becoming victims of hit men and State agents, we need calm, foresight and intelligent and comprehensive political solutions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Barbados.

Ms. Thompson (Barbados): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on this matter of the utmost gravity. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

The Heads of State and Government of the following members of the Caribbean Community — Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago — together with the Foreign Ministers of Grenada and Suriname, met by video-conference on 24 January and issued the statement that I today have the honour to deliver to the Security Council. This statement was subsequently endorsed by the Republic of Guyana. I will now read the statement verbatim:

“Heads of Government are following closely the current unsatisfactory situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a neighbouring Caribbean country. They expressed grave concern about the plight of the people of Venezuela and the increasing volatility of the situation brought about by recent developments, which could lead to further violence, confrontation, breakdown of law and order and greater suffering for the people of the country.

“Heads of Government reaffirmed their guiding principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of States, respect for sovereignty,

adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights and democracy.

“Heads of Government reiterated that the long-standing political crisis, which has been exacerbated by recent events, can be resolved peacefully only through meaningful dialogue and diplomacy.

“In that regard, Heads of Government offered their good offices to facilitate dialogue among all parties to resolve the deepening crisis.

“Reaffirming their commitment to the tenets of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for Member States to refrain from the threat or the use of force, and article 21 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, which refers to territorial inviolability, the Heads of Government emphasized the importance of the Caribbean remaining a zone of peace.

“Heads of Government called on external forces to refrain from doing anything to destabilize the situation, underscored the need to step back from the brink and called on all actors, internal and external, to avoid actions that would escalate an already explosive situation to the detriment of the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and that could have far-reaching negative consequences for the wider region.”

That concludes the statement, as issued on 24 January. The Heads of Government of the Caribbean will continue to monitor and engage on this very serious matter, as appropriate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting to address an issue of the highest importance that affects the region and in which we believe a principal organ of the United Nations, such as the Security Council, is called on to play a fundamental role. We also appreciate the presence of various ministers of our region and the briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

As a key element of its foreign policy, Chile supports democracy as the political system that represents the appropriate framework for full respect for the basic rights of all human beings. The values of tolerance, dialogue, equality of opportunity and social

inclusion and cohesion, as well as the full exercise of fundamental freedoms, are best ensured in a context where the rule of law prevails, where there is respect and balance among the powers of the State and where public institutions operate effectively. A democratic culture based on those principles is built day by day and is a task that requires the participation of society as a whole.

Unfortunately, today Venezuela is suffering a profound crisis of its democratic institutions and an unacceptable deterioration in the living conditions and fundamental rights of its citizens under an authoritarian and repressive Government.

The Government of Chile does not recognize the legitimacy of the elections that took place in Venezuela last year, as a result of which the Government of Nicolás Maduro Moros assumed a new term. But it is not only that. Venezuela's Supreme Court of Justice declared Maduro's presidency illegitimate. Under those circumstances, Venezuela's National Assembly, which is the only democratically elected institution with full legitimacy, decided, under Venezuela's Constitution, in particular article 233, to appoint Juan Guaidó as Acting President with a very clear mandate — to restore democracy in Venezuela by calling for free, fair, democratic and transparent elections.

In that context, Chile, together with many other countries of the region, recognizes and has publicly expressed its full support for the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Juan Guaidó, who has become Acting President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela through the implementation of constitutional norms.

We support the beginning of the democratic transition process in Venezuela so that new elections are held as soon as possible with the participation of all political actors and with the necessary international guarantees and standards for a democratic process. Furthermore, we condemn the acts of violence that occurred in Venezuela, and we urge that the rule of law, the fundamental rights of individuals and social peace be ensured while the transition of Government takes place.

Chile therefore shares the concerns expressed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights about the use of the State's punitive power to criminally prosecute political dissidents and incapacitate a number of dissident leaders. In that context, we would like to refer to resolution 1/2019 of 25 January of the

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, under which it granted precautionary measures to Acting President Juan Guaidó and his family.

The solution to Venezuela's problems lies in restoring genuine democratic values. That means releasing political prisoners, restoring and respecting the freedoms and human rights of all Venezuelans, opening a humanitarian corridor to help to mitigate the crisis due to the lack of food and medicine and, of course, moving decisively towards full democracy in Venezuela.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Chile promotes efforts for the international community to work together towards the prompt and full recognition of Acting President Juan Guaidó and to support his constitutional plan, which seeks to hold elections and to restore democracy in Venezuela.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): On 23 January, Venezuela witnessed extraordinary events. In accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution, and as endorsed by the Supreme Court of Justice, the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Mr. Juan Guaidó, assumed the functions of acting President of Venezuela. The fact that on that same day an unprecedented number of people took to the streets in peaceful demonstrations to demand change in Venezuela only stresses the momentous nature of the events that we are witnessing.

Minutes after Juan Guaidó made his announcement, Brazil, together with many other countries committed to respect for the rule of law, legitimacy and democratic transition in Venezuela, immediately recognized him as Acting President of that country. That coordinated action was not an abrupt, ill-thought-out or irresponsible decision. It was the result of a collective understanding that we need to support Venezuela's Constitution and its legitimate institutions. It was also the result of a very long process of diplomatic dialogue and action to help Venezuela and its people.

Even before President Bolsonaro took office in Brazil on 1 January, Venezuela was already a priority for him and his team. The first trip of our Foreign Minister, Mr. Ernesto Araújo, was to participate in a meeting of the Lima Group to signal Brazil's firm commitment to taking the lead and to working with other partners to issue a very clear and strong statement of support to

the National Assembly and to the Supreme Court of Justice for democratic transition and for urgent change in Venezuela.

Since that first day, Brazil has also been in permanent contact with members of the democratic opposition in Venezuela and with the representatives of its legitimate institutions to contribute to the process of democratic transition. Therefore 23 January is only a new stage — albeit a fundamental one — in the quest for the rebirth of Venezuela. We are already working with the acting President to help with whatever it takes to fulfil the tasks that Venezuelans expect of him.

It is crucial that the Security Council and all Members here today address the situation in Venezuela, not only because it could pose real and immediate risks to peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean but because it is a situation that demands collective and urgent action.

The increasing deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in Venezuela is not new and has been cause for deep concern on the part of the Brazilian Government and other countries in the region in recent years. Venezuela is the product of a dictatorship that sacrificed its people in order to remain in power. Faced with an unsustainable situation of hunger, scarcity, misrule, disorganization and insecurity, many Venezuelans have simply been forced to flee their country. They were welcomed with open arms in Brazil and other countries of the region and elsewhere, but I am sure that they would have preferred to stay in their homes, with their families, in their country.

Representative democracy in Venezuela disappeared long ago, in particular the separation of powers. Until very recently, it was a police State, with hundreds of political prisoners and assassinations of opponents, including in State custody — all of this in an environment in which the independent press was muzzled and Venezuelans had lost the right to information.

The Maduro regime produced an economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions that poses a challenge in terms of methods of evaluation and comparison. Figures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank indicate that the gross domestic product has dropped by more than 35 per cent since 2013. The IMF predicts a significant worsening of Venezuelan hyperinflation, with the rate estimated at 1.3 million per cent in 2018. The World Bank, for its part, estimates Venezuela's international reserves to be on the order of

\$9 billion and that the country's foreign debt in 2018 could reach \$140 billion, that is, three times higher than in 2017.

It is vital that we understand, here in the Security Council, exactly what we are dealing with. Venezuela and its people have not only been quashed by a brutal and corrupt dictatorship; they have been held under a regime with links to organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorist organizations. That toxic combination has created risks for Venezuela and for us all, with unpredictable consequences for peace and security.

We therefore have an obligation to contribute to the prompt and full restoration of representative democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela, so that Venezuelans can forge a new path. Brazil understands that this will not happen without growing international pressure and international aid.

Let us not be naive. Those who have long held power in the country are comfortable where they are, and they will remain convinced that they are allowed to promote further chaos if they are not faced with collective pressure on our part. Such pressure can take different forms given the various regulatory milestones and the specificities of each country's relations with Venezuela, but increasing pressure is needed. Brazil and many countries have already done their part and will continue working in the same direction.

I would recall that in August 2017, after concluding that there had been a breach of the democratic order in Venezuela, Brazil and the other partners of the bloc activated the Ushuaia Protocol on Commitment to Democracy in MERCOSUR, the Republic of Bolivia and the Republic of Chile and decided to suspend Venezuela in all its rights and obligations as a State party.

Subsequently, the Brazilian Government considered the Venezuelan electoral process held on 20 May 2018 to be completely illegitimate. Those elections did not include all political actors in the country, nor did they meet the minimum guarantees and standards required for a free, fair and transparent process. Moreover, there were no independent international observers. For that reason, Brazil joined the countries of the Lima Group in issuing a declaration on 4 January that considered the presidential mandate of Nicolás Maduro that began on 10 January illegitimate. The Brazilian Government and the Lima Group countries recognized the National Assembly, legitimately elected on 6 December 2015, as

the only democratically elected constitutional body in Venezuela. From there, the necessary next step was to recognize President Guaidó and to start working with him. Today we are here reiterating our position and seeking the support of other Members.

There are countries that have not yet recognized Guaidó and that advocate for dialogue with the old regime. Brazil is in favour of dialogue with acting President Guaidó and with the democratic opposition in Venezuela. However, Brazil is firmly opposed to any kind of dialogue, in any format, with Nicolás Maduro and his accomplices. We know full well what Maduro understands by dialogue. For him, it is another opportunity to buy time and to continue his campaign of oppression of Venezuelans and deconstruction of Venezuela.

The only possible dialogue is one that will speed up the already ongoing process of democratic transition — a dialogue with Guaidó and all those committed to democracy and to the interests of Venezuela and its people.

Brazil is convinced that only through the rapid and full restoration of democracy and respect for human rights will it be possible to address the causes of the political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis faced by our neighbour to the north. Brazil will fully support the transition process, both politically and economically, so that democracy and social peace can return to Venezuela. Brazil trusts that the other members of the Council and of the Organization will do likewise.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Rosselli Frieri (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for presiding over this meeting of the Security Council this morning. I thank also Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her very concise and comprehensive briefing.

I should like to begin by reiterating Uruguay's previously expressed position that the issue of Venezuela is not on the agenda of the Security Council and that this is not the most appropriate body in which to consider the situation in that brotherly country.

By the same token, Uruguay reiterates the relevance and validity of Article 52, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations — under Chapter VIII, entitled “Regional Arrangements” — which states that:

“The Members of the United Nations entering into such arrangements or constituting such agencies will make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council.”

The Government of Uruguay has been following very closely the evolution of the political, economic and social situation in Venezuela and reiterates once again that the worst possible solution for the people of Venezuela would be to deepen its international isolation. In that spirit, a few days ago the Government of Uruguay, together with the Government of Mexico, appealed to all of the parties involved, both within and outside the country, to reduce tensions and to avert any escalation of violence. In keeping with the principles of international law, both Governments urged all stakeholders to find a peaceful and democratic solution to the complex situation in Venezuela and proposed a new round of inclusive, credible negotiations that would fully respect the rule of law and human rights. Both Governments reiterated their full support for, commitment to and willingness to work jointly for the stability and well-being of the Venezuelan people and peace in their country.

But there will be neither stability nor peace in Venezuela absent a political agreement between the various stakeholders that is reached through a broad and fully inclusive process of dialogue that includes the Government, actors from the entire political spectrum and civil society. Dialogue is not a succession of monologues, but requires listening to the other party, understanding their points of view and seeking understanding. The Uruguayan Government once again urges all parties to follow that path in the strictest respect of human rights and while taking into account the legitimate interests of all the Venezuelan people.

To conclude, I would like to highlight the attitude with which Latin American countries have reacted to the sad phenomenon of massive migration of Venezuelan citizens, which has been to open our doors and societies, without rejecting migrants at the border or building walls. Uruguay emphatically reaffirms its determination to uphold international law, peacefully settle disputes and strengthen democracy and the legal equality of States. Likewise, regardless of the circumstances, Uruguay will never, in no setting whatsoever, support an armed intervention in

any country in the region as a supposed solution to an internal crisis.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Carazo (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): As an aside, and as I have mentioned, I completed part of my secondary education in Venezuela.

The will of the sovereign in a democracy is manifested in free, open and verifiable electoral processes. As Costa Rica has already indicated on several occasions, the electoral process carried out in Venezuela on 20 May 2018 lacked legitimacy because it did not include the participation of all Venezuelan political actors or the presence of independent international observers or the international guarantees and standards necessary for it to be considered a democratic, free, fair and transparent process. Costa Rica therefore reaffirms today that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the Government that began on 10 January.

Deprived of that democratic capacity, once again, on 23 January, the Venezuelan people vindicated their aspirations for peace and reconciliation. And it is for that reason that Costa Rica has endorsed the transitional actions taken by the Venezuelan National Assembly. Costa Rica supports the steps taken to move towards the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, in accordance with international standards and in the period provided for by the Venezuelan Constitution.

Consistent with its commitment to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law and aware of the need to respect human rights everywhere, in accordance with international law, Costa Rica actively joins the international community in calling for every effort to restore constitutional order in Venezuela as soon as possible and resume a path to peace, democracy and rebuilding of its prosperity, for the benefit of its inhabitants. We reiterate that any solution to the crisis must come from Venezuelans themselves and be achieved through peaceful means and inclusive dialogue.

Costa Rica will continue to monitor developments in Venezuela, in order to put an end to the serious and constant violations of the human rights of the Venezuelan population and achieve the prompt restoration of democracy and the rule of law, as a reality and not simply a desire.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Dominica.

Ms. Bannis-Roberts (Dominica): The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica wishes to express its deep concern regarding the recent developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the worrisome consequences of those events. The Commonwealth of Dominica strongly upholds the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any sovereign State.

Elections were held in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on 20 May, in accordance with its Constitution. The election outcome returned President Nicolás Maduro as the duly elected President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, in its utterances and by its actions, fully respects the will of the people of any sovereign nation as exercised through the electoral process. Following the accepted standards governing outcomes of the duly held elections, the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica accepted the results and recognizes the re-elected Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is concerned about the expressions of support for a transitional Government in Venezuela and declarations of the illegitimacy of the Nicolás Maduro Government. We wish to place on record our opposition to such a position. The recognition of a self-declared Government outside of the electoral process is a clear repudiation of the will of the people. There cannot be a parallel Government in Venezuela.

Such recognition does not reaffirm the right of the people of Venezuela to peace and democracy; rather, it opens the door to confusion and civil strife. Instead, the international community should expend efforts to help build peace, promote reconciliation and help find a solution that will not result in bloodshed.

We maintain that, in order to peacefully resolve the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, there must be dialogue between the parties. The Commonwealth of Dominica stands ready, in conjunction with other like-minded States, to offer its good offices to assist in that regard. We therefore urge Member States to exercise caution and let prudence guide us.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I believe that it is regrettable when any country in Latin America and the Caribbean is the subject of discussions within the Security Council. I make that point irrespective of the views that the members of the Security Council might have — and, more important yet, those that members of the General Assembly might have — as to whether or not it is fitting for the Security Council to take up item X, Y or Z.

I understand that I am one of the last speakers on the list today, and I will therefore try to be very brief and get to the point, while also out of respect for everyone's weekend. I would like to begin by welcoming the presence of Minister Jorge Arreaza of Venezuela. We would like to once again reiterate in this forum a point that was previously made by my national authorities, that is, expressing our deep concern about the new escalation in the political confrontation that is undermining the stability and development of our brother country Venezuela.

Once again, we express our view that it is principally incumbent upon the Government and the other Venezuelan political forces to find a solution to any problem or dispute within the country's society, while it is imperative to rely on the political track and resume discussions leading to an agreement. As a responsible State, a member of the international community and a founding Member of the United Nations, El Salvador reiterates that the peaceful resolution of disputes and full respect for the principles of non-intervention, the sovereignty of States and the prohibition of the use of force or the threat of the use of force are the best way forward for overcoming any difficulty confronting Venezuela and for contributing to regional stability, which is extremely vital for all with regard to the development and well-being of our peoples in the region.

Lastly, we recall that the Government of El Salvador expresses its support for the diplomatic initiative of those countries that are committed to achieving peace and stability in the region and foster and hope to contribute to finding a political and peaceful solution to the disputes in Venezuela.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Ms. Flores (Honduras): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, for convening this timely debate on the situation concerning Venezuela to attend to the new

developments of a political and humanitarian crisis in which more than 3 million refugees and migrants have left the country since 2015. Those who remain are at risk of enduring an escalating conflict, which today members of the security Council are called upon to prevent, while taking all the necessary to protect the Venezuelan population.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter, with respect to the principle of non-intervention, established mechanisms for collective action in case of a sudden or irregular interruption of the democratic political institutional process in order to respond rapidly in defence of democracy. For that purpose, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States adopted a resolution to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduros' new term as of 10 January and called for a new electoral process that would reflect the will of the Venezuelan people. All member States of the Organization of American States are called upon to adopt, in accordance with international law and national legislation, diplomatic, political, economic and financial measures, as appropriate, to contribute to the prompt restoration of the democratic order in Venezuela and support other measures to allow access to humanitarian aid.

As mandated by the Venezuelan Constitution, the President of the Assembly, Juan Guaidó, has assumed the functions of interim caretaker President of Venezuela, amid a monumental demonstration of support by Venezuelan citizens, garnering the recognition of States in the region, the Lima Group and the international community, accompanying democracy, in trusting that Venezuela can soon commence a process of credible elections.

Upon those actions in the face of the restoration of constitutional order, tensions have increased and serious violations of human rights have been duly reported. Notwithstanding Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, regarding regional arrangements and relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has the responsibility to respond to threats to international peace and security. As all of our region and its peoples are impacted by the protracted crisis in Venezuela and the deterioration with regard to the rule of law, stability, security and elemental guarantees and freedoms, we request the security Council to urgently and diligently attend to this matter.

In favour of our youth and of assuring prosperity for generations to come, let us today shift the culture of denial and dismissiveness of critical issues that require the care and the attention of our United Nations, and embrace a new conscientiousness with full respect for human rights.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): Let me begin by first congratulating you, Mr. President, on your leadership of this organ during the month of January. My country, Antigua and Barbuda, is extremely proud of your exemplary leadership as a small State in the Security Council for this month.

We cannot, and no one, can describe the situation in Venezuela in any other term but serious. The situation of the Government and the people of Venezuela is of great importance to my region and country. We do not, and will not, stand to see the promise of the zone of peace in our region break.

Our world is littered with examples by which external interference in other countries in an attempt to bring about or impose peace has resulted in those countries and societies remaining in a state of uncertainty, disorganization and chaos, and they have yet to find peace. The Charter of the United Nations is clear with regard to the promotion of international peace and respect for sovereignty. The Charter also makes clear that Member States should refrain from the threat or use of force. Any unilateral declaration of support for one side or the other and undue and uninvited influence in the internal affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela do nothing other than undermine the peacebuilding process, which requires our full attention, urgency and focus.

My Government therefore rejects any external force that interferes with the internal matters of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and furthermore rejects any attempt by any political unit within the country to take power in a manner other than by the constitutional process, through which they are all allowed. My region and Government in the Caribbean experience relative peace. We continue to emphasize our zone of peace. In our region we promote brotherhood and sisterhood, and therefore the Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda, together with the Governments of the other Heads of the Caribbean Community — as was stated here

earlier — continue to avail themselves of facilitating dialogue and a peace process that will return the Government of Venezuela to its continued operations and functions legitimately conferred upon it by the May 2018 elections.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Panama.

Ms. Quiel Murcia (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Panama is participating in this emergency meeting of the Security Council to again share its increasing concern about the seriousness of the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation that Venezuela is undergoing. As a result of the search for a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis and the restoration of the democratic order, the Government of the Republic of Panama has explicitly recognized the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó as the interim President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Now that the legitimate term of the Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros has concluded, Panama supports a peaceful democratic transition that will lead to fair elections, with the equal participation of all political actors. We also reject any act of violence or repression that restricts the rights of the Venezuelan people and the security of Venezuela and, ultimately, our entire region.

Based on this vision, Panama has expressed strong support for the measures adopted to seek international humanitarian assistance and the release of political prisoners. We also deeply regret the loss of human lives while people were exercising their right to protest, and we condemn acts of violence in all their manifestations, regardless of who commits them.

Concern about the situation in Venezuela is genuine and it cannot be interpreted as an interference into its internal affairs, given the massive and continuous exodus of Venezuelans who cross the border in search of refuge in our countries. Official reports indicate, as has been said in this Chamber, that this is the largest migratory crisis of this type in the recent history of Latin America. Many efforts have been made by regional bodies prior to this meeting without success, but we will continue to pursue these efforts with the aim of finding a peaceful solution that benefits the Venezuelan people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Cuba has asked to make a further statement. I give her the floor.

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have requested the floor again to respond to the slanderous statements made by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Michael Pompeo, and Mr. Elliott Abrams, which we categorically reject.

In response, I would just ask Mr. Pompeo or his representative in this Chamber if it is not true that the attempt to impose on Venezuelans an illegitimate president, whom no one had heard of until a few days ago, was orchestrated and motivated by Washington, D.C. Was it not his country that organized and immediately recognized the coup d'état that took control for a few hours in Venezuela in April 2002, at the cost of many lives? Was it not his Government that, for years, has subjected Venezuela to an unrelenting economic war intended to damage the living standards of the Venezuelan people, restrict their potential for development and provoke suffering and social instability?

The delegation of the United States America should clarify whether or not it was its Government that deliberately undermined the attempts to reach a negotiated solution in the Dominican Republic when the Bolivarian Government and representatives of the opposition were ready to ratify a negotiated agreement that was mutually acceptable to both sides. The delegation of the United States of America should also clarify what its country's attitude will be and what responsibility it will assume if its irresponsible acts provoke a situation of rampant instability for Venezuela and the entire region, whose victims will be the people.

The cooperation and solidarity between Cuba and Venezuela — like that we offer to almost all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and to many other countries in the so-called third world — is dedicated to help meet the essential needs for life, in particular health care and education. That is well known to all in this Chamber, including the representatives of the United States. The Organization recognizes it, as do many specialized agencies of the United Nations system. To state the contrary, as the Secretary of State of the United States of America did this morning, is an undignified attack on the truth and demonstrates his Government's lack of respect for the Security Council and the United Nations.

Both Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Abrams, I repeat, are intentionally lying and failing to recognize that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a free, sovereign

and independent nation that makes its own decisions. Venezuela is not and cannot ever be anybody's satellite. It has its own institutions, a people who overwhelmingly support the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution and the constitutional President, Nicolás Maduro Moros.

We reiterate that the main threat to international peace and security in our region is the interventionism of the United States of America, the return to the Monroe Doctrine and the bullying of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with the declared aim of regime change and the imperialist goal of looting the greatest oil reserve on the planet. We recall that it is the United States, not Cuba, that has set up military dictatorships and organized bloody coups d'état in Latin America. It is the Government of the United States of America, not that of Cuba, that unscrupulously intervenes in the electoral processes and the internal affairs of the majority of the States of the planet, seeking to replace by force the legitimate Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and conducting a brutal campaign of defamation against it and by threatening military action, while it calls for violence and a coup d'état.

I suggest that Secretary of State Michael Pompeo review the history. He must not blame others for the attempts of the United States of America to impose its imperialist hegemony on our America by invoking once again the obsolete, aggressive and dangerous Monroe Doctrine and gunboat diplomacy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to respond to some things that have been said this afternoon.

First of all, we made it clear in our first statement that the reason we referred to President Trump's statement to the General Assembly in 2018 (see A/73/PV.6) was to denounce the fact that President Trump, from the rostrum that embodies multilateralism and international law, again validated the Monroe Doctrine, which considers our Latin America to be the backyard and exclusive zone of influence of the United States. In outlining the United States new national security doctrine, he reiterated that fact, which, in that context, represents a military threat against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. If the United Nations, through

its Security Council and General Assembly, cannot condemn that, then I do not understand what can be condemned in this institution.

Venezuela has three satellites — one for telecommunications and two for ground observation — thanks to its cooperation with the People's Republic of China. Venezuela thanks Cuba wholeheartedly for committing its personnel to provide the Venezuelan people with health care, education and life at a time when we did not have, as we do today, an army of doctors and professionals. Thanks to the Cuban revolution and Commander Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro and, today, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, we have been able to offer well-being and happiness to our people.

A few months ago, on 4 August, there was an attempt to assassinate President Maduro Moros at a public event. Individuals from Colombia and Miami took part in that failed attempt. Among them was a Peruvian journalist living in the United States who claims that he had attended meetings and that he had wanted to buy more drones to assassinate President Maduro, the entire political and military leadership and Venezuelan public authorities at an event commemorating the anniversary of the National Guard.

We requested both Colombia and the United States to extradite the individuals responsible for that attempted assassination. We gave them indications of where the individuals were located: for example, the municipality of Chinácota in Colombia, and the city of Atlanta in the United States. We gave them names, including those of the immigration agents who allowed the individuals, drones and explosives to pass through. We gave them everything, but we have received no response. Instead, they offered refugee status to the masterminds behind the attack, who were revealed in the confessions of those who carried it out. None of what I have just mentioned has been discussed or condemned here.

We also want to tell the people and authorities of Colombia that although they insult us, ignore us and refuse to communicate with us, the Bolivarian revolution of President Maduro will always be available to the people and institutions of Colombia to achieve peace in that country — the site of the last armed conflict on our continent, and one with direct links to the production and export of cocaine, among other drugs. We are ready to assist Colombia to achieve a lasting peace in all its processes of negotiation.

The United States has over 800 military bases around the world. It has 70 military bases in Latin America. We do not have a single one. Our Constitution — to which everyone here has referred with a view to the illegal undermining of our President — prevents us from having foreign military bases. What we have is military cooperation. The United States cut off military cooperation with us 15 or 16 years ago, but Russia, China and others have offered us military cooperation, and it is our sovereign right to protect our territorial integrity, our people and our sovereignty. We do not seek to attack anyone or to ever put anyone at risk.

We have had 25 elections in Venezuela in 20 years. The Bolivarian revolution won 23 elections, and in the two that we lost, we immediately recognized the loss. With respect to the electoral system used, the electoral authorities that organized the election of the National Assembly in December 2015 have not changed. There are even greater guarantees because, at the request of the Dominican Republic, we created more security guarantees in the electoral system that elected President Maduro last year.

The Venezuelan opposition could not agree on a single candidate. They pressured candidates not to participate, although some did. There was a legal constitutional election that led to a popular outcome that we cannot simply disregard. It is in line with our Constitution, and overturning it would mean scoffing at the wish of some 10 million voters.

Venezuelan migration has been mentioned several times. As I have said previously, there is indeed migration, but not of the magnitude and scale that we have been led to believe. I thank those countries who have received Venezuelan migrants and would ask them to share information with us so that we can effectively corroborate their number, where they are, how to help them and how to implement our plan of return so that they can come back to the country. However, refugee status is being given orally to millions of them. How can that be? Who says they are refugees? We must be more rigorous in our use of terminology.

There is economic migration that is largely the result of the blockade and economic persecution of the United States against Venezuela. Perhaps it would be a good idea to invite Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, former Prime Minister of Spain, to testify as to the process of dialogue in Venezuela, the electoral guarantees that were provided and why the commitment

among the parties that would have guaranteed peace was not signed. Perhaps we could also learn why those who did not sign it are now at the head of a coup d'état in Venezuela.

It is a heavy responsibility to recognize Governments that have not been constitutionally elected. Harm is being done. A mistake is being made. States are entering a new stage of international law, and we invite them to reflect. We invite Europe to reflect. Europe should take the eight-day ultimatum it imposed on us to reflect. Perhaps in eight days Europe can learn to respect the Constitution of Venezuela and support an egalitarian dialogue in a framework of respect for the sovereignty of Venezuela, as it should be and as we all would like to see.

There were 300 observers. I ask that we be provided with any report from the electoral observers in Venezuela stating that the elections were not honest or that the voting machines had problems. Let us have a fact-based dialogue. Let us be diligent. It seems that speakers here are following the same script. Some seem forced to read what has been dictated to them, and that is painful. The sovereignty of our brethren States on the continent is being undermined.

As I said about two hours ago, I think we also need to acknowledge that the Government of Ecuador denied us the flight authorization necessary for the return of Venezuelan immigrants who, fleeing the persecution promoted by President Lenin Moreno Garcés against Venezuelans, had taken refuge in our Embassy and diplomatic missions in Ecuador. Although it was not granted yesterday, as would have been right, or this morning, the Ecuadorian Ombudsman's Office intervened. Finally, the Ecuadorian Ministry for Foreign Affairs granted authorization, and we can retrieve our compatriots.

Venezuela is at peace. Attempts to provoke a war in Venezuela have not been successful. Venezuela is a country that will defend its sovereignty and will always use dialogue. In Venezuela, the people, the workers, the trade unions, the farmers, the local councils and the businessmen are in favour of sovereignty and peace. We will not allow any Government or country to violate our sovereignty or to promote war. Nor will we give Donald Trump the pretext he seems to need to start a war.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Trujillo García (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to make a brief statement in response to a reference was made specifically to the domestic situation of Colombia. I only wish to take the opportunity provided by that reference to thank the Security Council once again for its unanimous support for the report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2018/1159) on the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed by the previous Government of Colombia with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. Unanimous support was lent to that report, and I simply wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Security Council for that endorsement.

I also take this opportunity to reiterate the willingness of the Government of Colombia to comply with its obligations with respect to counter-terrorism activities as provided for in resolution 1373 (2001).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement. I call on him to do so.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I understand that this discussion has dragged on, and I do not want to prolong it. This is not a right of reply. I simply want to make one comment that I believe worth stating.

As I mentioned today, United States Secretary of State Pompeo claimed that his country's position is shared by the majority of members of the international community and that the Maduro regime is supported by only five countries, which I listed. I must reply that in listening to the representatives of the countries that spoke today, we counted 11 Latin American countries that spoke in favour of the legitimate Government of Venezuela, whereas 10 countries spoke against. The representative of Barbados referred to the joint statement of the Caribbean Community, which stresses non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for sovereignty and independence. I am not even including the members of the Security Council that are also divided on this matter.

First of all, that confirms what I said earlier while Secretary of State Pompeo was still in the Chamber, to the effect that there is not as much unity in support of his position in the world as he thinks. We believe that there is a majority in favour of those who

support the sovereignty, territorial independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

Secondly, what we are seeing today clearly demonstrates that the United States and its allies have not been able to achieve their aim. What, then, was the point of holding this meeting? It has been useful because it has shown our United States colleagues the true attitude of the international community with regard to what is going on in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We once again repeat — let us not escalate tensions around Venezuela. Let us stop all the threats and threatening the use of force against that country. Let us set aside ridiculous ultimatums of eight days. What is

the special significance of eight days? Why not seven days or thirty days? Who was the genius who came up with the eight-day formula? Let us give Venezuelans a chance to solve their own problems. If we can help them do that then let us help them. But let us not try to trip them up on that path.

We welcome the initiative of Mexico and Uruguay, which have extended their good offices in fostering dialogue between the Government and the opposition. We call on everyone to join that effort in good faith and with good intentions, unlike what has been demonstrated by some today.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.