



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Heusgen	(Germany)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Indonesia	Mr. Djani
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Lewicki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa	Mr. Matjila
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Pence

Agenda

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of 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 the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Eduardo Stein, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/International Organization for Migration Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region; and Ms. Kathleen Page, Researcher at Johns Hopkins University.

Mr. Stein is joining today's meeting via video-conference from Panama City.

I also wish to acknowledge and express our pleasure at the presence here today of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, whom I thank very much for joining us this morning.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: Let me be clear from the outset that there is a very real humanitarian problem in Venezuela. The United Nations is willing and able to respond, consistent with the long-standing mandate that Member States have agreed for principled humanitarian action. We can do more to relieve the suffering of the people of Venezuela if we get more help and support from all stakeholders.

Since Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo last briefed the Council on 26 February (see S/PV.8472), the humanitarian situation has worsened. Recurrent widespread power outages have affected the whole country. Without electricity from the grid, many hospitals have struggled to carry out essential surgical procedures and to sustain intensive-care services and dialysis treatment. Water and sewage systems have been interrupted. Economic decline has continued, and the

purchasing power of ordinary people has fallen further, rendering food even less affordable for many families.

The scale of need is significant and growing. The United Nations is working in Venezuela to expand the provision of humanitarian assistance. Our efforts are in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as determined by the General Assembly in resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

The Secretary-General has expressed his concern for the people in Venezuela. I echo that concern. I will focus my briefing today on, first, the priority humanitarian needs in Venezuela; secondly, our efforts to assist the most vulnerable people; and, thirdly, the areas where we seek the Council's collective support.

We recently produced a draft overview report on priority humanitarian needs in Venezuela. The review was based on the best available data from all available official and unofficial sources, including Government data. We gave our draft report to the Government and the National Assembly on 27 March.

We estimate that 7 million people in Venezuela need humanitarian assistance. That is some 25 per cent of the population. There are people in need throughout the country, but needs are most severe in the three states in the south and Zulia and Lara states in the west. People with chronic health conditions, pregnant and nursing women, children under five, indigenous people, people on the move and those living with disabilities are among the most vulnerable.

The context is a severe and continuing economic contraction, with associated dramatic increases in inflation on a scale seen in few if any other countries around the world in recent years. Our review found that access to nutrient-rich foods and a varied diet has diminished. Historically, Venezuela has imported up to 75 per cent of its food. As a result of the crisis, the availability and affordability of food have fallen, with lower imports, reduced local production and declining purchasing power. Many people depend on subsidized food to meet their needs. Six million families across the country reportedly benefit from food supplies distributed by the Government.

Despite this, malnutrition has increased, especially in areas with the highest poverty rates. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that in 2018, some 3.7 million people

suffered from undernourishment. The prevalence of undernourishment has almost trebled over a five-year period. Other aid organizations report an increase in the global acute malnutrition rate among children under five. We estimate that 1.9 million people require nutritional assistance, including 1.3 million children under five. More data is needed to improve our understanding of the nutrition and food security situation.

The Venezuelan health system is strained by shortages in personnel, medical supplies, equipment and electricity. Reduced access to medicines has increased the risk of morbidity and mortality from diabetes, hypertension, cancer and HIV/AIDS. Preventable diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, measles and malaria have resurfaced. The World Health Organization registered more than 400,000 cases of malaria in 2017, nearly 70 per cent more than the year before. That was the largest increase in the world that year. Overall, we estimate that some 2.8 million people need health assistance, including 1.1 million children under five.

Health problems are exacerbated by insufficient access to clean water and inadequate sanitation systems. One estimate suggests that 17 per cent of people living in poverty have no access to safe water or receive it only once a fortnight. Recent power outages are making this problem worse. Some families have resorted to using water from unclean sources because they cannot afford safe water. Sanitation systems have deteriorated, affecting solid waste management, among other services. Basic hygiene needs like hand-washing are undermined by the unavailability or unaffordability of water and cleaning supplies. We estimate that some 4.3 million people require water and sanitation assistance.

The crisis has interrupted the education of more than 1 million children. Many families cannot afford the transportation, clothing or shoes that children need to attend school. The population on the move is at particular risk of protection violations, as are women and girls, who compose 72 per cent of trafficking victims. More than 3.4 million people have already left the country. We estimate that some 2.7 million people still inside Venezuela require protection assistance and services.

Let me move on now to how we are assisting the most vulnerable people.

The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations are on the ground, and we have been expanding our operations. Since 2017, the number of United Nations staff has increased from 210 to nearly 400. United Nations agencies are working in all 24 states. Our efforts are particularly concentrated in the vulnerable border states of Zulia, Táchira and Bolívar.

To support the expansion of humanitarian assistance, I released \$9 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in late 2018. Through this grant, as well as bilateral funding from donors, the United Nations has provided 189,000 children with preventive and curative treatment for acute malnutrition; expanded maternal and child health care through the provision of medicines and supplies from 74,000 health kits; donated 10 generators to provide emergency power to hospitals; installed water tanks in hospitals to ensure a safe supply of water for Palestinian Authority pediatric and maternal services; distributed 10 million tablets for the treatment of HIV among 50,000 people across all 24 states; and delivered 176,000 doses of vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella for babies and young children.

The United Nations and other aid organizations are working with institutions and organizations across the spectrum, including line ministries and national civil society organizations, and we are in touch with the National Assembly. Under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, we recently established a cooperation and assistance coordination team, bringing together United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations in Caracas to provide strategic-level guidance and coordination to the humanitarian operation.

It is clear that much more is needed. We seek the support of the Council for action in three areas:

First is improved respect for principled humanitarian action. In Venezuela, there is a need to separate political and humanitarian objectives. Humanitarian assistance must be delivered on the basis of need alone. The Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed the importance of the humanitarian principles and has called on Member States and others to respect them. We seek the Council's support to safeguard the neutral and impartial nature of humanitarian action.

The second area is an enabling operating environment, including sustained and regular access to people in need. I note recent steps taken by the

Government of Venezuela to facilitate the entrance of additional United Nations staff into the country and the expansion of humanitarian programmes, including those of the Red Cross movement. Additional steps are needed. We need more humanitarian organizations with the capacity to meet urgent needs to establish a presence and assist with operations in the country. We also need more data and information to ensure our understanding of needs evolves with the situation.

Thirdly, more money is needed to support the expansion of humanitarian programmes. The resources available now are extremely modest in relation to the needs we see. I would like to thank Member States that have contributed to the provision of humanitarian assistance in Venezuela, including our generous donors supporting the CERF. The Council's continued support is critical, but we need a lot more.

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Stein.

Mr. Stein: The situation in Venezuela has resulted in a population outflow the magnitude of which is unparalleled in the modern history of the region. At present, we estimate that 3.7 million Venezuelans have left their country, approximately 80 per cent of whom have left since 2015. Although the vast majority of Venezuelans who have left home can be found in neighbouring countries and other parts of South America, it is important to note that more than 20 countries are affected by those outflows, across the hemisphere and beyond.

Last year, Venezuelans left the country at a net rate of about 5,000 per day, and they continue to leave the country, despite recent border closures on the Venezuelan side. If the trend continues in 2019, we estimate that the total number of Venezuelans outside the country will exceed 5 million by the end of the year. The testimonials and feedback from Venezuelans arriving in countries of the region outline a range of factors, often in parallel, that contribute to their departure from the country. The stated reasons for leaving include insecurity and violence; a lack of access to food, medicine and essential services; loss of income; and a lack of effective national protection systems.

Against that backdrop of deteriorating conditions inside Venezuela, we observe individuals and families leaving the country with increasing needs and vulnerabilities. A disproportionately high rate

of family separation is already taking place as some family members leave in search of opportunities to support those back home or secure the means to later bring their relatives.

The aforementioned border closures also make it necessary for the majority of persons leaving the country to cross the border irregularly and in very dangerous conditions, exposing them to additional risks of exploitation and abuse, including through human smuggling and trafficking. The presence of illegal armed actors in multiple border areas and the seasonal rise in border river flows create additional challenges and risks for the continuous population outflows, including their possible recruitment, which also affects children and youth.

In that context, it is important to highlight the generosity of the countries that have been receiving Venezuelans, both those in transit as well as those being hosted. Those countries have largely maintained open-door policies and, through the Quito process, continue to work towards harmonized approaches on important matters such as reception arrangements, regular stay provisions, documentation and social, economic and cultural inclusion.

The third meeting in Quito on the human mobility of Venezuelans in Latin America, held this week, brought together participants from 12 countries and observers from 13 countries, as well as United Nations agencies, international cooperation agencies and financial organizations. Technical discussions during the meeting indicated important advances in the harmonization of approaches in the areas of entry and stay requirements, access to rights and documentation.

Participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to the continuity of the Quito process and announced that Argentina will assume the leading role in moving the process forward and host the next meeting in Buenos Aires in July. Paraguay offered to take over the process after Argentina. A priority issue identified by all participants was the urgent need for greater international cooperation and the involvement of multilateral development and financial actors in that unprecedented humanitarian situation that is affecting many States of the Latin American and Caribbean region, as well as other countries.

Despite those efforts, national capacities are increasingly strained and, in some cases, carry the risk of denial of entry or access to regular migration

schemes. The experience to date, however, demonstrates that Venezuelans continue to move across the region, regularly or irregularly, and it is in the best interest of the receiving countries to avoid situations where Venezuelans remain undocumented, invisible and without access to basic rights, as well as exposed to situations of violence, exploitation or abuse. Taking into account those considerations, I would like to highlight some implications for and requests to the Council and the international community as a whole.

First, more support is needed for the States that are employing open-door policies to receive, assist and host Venezuelan outflows, including the initiatives of the Quito process.

Secondly, the communities that are receiving Venezuelans are in need of support. Many of the communities receiving Venezuelans have needs of their own, and support is also needed for the host population. By addressing the needs of both, we can increase the impact of the humanitarian response, mitigate the possibilities of xenophobic expressions and create a better climate for the local integration of Venezuelans into their host communities.

Thirdly, stronger international cooperation is critically needed. Despite some important contributions to date, on the whole more is needed in terms of financial support to countries and other actors engaged in the humanitarian response. Those contributions not only strengthen the humanitarian response and socioeconomic integration solutions, but also contribute to stability in the region as a whole as it faces unprecedented humanitarian challenges.

The President: I thank Mr. Stein for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Page.

Ms. Page: I thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to present our findings here today. I am Kathleen Page, a physician and faculty member at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. The findings that I am presenting today were published last week by Human Rights Watch, together with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Our report concludes that the combination of severe medicine, health supplies and food shortages in Venezuela, together with the spread of epidemics within and across the country's borders, has resulted in a breakdown of Venezuela's health system. The crisis in

Venezuela fits the definition of a complex humanitarian emergency, and Secretary-General António Guterres should formally declare it as such and lead a full-scale United Nations-led response that is neutral, independent and impartial.

We conducted research at the borders of Venezuela in Colombia and Brazil, where we interviewed more than 150 health professionals, humanitarian actors, United Nations officials and local authorities, as well as dozens of Venezuelans who had crossed the border. We also reviewed data from the Venezuelan Government, international organizations, Venezuelan hospitals and other local actors.

The health data that we analysed show a health system that is not functioning, with increasing mortality and morbidity. The recent nationwide blackouts have further undermined the ability of public hospitals to respond to the medical needs of Venezuelans. The latest statistics from the Venezuelan Ministry of Health indicate that, from 2015 to 2016, maternal mortality rose by 65 per cent, and infant mortality by 30 per cent. Venezuela is the only country in the region where infant mortality is rising and has returned to levels last seen in the 1990s.

Infectious diseases are increasing and spreading at an alarming rate. From 2008 to 2016, only a single case of measles was recorded. Since 2017, there have been more than 9,300 cases in Venezuela, and an additional 10,000 in Brazil, mostly in border areas. Since 2016, there have been more than 2,500 suspected cases of diphtheria, whereas there was none in the preceding decade. The number of cases of malaria has increased in recent years from fewer than 36,000 cases in 2009 to more than 414,000 in 2017 — the highest rate of increase in the world. The number of tuberculosis cases increased from 6,000 in 2014 to 13,000 in 2017, resulting in the highest tuberculosis incidence rate in 40 years. In 2018, nearly nine out of 10 Venezuelans living with HIV were not receiving antiretroviral therapy.

Although Venezuelan authorities stopped publishing statistics on nutrition in 2007, available evidence indicates that hunger, malnutrition and severe food shortages are widespread. From 2015 to 2017, nearly 12 per cent of Venezuelans — 3.7 million people — were undernourished. National surveys show that 80 per cent of Venezuelan households are food insecure, and, in some locations, acute malnutrition among children surpasses crisis thresholds. Hospitals

across the country are reporting increases in paediatric admissions and mortality due to acute malnutrition.

Venezuelan authorities also no longer publish official health information. They have threatened and retaliated against health-care workers who collect data, report deaths or speak out about medicine shortages. Objective and verifiable data are critical to assess the situation, follow trends and develop an effective humanitarian response. While more international aid has started to enter the country, the response to date has been insufficient, and there have been obstacles to implementation. While Venezuelan authorities are within their rights to reject particular offers of assistance, they are responsible for fully addressing the country's urgent humanitarian needs.

In order to protect the rights to health and food of the Venezuelan people, we recommend that the Secretary-General declare that Venezuela is facing a complex humanitarian emergency and acknowledge the severity of the situation. The crisis should be a top priority that requires United Nations system-wide, full-scale mobilization of humanitarian relief. The Secretary-General should request that Venezuelan authorities grant United Nations agencies full access to health, nutrition and food security data, and allow them to undertake a nationwide comprehensive humanitarian-needs assessment. The response we are calling for would be credible, neutral, independent and impartial, as it would be under the auspices of the United Nations.

Furthermore, the Security Council should regularly meet to address the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, as well as its regional impact, given that more than 3.4 million Venezuelans have left the country in recent years. We call on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to document violations to the rights to health and food in her upcoming report on the situation in Venezuela. Finally, we call on the Human Rights Council to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Venezuela and adopt a draft resolution to create an international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of the rights to health and food.

The President: I thank Ms. Page for her briefing.

I would ask the briefers to stay so that they can answer any questions that Council members might have.

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

I welcome and call on the Vice-President of the United States of America.

Mr. Pence (United States of America): I am here today on behalf of the President of the United States of America to discuss the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and to call on this body to stand up for democracy and the rule of law in that nation, which has suffered so much. Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations confers on the Security Council the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. As another American president said many years ago, the United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its Members. It is why this institution exists.

For six long years, the people of Venezuela have suffered under the heavy hand of oppression. The Maduro regime's socialist policies have shrunk their economy by nearly half. In what was once one of the wealthiest countries in our hemisphere, nine out of 10 people now live in poverty. The average Venezuelan has lost more than 20 pounds through deprivation and malnutrition. Thousands of Venezuelan children are starving and, at this very hour, infants in hospitals across Venezuela are dying for lack of basic medical care. The Maduro regime, in the midst of this deprivation and suffering, has used violence and intimidation against anyone who opposes their actions. In the past three months, the regime has thrown at least 1,255 people into jail without any due process of law and killed at least 40 protesters. That is the nature of the regime that we are dealing with. But the Maduro regime is a threat not only to the Venezuelan people, it is a threat to the peace and security of the wider region as well.

The rising desperation in Venezuela has fuelled a mass exodus, the likes of which we have never seen in the western hemisphere. More than 3 million Venezuelans have now abandoned their beloved country, and, if things do not get better, it is estimated that another 2 million are expected to follow before the year is out. Travelling through the region, my wife and I witnessed the results of that deprivation first-hand. At a church in Manaus, Brazil, we spoke to families who had fled the deprivation in Venezuela. I will never forget when a father looked at me, with his two young boys standing at his side, and said how hard it was as a father to come home at the end of the day and say, "we are not eating today". As he said it, his two little boys looked up and nodded, recalling those days. Then there was the day in Cartagena, Colombia, at another mission, where

Venezuelan people had fled the deprivation in their country, and a grandmother told me how it had gotten so bad in their small rural town that her grandchildren had to rise at 4 a.m. to get a single ticket to purchase a piece of bread at 4 p.m. Their children were starving, and she gathered up her grandchildren and fled the country.

Those are the stories the world deserves to hear of deprivation. The truth is that those who stay behind are subject to crime, violence and lawlessness. Thieves in Venezuela do not rob banks; they rob restaurants for food. Vicious gangs and so-called “colectivos” have turned the streets into war zones. Venezuela now has the highest murder rate in the world, as more than 70 people are murdered every single day. Venezuela is a failed State, and as history teaches, failed States know no boundaries. Drug traffickers, criminal gangs, even terrorists, such as Hizbullah, are exploiting the chaos in Venezuela to gain a foothold in the region and export crime and violence. Were we to let the crisis continue, the chaos and suffering would only spread.

The struggle in Venezuela is between dictatorship and democracy. Nicolás Maduro is a dictator with no legitimate claim to power. And Nicolás Maduro must go. But for all the suffering, the Venezuelan people across Venezuela — in cities large and small — people are rising up. They are rising up against their oppression and deprivation. Today those courageous Venezuelans will take to the streets again. As President Trump said not long ago, the fight for freedom in Venezuela has just begun.

Just three short months ago, after Nicolás Maduro was sworn into his second term, which was stolen in a sham election, the National Assembly, the only duly elected body in Venezuela, exercised its power under the Constitution and recognized a new leader, interim President Juan Guaidó. All across the western hemisphere nations have been standing up to declare their support for President Guaidó. Last month, the Inter-American Development Bank voted to see President Guaidó’s representative. Earlier this week, the Group of Seven issued a statement saying the May 2018 presidential election lacked legitimacy, and called on the Maduro regime to, in their words, “restore the authority of the National Assembly”. And just yesterday, the Organization of American States, the oldest regional organization in the world, voted to stand with the Venezuelan people and recognize the Guaidó Government’s representative as the only true representative of Venezuela.

At President Trump’s direction, the United States was proud to be the first nation to recognize interim President Juan Guaidó as the legitimate President of Venezuela. Today, 54 nations have joined us. The western hemisphere has spoken with a clear voice. Nations across the world have spoken. It is time for the United Nations to speak.

In February, the United States introduced a draft resolution at the Security Council that called for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela and for the Maduro regime to allow all humanitarian aid into the country. The draft resolution was not adopted (see S/PV.8476). Two nations that continue to back that brutal regime used their vetoes to stop this body from taking action. And while Russia and China continue to obstruct the Security Council, rogue States, like Iran and Cuba, are doing all they can to prop up the Maduro regime.

For decades, Cuba has tried to create client States across our region. While normal countries export goods, Cuba exports tyranny and strong-arm tactics. Even now Cuban military and intelligence services train, support and equip Venezuela’s secret police as they silence opponents, jail and torture members of the opposition.

Last week, the United States took action to sanction ships transporting Venezuelan oil to Cuba. And soon, at President Trump’s direction, the United States will announce additional action to hold Cuba accountable for its malign influence in Venezuela. This week, in addition to Cuba’s action, Caracas received a delegation from Iran to begin direct air service between those two rogue capitals. That blacklisted airline is used to export terrorism by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which President Trump formally designated as a foreign terrorist organization on Monday. That is the company that Nicolás Maduro keeps, and those nations continue to prop him up even as he inflicts suffering on the Venezuelan people. Just two months ago, the dictator in Caracas actually danced while his own citizens were shot and truckloads of desperately needed food and medicine burned.

Unlike nations that are subsidizing the dictator in Caracas, under the leadership of President Donald Trump, the United States has been standing with the people of Venezuela. And we are committed to helping the families and communities that have been devastated by the Maduro regime. At this point, the United States

has sanctioned more than a 150 Government officials and organizations loyal to the dictator. We have sanctioned State-owned businesses to prevent the Maduro regime from robbing the people of what is rightfully theirs, and as President Trump has said, we can be a lot tougher.

In addition, the United States has positioned more than 500 metric tons of food and humanitarian supplies on the Venezuelan border, ready for immediate distribution. We have provided \$200 million in aid to support displaced Venezuelans and the host communities that support them. And today, under President Trump's direction, the United States is announcing an additional \$60 million in humanitarian assistance to address that crisis. The United States of America will continue to exert all diplomatic and economic pressure to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy in Venezuela, but all options are on the table.

Up to this point, while other international bodies have acted, the United Nations and the Security Council have refused to act. But now that nations across this hemisphere have spoken, the time has come for the United Nations to recognize interim President Juan Guaidó as the legitimate President of Venezuela and seat his representative in this body. This body should revoke the credentials of Venezuela's representative to the United Nations, recognize interim President Juan Guaidó and seat the representative of the free Venezuelan Government in this body without delay.

With all due respect, Ambassador Moncada should not be at this meeting. He should return to Venezuela and tell Nicolás Maduro that his time is up. It is time for him to go.

The men, women and children of Venezuela are suffering. Their economy has been destroyed. Their democracy has been destroyed. The people of Venezuela are paying the price, and soon the region and the world will pay the price if we fail to act. There can be no bystanders to this history. For the peace and security of our hemisphere, the world and the United Nations must stand with the people of Venezuela.

To that end, the United States is preparing a draft resolution recognizing the legitimacy of the Government of interim President Juan Guaidó, and today we urge every member of the Security Council and all States Members of the United Nations to support it and to stand with the Venezuelan people as they rise up to restore freedom, democracy and *libertad* to their nation. And this they are doing. They are rising

up against intimidation and violence. Even today the people of Venezuela are taking to the streets to march for freedom. Despite all the hardship, they continue to march. Despite all of the oppression, they continue to march. Despite the opposition, they continue to march with courage and strength, because they are marching to freedom. In the words of Simón Bolívar, a people that loves freedom will in the end be free.

But now it is time for the United Nations to act and for the world to stand with the people of Venezuela as they march to freedom. History has taught us what happens when the civilized nations of the world allow oppression to go unchecked. When a brutal dictatorship arose in Europe, the world failed to respond, and millions of lives were lost in the Second World War. This very institution was forged in the aftermath of that war so that nations around the world could come together and confront dictatorship with one voice. And so the United States is calling on the United Nations to live up to its very purpose, reject the failed leadership of Nicolás Maduro, stand with us and with nations across the world and this hemisphere to help the people of Venezuela forge a brighter future.

As President Trump has said, "If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph". When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength. So let us today rededicate ourselves to the mission upon which this body was founded — to maintain international peace and security. We have confidence that if we do that, if we make every effort to be at peace, the God of peace will guide us and bless us, today, tomorrow and always.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the honour of addressing the Council today. May God bless the people of Venezuela. May God bless us all.

The President: I will now turn the hourglass once again.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You can turn your wonderful hourglass as many times as you wish, Mr. President, but I will take as much time as I need.

We are both surprised and yet not surprised that the Security Council convened an extraordinary meeting today with the participation of the Vice President of the United States, whom you, Sir, are of course always happy to see in this Chamber. It is just a pity, however,

that he did not want to listen to the views of the other members of the Council on the situation in Venezuela. Today we are witnessing yet another episode in a tragedy in many acts in an attempt to effect regime change in Venezuela. The situation in Venezuela does not pose a threat to international peace and security. However, the outside players involved are a direct threat to the peace and security of Venezuela itself, and we have just heard that today.

We just heard a horrific description of the suffering of the Venezuelan people under the yoke of an illegitimate dictator that can be eased only through decisive action by the international community, needless to say led by the United States. I would like to know where they got all the numbers and testimony that we heard about today. When was the last time anyone who spoke today was in Venezuela? As it turns out, the situation has to be studied at a distance, based on the premise that so-called President Guaidó is the country's only legitimate authority and source of information about what is going on there. By the way, I would like to say to Ms. Page, who gave us a worrying description of the health-care situation in Venezuela and of the measles epidemic there in particular, that epidemics unfortunately happen. Does Ms. Page know that the New York authorities have declared an emergency due to a measles epidemic in New York that is just a few hundred metres from the United Nations Headquarters building, in the borough of Brooklyn?

We have seen all of this already in other regions of the world. We heard so-called witnesses who had settled in the West tell blood-curdling stories about the suffering of the peoples of Iraq, Libya and Syria, after which it was precisely because of the Western intervention in those countries that their real suffering began and has continued to this day. Does the Council want to see a similar scenario in Venezuela?

Like the legitimate authorities in Caracas, we do not deny the fact that the humanitarian situation in Venezuela is definitely not ideal. We are ready to work with them to improve the situation, based on General Assembly resolution 46/182, which among other things requires that humanitarian assistance should be requested by a country's legitimate Government. The Secretariat should assist in that, but the briefing on behalf of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has left us with a dual impression. On one hand, it stresses the importance of separating political and humanitarian tasks in

providing assistance to Venezuela. Needless to say, we are in favour of neutral and impartial humanitarian assistance. On the other hand, we are disappointed that the data presented was collected and published without the agreement of the legitimate Government of Venezuela. It appears that we are returning to those less than glorious times when OCHA was used to disseminate unverified information. We would like to think that is not the case now. Furthermore, preparing a needs assessment is an indissoluble part of preparing a humanitarian assistance plan, which in its turn can be done only with the agreement of the legitimate authorities. Any failure to comply with that principle undermines a key aspect of resolution 46/182.

We categorically reject the methods of the United States with regard to Venezuela. With one hand, by continually imposing new sanctions and restrictions that prevent the country from developing normally, it is keeping Venezuela in a choke hold, when international assistance to States that need it should be designed to establish a situation that enables a State to take care of its own citizens. And with the other hand it is picking Venezuelans' pockets, expropriating Venezuelan assets in Western banks. Just since the beginning of this year the United States has taken more than \$30 billion from Venezuela, asserting that now only self-proclaimed President Guaidó can use that money. The overall damage that United States actions have done to the Venezuelan economy since 2013 amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars. And despite all of that it keeps calling more loudly than anyone for help for the people of Venezuela.

Incidentally, I would like to remind the Council that humanitarian assistance has definitely not gone smoothly of late in the United States itself. It still has not fully dealt with the destruction wrought by Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico, among other places, in the autumn of 2017. At the time there were horrendous problems with the lack of water, food, electricity and medical assistance. Some 225,000 families were left homeless. An entire harvest of crops vital to the island was lost. According to various estimates at the time, the total damage was assessed at between \$45 billion and \$90 billion, and Washington completely rejected any international assistance. In September 2017, President Maduro expressed Venezuela's readiness to immediately launch a programme of support and solidarity to Puerto Rico. Cuba also offered to help Puerto Rico deal with the effects of the hurricane,

which Washington also rejected. Venezuela eventually did provide assistance to Puerto Rico through Citgo, the United States subsidiary of Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A., while the Cuban Government respected the America's refusal of its help and did not insist or make use of the subject for propaganda purposes, despite the fact that many in the United States were not pleased with the decision.

Caracas is not refusing humanitarian assistance that is provided in accordance with the principles approved by the United Nations. Russia and a number of other countries have provided such assistance through the World Health Organization. The sanctions and outside interference in this State's internal affairs will not allow the crisis in Venezuela to end. As for the country's internal political conflicts, we believe firmly that the only thing that will help to overcome them is a dialogue within Venezuela itself.

The United States has persisted in destabilizing the situation in Venezuela by creating an artificial crisis around the country in order to replace its legitimately elected leader with its own pawn. There are endless examples of the United States' blatant interference in the affairs of Latin American countries and its use of military force to overthrow leaders it does not like. I would like to once again ask Venezuela's neighbours if they have really learned nothing from history. Do they really not understand that Venezuela is merely a bargaining chip in the geopolitical and geostrategic struggle for influence in the region and the world, in the spirit of a revitalized Monroe Doctrine? By the way, the attitude of Latin American countries to what is happening in Venezuela is not as unequivocal and uniform as the Vice-President of the United States told us today. We have heard that in previous Council meetings.

It is very odd to be speaking yet again about what should be self-evident truths, which is that a resolution of a crisis created in Venezuela can be achieved only through internal Venezuelan dialogue. It is only the self-proclaimed President who is unwilling to do that, because he has received no orders to that effect, but there is no other way. In that context, we welcome the international initiatives coming from the Latin American region aimed at promoting a dialogue between the legitimate Government and the leaders of the opposition. Our experience suggests that Mexico and Uruguay's proposal for a Montevideo mechanism has the greatest potential in that regard. It provides

for establishing a comprehensive and all-inclusive dialogue and in that regard has much greater chances of success than initiatives that require preconditions before anything can start.

The possibility of joining in the efforts to provide good offices or mediation should be open to everyone trying to contribute constructively to establishing an inclusive dialogue within Venezuela. Unfortunately, what is going on in the Security Council today is merely another episode in the frontal attack on the official Government in Caracas and ordinary Venezuelans. I want to point out that alongside their attempts to impose humanitarian services, so-called well-wishers are actively trying to challenge the credentials of official Venezuelan delegations to international platforms. We heard this today from the lips of the Vice-President of the United States. I will not comment on his tone, but I want to say that the Permanent Representative of Venezuela, who is in this Chamber today, was appointed by his country's legitimate Government, and his appointment was confirmed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Furthermore, these so-called friends of Venezuela are replacing Venezuela's official ambassadors and abetting the seizure of diplomatic property and thereby blatantly violating the founding principles of the Charter of the United Nations and undermining some of the most important norms of international law. It may be that the so-called international rules-based order that our Western colleagues are promoting so actively provides for such thuggish action, but international law definitely does not.

We urge the United States to acknowledge, finally, that Venezuelans and other peoples have the right to determine their own destiny. If the United States wants to make America great again, something that we are all sincerely interested in, it should stop interfering in the internal affairs of other States. It will only be respected for doing so. After all, the United States does not like it when anyone interferes in its affairs. No one likes that.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the valuable information provided by the speakers invited to today's briefing, which enables us to once again sound the alarm about the serious humanitarian crisis, economic collapse and disintegration of public services, unprecedented in the history of Latin America, that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is experiencing. In that regard, I want to emphasize that Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile,

Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Paraguay, member countries of the Lima Group, align themselves with this statement.

In order to understand the situation in Venezuela, it will suffice to mention some figures on its economy. For example, according to estimates by the International Monetary Fund, there was 1.5 million per cent inflation in 2018 alone and the gross domestic product has fallen by 44 per cent since 2013. According to the National Survey of Living Conditions, which is a joint project of three Venezuelan universities — Central, Andrés Bello Catholic and Simón Bolívar — Venezuela, which once had one of the highest incomes in the region, is now a country 94 per cent of whose citizens live in poverty, with 60 per cent in extreme poverty and 80 per cent at risk of food insecurity because they do not have enough income to buy food.

Therefore, while Nicolás Maduro's illegitimate regime hides those figures, which show that the economy in Venezuela is in free fall, and boasts that the country does not need humanitarian aid, hospitals are collapsing without vaccines or medicines, diseases that had been eradicated are resurfacing, unemployment is increasing at a dizzying rate, cities are becoming more violent, electricity and water supplies are collapsing and the flight of talent suggests a future that is even gloomier and more worrisome than ever. All this is the responsibility of a regime that has been declared illegitimate in a resolution of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. It is an authoritarian regime that silences the media, represses and imprisons the opposition and abuses its total power.

In that context, the number of people who have emigrated recently reached more than 3.5 million, with 5,000 new and ongoing daily departures, which represents an enormous challenge for host countries and their health, education, housing, employment and integration services. It is worth noting that the countries of the region have had to allocate significant and unanticipated domestic resources to provide such social services to the hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans we have hosted, which in some cases is beyond our capabilities.

How did we arrive at that situation? The answer is clear. The unprecedented crisis is due to the illegitimate and oppressive nature of a regime that has added to the breakdown of the constitutional order and the rule of law its incompetence in economic management,

corruption and the illicit diversion of resources, turning a prosperous and thriving country like Venezuela into one where poverty, insecurity and hopelessness are prevalent.

There is now an urgent need to alleviate the humanitarian crisis of millions of Venezuelans, which clearly cannot be controlled or entrusted to an illegitimate regime that uses aid solely for political and propaganda purposes. In the short term, it is urgent to channel humanitarian assistance through the United Nations system and the International Committee of the Red Cross, possibly with the support and participation of local and international non-governmental organizations on the ground. That will allow for an impartial and independent delivery aimed at those most in need.

However, that urgent and necessary response should not lead us to forget that it is only a palliative to the true solution to the Venezuelan problem, whose impact on the region threatens peace and security. The solution involves the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, led by the Venezuelans themselves in a peaceful manner, within the framework of the Constitution and international law, supported by political and diplomatic means and without the use of force. We therefore reaffirm our recognition of and support for the National Assembly, the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, and his representatives entrusted with that mandate.

We therefore ask the international community and the members of the Council to support the countries of the Lima Group in their efforts to help restore constitutional order in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in order to address the root cause of the serious humanitarian situation about which we are meeting today.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting.

It is important that the Council again take up the situation in Venezuela in the light of recent events. In particular, we deplore and are concerned about the deteriorating conditions in the country, which have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis affecting millions of Venezuelans and which continues to drive many of them to leave their homeland in pursuit of better livelihood opportunities.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 11.7 per cent of Venezuela's population are undernourished. The proportion of people living in poverty has also increased dramatically in recent years. Every day, millions of Venezuelans face unprecedented challenges in obtaining supplies and accessing basic services such as health care, medicines, vaccines, water, electricity and education. Diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, measles and malaria have re-emerged throughout the country.

In recent weeks, the situation has been further complicated by power outages in most of the country, which lasted for several days. The results have been devastating.

We have seen tragic situations in hospitals, where the lack of electricity forces medical personnel to often work without the minimum conditions of hygiene and tools. The lack of water is another tragic consequence of those outages.

In the same way, in many places school and work activities have been temporarily suspended, which impacts the productivity of the country and contributes to the economic deterioration. Given that outlook, no significant improvement in the situation is envisaged in the short term.

The crisis in Venezuela cannot be solved by humanitarian assistance alone. It is urgent to find the conditions to conduct concrete negotiations that lead to a solution to the crisis through a fair, free and competitive electoral process with guarantees for all political groups and actors and the support of the international community in a climate of respect for human rights. We also call for that to be a solution led by the Venezuelans themselves and achieved in a peaceful manner.

I reiterate our strong determination to work together with the international community to help Venezuela to find a response to the crisis that is democratic and adheres to the law, both internal and international and that, above all, paves the way for the reconstruction of Venezuelan society in a spirit of unity and a vision for the future.

Aware of the central role of States in humanitarian action and in order to achieve a substantial increase in humanitarian assistance for the country, we make an urgent appeal to the Venezuelan authorities to recognize the serious situation in which the country finds itself.

In that direction, we encourage them to establish spaces for coordination and humanitarian action with actors on the ground, supported by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, to reach the most needy and vulnerable populations.

We acknowledge the work carried out in the context of the cooperation and assistance coordination team to assess the existing needs. We urge all actors, including the Government authorities, to continue working towards a people-centred humanitarian action. All actions must address the priority needs of the Venezuelans, with an approach that lays the foundation for redirecting the country towards sustainable development and enables the return of the 3.7 million who have been forced to leave their homeland.

We believe that the recent agreement reached by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to expand its humanitarian actions in the country is an encouraging step despite the fact that the 650,000 people in need are only a fraction of the total that requires immediate assistance. We are confident that that is only the first step towards new initiatives and measures that have a positive impact on the lives of Venezuelans. We also wish to emphasize the need to speed up the mechanisms for authorized personnel to enter the country and for them to have unhindered access to the most vulnerable areas. We support the expansion of the United Nations presence on the ground and appeal to the international community to make the necessary financial resources available for much-needed humanitarian assistance in Venezuela.

In conclusion, we urge the members of the Council to remain focused on improving the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, promoting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in international humanitarian law and strengthening the role of the United Nations in negotiating a solution to this very serious crisis.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has been following closely the developments in Venezuela. China supports the Venezuelan Government in its efforts to uphold its national sovereignty, independence and stability, and believes that Venezuela's affairs should be handled independently by the Venezuelan people themselves. China calls on the Venezuelan Government and opposition parties to seek a political solution through dialogue and consultation, within their constitutional and legal framework.

China's position on the Security Council's involvement in the Venezuelan issue has been consistent and clear. Our point of departure is, as always, to uphold the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations, promote a peaceful settlement of the Venezuelan issue and maintain long-term peace and development in Latin America.

China opposes any interference by external forces in Venezuela's internal affairs; military intervention in Venezuela; and the use of the so-called humanitarian issue to achieve political aims. History has shown repeatedly that unilateral sanctions only further complicate situations and affect people's daily lives. They do not help resolve problems or bring peace to a country.

On the one hand, we hear fine words about caring about the well-being of Venezuelans, while, on the other, we see increasingly tighter sanctions on the country. These two things are not consistent, and the underlying motive is dubious.

To help the Venezuelan people overcome their temporary difficulties, China has decided to provide emergency aid consisting of civilian goods to Venezuela; the relevant supplies are on their way to Venezuela in batches. On 29 March, the first batch of medicines and medical supplies was delivered to the Venezuelan Government. China's assistance to Venezuela is in keeping with its long-held principles on foreign aid. It is intended to help the Venezuelan people overcome the negative impacts of external interference and sanctions, with no political conditions attached. China will continue its cooperation with Venezuela, based on the principles of mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and common development, for the greater well-being of the two peoples.

Peace and stability in Venezuela is in the fundamental interests of the country and its people, and it also serves the common interests of all parties. We hope that the international community will take steps that are truly conducive to the stability and economic development in Venezuela as well as better livelihoods for its people; provide constructive assistance to the country on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of Venezuela; and promote the effective settlement of the relevant issues as soon as possible.

We hope that the countries concerned will promptly lift the unilateral sanctions on Venezuela, create the

conditions for its economic and social development to return to normal, and lend help and support to the country, in accordance with the basic principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

Earlier in his intervention, the United States representative levelled unfounded accusations concerning China's position on this agenda item, which China categorically rejects. As is common knowledge, China has all along maintained friendly and cooperative relations with other countries around the world, Venezuela included, on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence.

We support the people of various countries in independently choosing a development path that caters to their national realities. We never interfere in other countries' internal affairs or impose our will on other countries. States members of the Security Council should faithfully abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and universally recognized norms of international relations, and they should show genuine respect for the choices made by the peoples of other countries to take concrete steps that are conducive to the well-being of the people of Venezuela, rather than the opposite.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to start by commending in particular the participation in this meeting of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Vice-President of the United States.

The briefers, whom I wish to thank, painted a picture that is absolutely clear. Venezuela has been plunged into the worst humanitarian crisis in its history. The crisis, which is massive and systemic, is having major consequences across the American continent. Contrary to what we are going to hear, there is no so-called foreign plot behind the chaos. The Venezuelan regime is the sole and only culprit of this tragic situation, which has recently deteriorated even further owing to the large-scale breakdown of the electrical-supply system, followed by a water-service interruption.

But the Venezuelan people have not yet seen the worst of it. Increased indicators of deterioration, such as those measuring poverty, violence and mortality, might be only the prelude to an even deeper crisis unless something is done to ease the suffering of the Venezuelan people and move towards a political and peaceful solution. The question that we should be considering together is: how can we reverse the tragic dynamic that is under way?

I will therefore focus on three urgent, complementary matters.

The first urgent issue is the need to ensure and facilitate access by humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations, while fully respecting the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Indeed, the outer limits of cruelty seem to constantly be pushed outward, seeing that the regime's allies are prepared to divert humanitarian assistance. Political instrumentalization, whatever its source, should be condemned in every case.

The position taken by the Venezuelan regime of denying the existence of a humanitarian crisis and restricting access by humanitarian actors is taking an increasingly high toll in terms of human life. I will simply mention the impact of the breakdown of the health-care system on the most vulnerable people, as well as increasing malnutrition and higher mortality.

France's position has been clear since the beginning of this tragedy. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the Venezuelan people. France, in its national capacity and through the European Union, has prepared a response that is commensurate with the scale of the crisis. The European Union announced on 27 March an additional €50 million in humanitarian assistance in Venezuela.

It is equally urgent to provide assistance to the more than 3 million Venezuelans who have had to take the path of exile owing to the chaos and violence. I welcome the measures taken by all the countries of the region, whose solidarity has been exemplary, in particular Colombia, which is shouldering the heaviest burden, with some 1.4 million refugees and migrants. Here I wish to welcome the presence here of the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs. This sustained engagement deserves our deep admiration, even as we observe a continued flow of people leaving the country – more than 5,000 people a day – as indicated by the Special Representative.

Let us make no mistake: unless there is a radical change in the position of the Venezuelan authorities, and unless they fully cooperate with humanitarian agencies, this exodus could accelerate and have a very negative impact on the stability and development of neighbouring countries. I would therefore reiterate France's full solidarity with the countries affected. Meanwhile, we strongly urge the Venezuelan regime to seize the opportunity created by the International Contact Group, which is striving, with France's active

participation, to find a humanitarian and political solution to the crisis.

Lastly, the third urgent matter is to begin a political and peaceful transition in Venezuela in the form of free, fair and transparent presidential elections, overseen by the international community. On the question of the causes of the humanitarian crisis, we will undoubtedly hear the Venezuelan authorities once again accuse foreigners of being responsible for the tragedy of the Venezuelan people. Yet it is the Maduro regime that is both the author and the main actor of that tragedy. By trying to hold on to power by organizing mock presidential elections, repressing the opposition and dissenting voices and monopolizing Venezuela's wealth, the current regime has brought an entire country and people to the brink of collapse.

Many countries, including France and its European partners, have drawn the necessary conclusions from that situation. The President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, has become the interim President not as a result of foreign support but by upholding the Venezuelan Constitution and with a view to organizing free, credible and transparent elections.

It is unacceptable that the survival of a regime should be at the expense of the lives of a people. We urge the Venezuelan authorities to allow humanitarian staff access to Venezuelans and to move towards a peaceful, democratic and sustainable solution. The Security Council will need to demonstrate its unity to play the role that it must in that situation. The goal is to promote a negotiated and peaceful solution to the crisis. The use of force and violence must be avoided in Venezuela — a point that France especially wants to drive home. There can be only a political and peaceful solution, which requires that democratic presidential elections take place at the earliest date.

While Venezuela teeters on the verge of collapse, our role is not to serve as a substitute to the Venezuelan people, but to the contrary, to allow the Venezuelan people to speak freely and express their wish to decide their future by re-establishing democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. That is the essence and meaning of France's efforts in that regard.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank our three briefers, as well as the United States for proposing this discussion today and Vice-President Pence for joining the Security Council.

It is clear from the briefings that we heard that the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has reached epic proportions, and it is right that the Security Council should discuss such issues. I know that there is an age-old debate that we have never resolved as to how bad a situation must get within a country in order for it to constitute the sort of issue that the Security Council has looked at. But the figures that we have heard today and their effect on the Venezuelan people and their neighbours, as well as the view of the regional authorities and international authorities, as represented by the Joint Special Representative and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, make it, I believe, absolutely an issue that the Council should be discussing.

We have heard today how ordinary Venezuelans are unable to access food and basic health care. Preventable diseases, such as measles and diphtheria, have reappeared. HIV goes untreated and maternal and newborn mortality rates are extremely high. Electricity and water shortages, as many speakers have said, have made it all much worse. The figures are appalling, but we are also starting to hear words such as ‘unprecedented’ and ‘unparalleled’.

Today I heard some things that I did not know, particularly about the health side. In that regard, I thank Ms. Page. They are truly shocking. The malaria figure especially stuck in my mind. I think the answer with respect to measles is to refer to the George Washington University study about Russian social media, so I am not going to go into that. But I think that the malaria figure alone ought to really horrify us.

It is all the more shocking because, as a number of speakers have said, the crisis is man-made, and even more so because Venezuela used to be a prosperous country. My understanding of the figures of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and World Bank is that Venezuela was considered to be an upper-middle-income country. The fact that it can go from that status to having the sorts of problems that we heard described today really does draw the concern of the international community.

I want also to reference the refugee situation. The figure we have heard is that 3.4 million Venezuelans have left their country to go to their neighbours. I too welcome the presence of the Colombian Foreign Minister here today, and we commend him and his Government; our Security Council colleague, Peru; and others in the region that have offered refuge and hope to those

millions of ordinary Venezuelans. But we cannot rely solely on the region’s efforts because, as we also heard today, that number is set to rise quite dramatically.

I wanted to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, through the Joint Special Representative, for the efforts that they have made. I think that we agree that it is a positive first step that the Maduro regime no longer denies the existence of a crisis and that the Red Cross and the United Nations are allowed to start the international humanitarian response. The scale of what is needed was set out graphically by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, which points to how much more needs to be done.

The United Kingdom agrees with the majority of the Council on the need for a new start in Venezuela, and we will be working closely with the international community to ensure that assistance can reach those most in need. However, I want to echo what Vice-President Pence said in his emphasis on democracy and the rule of law. We stand with the Venezuelan people. This is about what is needed to help the Venezuelan people. We therefore support the United Nations efforts, under the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to mount an international humanitarian response commensurate with the severity of the situation and underpinned by the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. I call Member States’ attention to the three areas that the Emergency Relief Coordinator outlined.

We call on the Maduro regime and all actors to facilitate the humanitarian process and allow further international organizations, such as the United Nations, Red Cross and non-governmental organizations, unhindered access to deliver humanitarian assistance to meet the urgent needs of the Venezuelan people. I repeat that it is against international law to try to deny one’s own people the help that they need, particularly with respect to food.

I would also like to use this occasion to call on Member States to support the United Nations efforts. For our part, we have committed a package of nearly \$9 million in humanitarian aid to respond to the most severe needs in Venezuela and host countries. We hope that our aid package will respond to the most severe health and nutrition needs by supporting emergency rooms and maternity wards. We hope to help people fleeing their homes get access to critical support, and

we hope to help meet the immediate needs of those forced to flee Venezuela, who are at greater risk of exploitation. We therefore plan to offer migrants access to personal documentation and information on how to access basic services.

It is important that we are clear that the suffering faced by the Venezuelan people is the result of years of mismanagement by the de facto Government. Humanitarian aid is urgently needed, but, as many speakers have said today, it will not solve the crisis. Political change is equally urgent. The legitimate interim President — Juan Guaidó — was stripped of his immunity as Speaker of the National Assembly. His Chief of Staff was arrested and others who are trying to secure peace and democracy in Venezuela have suffered similar forms of intimidation and threats. Mr. Guaidó has our full support in his efforts to bring about the necessary change. The people of Venezuela deserve a better future.

I repeat that it is our belief that it is time for a new start, with free and fair elections in accordance with international democratic standards.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buyswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank those who have called for this briefing for the information they provided.

In order to prevent the situation from further deteriorating, we call on all Council members to work together to foster a peaceful solution to the crisis. We call for violence to be avoided at all costs. In that regard, I would like to make three points — first, the importance of full humanitarian access in accordance with humanitarian principles; secondly, the need to launch as soon as possible a peaceful political process that paves the way towards free and transparent presidential elections; and, thirdly, an appeal to protect Venezuelan citizens from all forms of violence.

First, it is clear that the situation in Venezuela constitutes a humanitarian crisis, as we just heard from the briefers. Approximately 25 per cent of Venezuelans are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Those segments of the population most affected include people suffering from chronic health problems, pregnant women, young children and indigenous populations. We must do everything in our power to alleviate the suffering of those vulnerable groups.

Belgium calls on all actors to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian

supplies and personnel in the country. We recall the need to respect the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance, and we stress how important it is that such assistance be provided according to needs-based criteria and not used to achieve political ends. I also commend the efforts of the United Nations and all humanitarian and medical personnel in Venezuela, as well as those of other partners, such as the European Union, which my colleague from France mentioned.

Secondly, in the absence of a political solution, the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate. Belgium reiterates its call for the early launch of a peaceful political process that paves the way towards the holding of free and transparent presidential elections and reconciliation in Venezuela. As I have already said on several occasions, the May 2018 presidential elections were neither free and fair nor creditable, and thereby stripped the Government of Nicolás Maduro of its democratic legitimacy.

We support Juan Guaidó in his endeavour to organize the holding of free, fair and democratic presidential elections. The European Union, together with countries of the region, has set up the International Contact Group, which aims in particular to create the necessary conditions for the holding of presidential elections in the near future. I call on all stakeholders to demonstrate their full commitment to that initiative.

In that regard, Belgium is concerned about reports of an increase in foreign military aid to the Maduro regime, the goal of which is far from clear. As I have already said, Belgium advocates for a peaceful resolution of the situation in Venezuela, and the presence of foreign security forces will not help achieve, but is diametrically opposed to, that goal.

Thirdly, we call for the protection of Venezuelan citizens from all forms of violence. The Venezuelan people have the right to express themselves without fear of political persecution. The intimidation of members of the press and civil society is unacceptable. Belgium urgently calls for full respect for the rights provided in the Constitution and for the immunity of all members of the National Assembly, including its President. Their civil rights, freedom and physical integrity must be respected at all times. They must be able to carry out their functions without any form of intimidation.

In conclusion, I thank the countries of the region for their support for Venezuelan refugees and migrants,

especially Colombia, represented here today by its Minister.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank all the briefers for the information that they provided us at the beginning of this meeting.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is closely following developments in the situation and the increase in tensions in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We regret that the situation is increasingly deteriorating and express our concern that, if the situation continues on its current path, we may well arrive at an unsustainable and undesirable scenario for both the Venezuelan people and the international community. I would like to state that Equatorial Guinea condemns all acts that could jeopardize respect for human rights, that we believe in freedom of expression and that all peaceful demonstrations must be respected, as long as they take place in adherence to the relevant laws in force in the country.

I reaffirm my country's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which categorically prohibit the use of force and advocate for respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States Members of the United Nations. We share the concern of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that the humanitarian situation in Venezuela is going from bad to worse.

While we commend the timely and notable solidarity of the countries of the region and the noble work of the humanitarian agencies that are supporting the 10 countries of the region hosting millions of Venezuelans, it is nonetheless necessary that those countries continue to keep their borders open and ease their entry restrictions. In that regard, and as an example, we acknowledge the efforts to encourage international solidarity that Cuba has made and is making to support many countries, not only in its region but in other regions, in particular Africa, including my own country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in the areas of health and education, among others.

We are facing a real refugee and migrant crisis. Approximately 4 million Venezuelans have left their country. Given that situation, more must be done, based on the Global Compact on Refugees, to provide additional support for those who are leaving Venezuela as well as for the countries that are receiving them. Similarly, we call for the cooperation of those concerned

to ensure that the provision of humanitarian assistance adheres to the regulations governing humanitarian aid and that it reaches those in need without discrimination or distinction of any kind.

Moreover, we remain convinced that, as the crisis is a national problem of Venezuela, dialogue and negotiations among national political actors are the best way to overcome it. In that regard, it is crucial that the parties concerned set up a negotiating table at which the representatives of international organizations, especially the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, serve as impartial mediators.

We welcome the Montevideo mechanism, the goal of which is to preserve peace in Venezuela, based on the principles of non-interference and the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We believe that, given this tense and turbulent situation, all parties, whether directly involved or not, should refrain from making statements or taking actions that could be considered a threat of use of force, so as to not substantially raise tensions further and lead to an escalation in violence and cause greater harm.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela requires all national and international stakeholders to prioritize the interests of the Venezuelan people over any personal or partisan interests. Therefore, we once again urge political actors to increase their efforts to facilitate a peaceful negotiation scenario and to accept both the good offices of the Secretary-General in the peaceful settlement of disputes and the involvement of United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations in order to reach a productive and sustainable agreement for the political, economic and social strengthening of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for participating in today's meeting, as well as Mr. Mike Pence, the Vice President of the United States of America. I also thank all briefers for their updates.

We are confronted with a worrisome humanitarian crisis whose implications may go beyond Venezuela and neighbouring countries if not addressed urgently. There is no doubt that the crisis will have negative repercussions on regional security and stability in a way that will make it difficult to contain the further political and economic implications.

We are concerned about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, whose people are struggling with a severe shortage of food, medicine, water and electricity, all of which are major life necessities and reflect a grave economic situation and unprecedented inflation. That has led to a major displacement of people in recent years, the majority of them women and children. Such displacement has placed significant economic and political pressures on neighbouring countries and their ability to provide refuge and food to those displaced people.

Some 3.5 million Venezuelans have taken refuge in 15 neighbouring countries, while 7 million more are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as we heard from Mr. Lowcock. We therefore urge the Venezuelan Government to open the country's border crossings in order to allow humanitarian assistance, including food and medicine, to reach the largest number of people in need, in line with international principles and standards.

We call once again on all Venezuelan parties to refrain from any provocative measures and to prioritize the national interest of Venezuela in order to preserve its security, stability and unity while advancing the aspirations of the Venezuelan people. We call on them to launch a serious and inclusive dialogue to prevent bloodshed and preserve the dignity of the Venezuelan people. Such dialogue should address the root causes of the crisis and spare Venezuela and the countries of the region any further violence and instability. We support all efforts that seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait reiterates its full commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which call for respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, in line with Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): My delegation wishes to recognize the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and earlier on, Mr. Mike Pence, Vice-President of the United States of America. We would like to thank all the briefers, especially Mr. Lowcock and his excellent staff in Venezuela. We ask him to convey our utmost gratitude and appreciation for the sterling job they are doing in Venezuela, as they dispatch and offer much-needed assistance to the

people of Venezuela in the midst of uncertainty and political contestation.

International solidarity is a hallmark of most of us in developing countries, including Cuba. The situation in Venezuela requires a constructive and united Security Council in addressing both the humanitarian and political situation facing the country.

The political situation and continued economic difficulties in Venezuela are the result of myriad factors, including conflicting geopolitical dynamics. That necessitates the Council's focus on the resulting humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its adverse impact on ordinary people. In that regard, I wish to reiterate South Africa's position on three issues.

First, the provision of humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and in full compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/182. Those principles have enabled the Council to act in other difficult situations in order to support people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. That should be the central approach of the Council in this matter. We totally agree with the Secretary-General in that respect. The Council should not politicize humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, it is important that the effective and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance take place in coordination and cooperation with the Venezuelan Government, acknowledging the fundamental principles of State sovereignty, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge and work with established structures in Venezuela so as not to create parallel structures that may also cause increased tensions in that country.

Thirdly and finally, the provision of humanitarian assistance should be based on an adequate and accurate needs assessment of the situation — as Mr. Lowcock advised — in order to match those needs with appropriate support and totally steer away from the possibility of humanitarian intervention being used as a pretext for increased tensions, including the possibility of military intervention.

South Africa therefore urges all parties to respect the need for impartiality, neutrality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Venezuela. We also call on the international community to support

the channelling of humanitarian assistance through United Nations agencies. We are very grateful to be able to say that we have increased personnel capacity to more than 400. We hope to see more in Venezuela and an increased United Nations presence in neighbouring countries. We should also do so through other international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, in order to promote the much needed neutrality and impartiality for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Venezuela.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, permit me, like others, to thank today's briefers.

I will focus my intervention on addressing three points related to humanitarian situation. I think that that is supposed to be our main focus today.

First, we are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which we have been following closely. As we heard in today's briefing, the people of Venezuela are experiencing many difficulties. They cannot and must not be ignored. The facts also show that there are millions of refugees crossing the border, affecting neighbouring countries, and that issue should also be addressed. We thank the countries that have received those refugees. We fully support United Nations efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the hardship experienced by the people of Venezuela. Of course, we also support the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs thus far. I have taken note of the three areas that deserve the Council's attention, as duly presented by Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock. I thank him very much for that.

I believe that many countries represented in the Chamber care about the plight of the Venezuelan people and have the best of intentions. But the best intentions are not enough. It should not matter how assistance is being delivered. Countries should channel their assistance to the United Nations system, which is impartial, and gain the trust of the Venezuelan people. What is most important is that assistance reach those who are really in need — the people of Venezuela.

This is the time for the United Nations to once again play the crucial role not only of good offices but also of a good guardian of humanity, by coordinating the delivery of international assistance. The United Nations has the mandate and expertise, as stated in its Charter,

“to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character”.

We urge that any delivery of assistance by any parties be guided by General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Many have already alluded to those points. Such assistance must be free from political objectives and should be delivered on the basis of need, in close coordination with the Venezuelan Government and in full respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Certainly, it is also necessary to create conditions that will enable the successful provision of humanitarian assistance to the people in need. We appreciate the granting of full access to humanitarian personnel in Venezuela. Humanitarian assistance should also be provided to refugees in neighbouring countries.

That brings me to my second point, which is the need for dialogue. Indonesia reiterates that dialogue is the key that will significantly enable the best conditions for the smooth flow of humanitarian aid. Indeed, to resolve the broader situation in Venezuela, we would once again urge all parties to prioritize dialogue and accept the Secretary-General's good offices in helping resolve the crisis. In that regard, we encourage countries that have an influence on the parties to play a positive role. Indonesia has always believed that there has to be a negotiated solution based on dialogue among all those involved, including the option set forth in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

Thirdly, the Security Council, as a whole, must do everything it can to not impede but open up avenues that result in constructively and peacefully resolving the ongoing situation. The Security Council has met three times to discuss the situation in Venezuela, yet so far it has failed to make any difference in the country. Once again, it is another sad day for the Council. Based on the principles of the Charter, the Council must discharge its responsibility by assisting Venezuela in stabilizing itself and restoring normalcy. It should work in unity. The humanitarian challenge that has resulted from economic and political difficulties cannot be met unless the Council resolves to rise above its differences. Borrowing from the national motto of Indonesia, “Unity in diversity”, although the Council might be diverse in its views, it must be united in its action for the greater good of humankind. Let us show the people of Venezuela that the Security Council can and will be

united. Let us show that we care and will not leave them in despair and hopelessness.

I am reminded of what Dag Hammarskjöld said: “The United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell”. Indonesia implores the Security Council to act with unity and determination so as to be on the right side of history — the side of peace for Venezuela. I would like to echo the call of Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for us to separate humanitarian objectives from political objectives. Now is not the time for naming and shaming. Let us focus on saving lives and on the many children of Venezuela so that they have a better future. I must say that after my last statement to the Council on this issue (see S/PV.8476), I got calls from ordinary people in Caracas, not only thanking us for our statement but also reminding us all here in the Council to put aside our differences and think about all of the people of Venezuela. We have opened the curtains in the Security Council; now let us open our hearts and bring light to Venezuela.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): Let me thank the briefers for their valuable and informative contributions to today’s discussion. Our briefers’ interventions have clearly demonstrated to all of us the gravity of a humanitarian situation that needs to be addressed in an urgent manner to help the people of Venezuela.

There is no doubt that the people of Venezuela face a dire humanitarian crisis, which is man-made and the result of corruption and mismanagement. Furthermore, the crisis and suffering of the people of Venezuela continue to deteriorate due to the refusal of the de facto regime of Nicolás Maduro to grant access to a country that so desperately needs humanitarian aid. The reality on the ground speaks for itself. The health sector is in absolute collapse. The shortages of food and medicine are regular, not sporadic. Widespread malnutrition among children, increasing infant and maternal mortality and the resurgence of infectious diseases long considered eradicated should not happen in a country that has all the necessary natural and human resources to flourish and should lead statistically in every socioeconomic category. What makes the case worse is that not only is the Government unable to resolve those issues, but that it also contributes to deepening the crisis by denying its scale and casting aside offers of aid.

Let me also thank Kathleen Page for the John Hopkins University report. We consider the findings very troubling.

The current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has had a particularly alarming effect on women and girls, the most vulnerable groups in the majority of conflicts and crises. The trafficking of women for sex and forced labour is increasing throughout the region. Moreover, women in Venezuela are facing further challenges and risks, including a rise in sexual and gender-based violence, shortages of feminine items and high levels of maternal mortality.

Much remains to be done to address the extremely urgent needs, and Venezuelan actors across the political spectrum have the responsibility to put the interests of the Venezuelan people at the centre of their actions at this critical time. But it is up to the de facto regime to acknowledge the problem first and allow large-scale humanitarian assistance into Venezuela.

As we speak, more and more people — 5,000 every day — are crossing the borders, joining the more than 3 million Venezuelans who have already fled the country and leaving behind those unwilling or unable to leave despite being forced to live in extremely miserable conditions. The Council cannot remain idle in the face of such a crisis, which is having an adverse effect on the peace and security of the region.

We appreciate the efforts of the countries of Latin America aimed at maintaining an open door and providing assistance to refugees. A friend in need is a friend indeed. We commend the Governments and the peoples of Peru, Colombia — represented today by its Foreign Minister — and Ecuador and other neighbouring countries for the true hospitality they have extended to the people of Venezuela.

While trying to focus on the humanitarian aspects of this briefing, we cannot but refer to the political background of the Venezuelan crisis. In this regard, the two key issues to be addressed are the rule of law and legitimacy. Given the multifaceted challenges ahead and current absence of political dialogue, Poland considers the National Assembly as the only power in Venezuela that has a democratic mandate, obtained in free, fair and credible elections. The National Assembly and its President, Juan Guaidó, should be heard and respected. We call once again for the full respect of his constitutionally mandated prerogatives and immunity for all members of the National Assembly, including of

its President. We further call for respect for democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the freedom of assembly. We also call for refraining from violence.

The main challenge for the political track in this crisis is to guarantee, with all international support, the peaceful character of the transition process. We are convinced that the solution to the multidimensional crisis affecting Venezuela can only be a political, democratic and peaceful one and that the restoration of democracy is possible through free, transparent and credible presidential elections. We support the initiatives of both the European Union and the Lima Group to find a way out of this acute crisis, which is above all political, but with severe economic and humanitarian consequences for the people of Venezuela. We must therefore do our utmost to alleviate the most urgent humanitarian needs and reduce human suffering. We have to support Venezuelans in their hopes for a decent life in a democratic and prosperous country. Time is short, and we cannot remain indifferent.

Finally, we urge the *de facto* regime in Venezuela to respect and fully protect the freedom of media, including the safety and security of journalists. We strongly condemn cases of violent attacks and acts of intimidation against both foreign and domestic journalists. All such cases should be investigated in a thorough and independent manner.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would also like to welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Vice-President of the United States. We thank the speakers for their thoughtful briefings on the humanitarian situation in Venezuela.

Côte d'Ivoire, which is following developments in Venezuela with particular attention, notes with regret the political and institutional impasse in the country. This political tension is seriously affecting an already difficult economic situation and exacerbating a humanitarian crisis marked by the deterioration of the health and food situation and whose repercussions at the subregional level are palpable. In total, according to humanitarian agencies, 7 million Venezuelans, nearly a quarter of the population, need food and medical care. Some 3.4 million of them have found refuge in neighbouring countries.

The humanitarian emergency in Venezuela requires greater involvement of our Council in order

to provide an appropriate response to the current needs of millions of suffering people, while respecting the principles of international humanitarian law. In this regard, my delegation believes that, with its leadership and great expertise in humanitarian matters, the United Nations should play a leading role in mobilizing its specialized agencies and coordinating the assistance of the international community. In this perspective, it is necessary to establish close collaboration and a synergy of actions among the Venezuelan authorities, the specialized agencies of the United Nations and all international partners, in order to mobilize the necessary resources to meet the needs and ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in distress.

My country would like to remind all parties of their obligation to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. It also welcomes the authorization granted to the Red Cross to distribute emergency aid and thanks neighbouring countries for their solidarity with the Venezuelan people.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its consistent position in favour of a peaceful solution to the crisis. It therefore once again urges all parties to engage in frank negotiations to resolve the crisis.

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

First, let me pick up where our colleague from Indonesia left off when he said that this is a sad day for the Council. I do not share that view. I think that the discussion today, which we as the presidency wanted to have focus on the humanitarian situation, gives rise to optimism. I am optimistic that, as a result of this meeting, we will have a situation where more will be done on the humanitarian front.

Accordingly, I also would like to thank the three briefers for their very impressive statements. Our Russian colleagues called into the question the basis for their findings. Maybe afterwards they can indicate what the basis was for those findings.

Our Russian colleague compared the situation with regard to the measles outbreak in New York with the measles situation in Venezuela. However, there is one big difference between the two. If parents in New York want to vaccinate their kids, they can go into a pharmacy and get the vaccine. If parents in Venezuela

tried to get the vaccine for the measles in a pharmacy in Caracas, they would be unable to find it.

In this context, I would also like to pick up on what our Belgian colleague said with regard to arms. I would like to express the view that what Venezuela needs least at the present moment is a supply of military weapons. What Venezuelans need right now is a supply of humanitarian aid and medical assistance.

In the light of what our Indonesia colleague has said, I would like to appeal to our Venezuelan colleague that he recognize the dimension of the humanitarian crisis that his country is facing and that he allow all humanitarian actors to work in his country. These workers need access, and they should be able to assist. As our French colleague has reminded us, the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence should govern the delivery of humanitarian aid. Like others, we are alarmed about the politicization of the humanitarian issue. That runs counter to the humanitarian mandate.

Many speakers also alluded to the massive exodus of Venezuelans from their country. Like nearly everyone around the table, let me also express Germany's solidarity with the neighbours and pay tribute to what Peru, Ecuador and Colombia are doing, as well as the Foreign Minister of Colombia. I would also like to commend the countries in the region for seeking to coordinate their efforts in response to the humanitarian crisis. It is the biggest refugee crisis that Latin America has seen in its history.

On the political solution, very briefly, we need a peaceful political process. All actors must show restraint, refrain from the use of force and respect human rights. We support free, transparent and credible presidential elections organized under the leadership of the interim President, Juan Guaidó. The European Union is also ready to help through the International Contact Group.

I would like to conclude by saying that we must not leave the people of Venezuela alone.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be very brief. It is just to clarify the situation of vaccines. I just wanted to say that the Government of Venezuela was ready to buy the vaccines but, as I said, the money that had been deposited in British and American banks was stolen from it.

It is very simple. First, the problem is created. It is then proposed that it be resolved. That is by way of clarification.

The President: The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I know, Mr. President, that you do not want to prolong this. I do not want to get into a tit for tat, but the money was not stolen from a British bank. It is very important that we correct such falsehoods.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): To begin, we must respond to the host of falsehoods spoken here by the Vice-President of the United States while we are supposed to be discussing the humanitarian situation. I must clarify matters before the international community, the people of Venezuela and the media. He lied in saying that yesterday the region as a whole rejected the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at the Organization of American States. That is false. He is misinformed. It is a problem with his lawyers. Yesterday, in its eagerness to promote a coup d'état in Venezuela and impose a puppet Government to serve the interests of the United States to enable it to pillage our homeland, they sacrificed the founding Charter of that organization, which is the equivalent of the Charter of the United Nations. They distorted the law to the extent that what was approved was not the expulsion of the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela but the inclusion of a representative of the National Assembly. What they did there yesterday is a legal absurdity, since the Organization of American States, like the United Nations, is an organization of States, not of assemblies. The only State present in that organization is the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Therefore, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was not expelled from that organization. What they now have is a strange individual. No one understands what he will do, because he does not represent the State of

the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela but the National Assembly. That is what is written in the resolution. So he is lying.

I say that because the United States uses that lie to sell its course of action to the other States Members of United Nations to convince them to impose a puppet Government here and that the United Nations is a club of friends of the United States. According to him, the only ones that can be here are the friends of the United States, those that serve its interests and believe in the Monroe Doctrine, which is clearly a racist policy of more than 200 years ago, when the United States was a slave State, and which they think can still be pushed today when it comes to international law. But there is no basis in international law for what he is doing. We are certain that when the United States tries the trick that it played yesterday at the Organization of American States here at the General Assembly, it will fail. We are certain of that. And we wanted to respond to that before proceeding. It also threatens us with war: "all options are on the table". On what legal basis can a country come to the Security Council table to threaten another with war? The Security Council should address that point as well.

Turning to the topic at hand, the humanitarian situation in Venezuela must be resolved, but if we make a mistake in the diagnosis, we will also make a mistake in the treatment for its relief. As has been said here, the situation is the result of human actions. I want to mention something that has not been said, including by the three briefers — and they are very quick to gather data about the smallest non-governmental organization, while never setting foot in Venezuela, including Mr. Stein. He knows a great deal but is blind before the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. However, he sees the representative of the dictator Government in Guatemala and meets with his representatives. But he will not meet with us to learn what the current situation is, despite the fact that we have invited him on several occasions.

None of the three briefers, like most members of the Security Council, recognize that the human actions that led to this situation are part of a plan to destroy the economy directed by the Government of the United States and the United Kingdom in order to strangle the national economy, cause the greatest social suffering possible, undermine our country's ability to support itself and, ultimately, bring about a collapse that allows for a foreign military intervention under the perverse

pretext of the responsibility to protect, which has been the excuse for colonial invasions of countries with oil reserves. It is a giant inhumane experiment in unconventional warfare, a policy of calculated cruelty and a massive violation of human rights, going as far as committing crimes against humanity, in order to justify an overthrow and pillage by installing a subordinate local Government and, in our case, using racist ideology of 200 years ago, that is, the infamous Monroe Doctrine.

Members may think that I am exaggerating. But let us hear the criminals in their own words. Do not listen to me but to what they say. In January last year, that is, more than a year ago, the State Department declared:

"the pressure campaign is working ... what we are seeing ... is a total economic collapse in Venezuela. So our policy is working, our strategy is working and we are going to keep it".

In October of last year, the United States Ambassador, William Brownfield, said:

"We must treat this as an agony, a tragedy that will continue until it reaches an end ... and if we can do something to speed it up, we must do it, understanding that this is going to have an impact on millions of people who are already having difficulty finding food and medicine ... We cannot do this and pretend that it is not going to have an impact. We have to make a hard decision. The desired end justifies this severe punishment."

Those are not the diplomatic words or the words of a humanitarian worker. They are basically the words of a psychopath. There is no name for it, it is cruel and inhumane. It is an international crime. Severe punishment for the entire Venezuelan people, that is what he said.

Senator Marco Rubio, the leader of the coup d'état in Venezuela, said:

"In the next few weeks, Venezuela is going to enter a period of suffering that no nation in our hemisphere has ever confronted in modern history."

On 22 March, Mr. John Bolton, infamous in this Organization, said, sickeningly,

"It is like in Star Wars, when Darth Vader constricts somebody's throat; that is what we are doing to the regime economically".

That is what he said; those are not my words. This is deliberate economic destruction, the systematic implementation of the policy of aggression through the use of financial instruments, through the application of undue pressure and through the use of market dominance to influence the banking sector, private enterprise and other nations that engage in legal trade with Venezuela, including extorting United Nations agencies — all of this in order to isolate our country from the international trade and financial system.

If it were true that the Venezuelan Government, as has been stated here many times, as part of an incredible litany of lies, is killing its own people, then why is this group of countries using massively extortionate methods that only increase the suffering? Why would that be necessary if we are already killing our people, as they say? In fact, they are the ones causing our social implosion. What we want is peace and the well-being of our people. They are the ones who want to see social implosion in order to justify an invasion. This is a plan under which banks, insurance companies and the shipping system are being used with a destructive capacity comparable to that of weapons of mass destruction, but without those responsible for the suffering being brought to justice or suffering the moral sanction that they deserve.

John Bolton said, “My advice to bankers ... brokers ... and other businesses: do not deal in [Venezuelan] gold or oil”. Mr. Elliot Abrams, also infamous for his actions in Nicaragua and the Middle East specifically, where he planned the killing of thousands of people, stated:

“We are imposing our sanctions. What does the regime do? It tries to find other ways to get around them. It tries to find new customers. It tries to find new sources of imports. So what do we do? We watch carefully, and we can see ships moving and we can see new contracts with new companies, and when we do, we talk to shippers, or we talk to refiners, or we talk to Governments, and we say, you should not be doing that. That is what we are doing.”

That is what was stated by Mr. Abrams, whom some are attempting to portray as a humanitarian actor.

One repugnant aspect of this criminal policy of mass destruction is that it goes hand in hand with looting and pillaging. This deprives our people of basic goods, leading to tremendous suffering and literally robbing

the Venezuelan people of tens of billions of dollars. The profits of our refineries are being confiscated; they are using them to pay the debts of companies that are friends of the Trump Government. Those friends of the Trump Government hold Venezuelan bond debt, which they are prohibited from transferring, so they are receiving special licences from the Treasury Department to collect their profits from the earnings of our refineries, stolen from the people of Venezuela.

Now there is a plan to saddle the country with more than \$70 billion in indebtedness, as was just announced jointly with the International Monetary Fund. This \$70 billion is to be used to pay the uncertified debts created in opaque financial negotiations with friends of the United States Government. Nor can we forget about the Bank of England, which stole \$1.2 billion in gold from our people, under the pretext that they do not recognize President Nicolás Maduro.

Unbelievably, the last time we brought up this point (see S/PV.8476), the British representative stated that this was not the case, that it was a money-laundering issue. That is impossible, because the gold has been there for more than 30 years, and they know where it came from. In addition to taking more than two years to respond to our questions, they have joined with the Venezuelan opposition, the puppet Government that they are supporting, saying that they are complying with the sanctions imposed by the United States and with the order handed down by the British Government to recognize that puppet Government. The credibility of the Bank of England as a neutral, transparent organization has been ruined. It is now negative; it is less than zero. It is an institution that is working for the Trump Government and the British Government. It is a colonial Power that is behaving as did English pirates 200 years ago.

This is the real cause of the situation of the Venezuelan people. There is no other cause. Yes, our people are suffering, but our Government — as the Secretary-General can confirm, as can the Chef de Cabinet, with whom I meet almost every week — is working intensively with the United Nations system to boost the number of cooperation projects as well as the volume and capacity of those programmes, particularly in the areas of health care, food, education, electricity and transport.

By the way, Mr. President, if you were better informed about Venezuela, you would know that

vaccines are available in Venezuela and that the situation with respect to malaria, measles and diphtheria has improved considerably owing to our cooperation with the Pan American Health Organization. But if you keep restating figures from two or three years ago or figures such as the briefer presented, you will be deceiving the public. Vaccines are available right now in Venezuela; the situation in this respect has improved over the past two years as a result of this cooperation.

The same is true of our cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, with whose President our own President, Nicolás Maduro, met yesterday in Caracas in order to make headway in the creation of a direct mechanism that would facilitate the provision of truly neutral, independent and impartial assistance. The same can be said of the friendly countries that provide assistance on a peaceful basis, in full respect of our sovereignty.

One key factor that has been underestimated by those who are waging war against Venezuela is the sheer strength of our national spirit, which only grows when we are facing difficulties. This macabre experiment in destruction is aimed at proving that economic crimes do work, that peoples can be broken and made to surrender to foreign oppressors.

But they are wrong about Venezuela. The collective suffering that they are indeed causing is resisted by growing levels of organization on the part of our people. Our national Bolivarian armed forces have not broken rank despite all the calls for a coup d'état and are more united with the people than ever. Our people are resisting, and our workers are reacting to the clandestine attacks and acts of sabotage against our vital infrastructure with a discipline and celerity that the aggressors had not imagined they would possess. Yes, there is pain, there is suffering, but this is not triggering a civil war, which is what they want. Today our people are setting an example for the world of how to fight for peace and community.

It would be logical to think that the efforts of our Government to overcome the difficulties caused by this aggression would be recognized and supported by all of those who claim to be so interested in easing the situation in Venezuela. However, what we are experiencing is a fresh wave of economic extortion, which is cutting off our country's financial flows with the exterior and is also affecting our cooperation with United Nations agencies, which even as I speak cannot

find a way to receive our funds and send the supplies necessary to meet the needs of our people.

Why is that? Because the Trump Government is engaged in a campaign of terror against any commercial or financial actors that have anything to do with Venezuelan money. We have money; we are not asking anyone for anything. We have money, but the Trump Government is terrorizing economic actors to ensure that they do not touch it. What the United States is engaged in has nothing to do with humanitarian assistance; it is a clandestine operation carried out without the consent of Venezuela that violates our territorial integrity through the threat of the use of force, as we have seen, and is aimed at inciting a military uprising and civil war. That is the specialty of that Government.

The Security Council, under Articles 24, 34 and 39 of the Charter, has the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to determine the existence of any threat to the peace or of any act of aggression. We therefore ask and call on the Council to please determine the following.

First, what is the legal basis in international law and under the Charter of the United Nations for the United Nations and the United Kingdom to impose on Venezuela a programme of economic destruction without the express authorization of the Security Council? Are they taking measures in line with those provided for under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations — measures for economic blockade — with the authorization of the Council? This is illegal. When will the Council determine the illegality of this aggression?

Secondly, what is the legal authority for applying what is now being called “secondary sanctions” against countries that are legally transacting business with Venezuela? What authority does the Government of the United States have to place sanctions on any country for doing business with us?

Thirdly, what is the legal basis in international law for the United States to threaten Venezuela with the use of military force? Where is that? Why is there no pronouncement on that?

Fourthly, what is the legal authority for the United States and the United Kingdom to appropriate our wealth? The representative of the United Kingdom said they were extending \$9 million. Do we have to thank them for offering \$9 million for the situation in

Venezuela, when they have \$1.2 billion in confiscated funds in the vaults of the Bank of England and they say that the Bank of England is an independent institution — while the Bank of England says it does not obey what the British Government says to them? That is the subject of a case we have against them in court at the moment. What is the legal authority for the United States and the United Kingdom to appropriate our wealth and gain extortive earnings by massively violating the human rights of our people?

Lastly, what is the legal basis for the United States to intervene in what are essentially matters having to do with Venezuela's domestic jurisdiction, in violation of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter of the United Nations?

In conclusion, the diagnosis of the present situation is that it is the result of a campaign of aggression by the United States and the United Kingdom. Treating the situation cannot be by way of a new dose of aggressive intervention with a humanitarian mask. The solution does not lie in donations by the criminals who want to paint themselves as saviours. It does not lie in humanitarian channels designed to provoke armed conflicts. It does not lie in holding donors conferences that serve to hide the plunder against our nation. Addressing the situation requires returning the money stolen from our people; halting the economic and financial blockade against our nation; stopping the sabotage of our infrastructure through covert operations; ceasing threats of military intervention; and ending threats against Venezuelans who want to have a dialogue. We must stop Trump's war, and the Security Council must meet its responsibility by guaranteeing Venezuela its right to peace.

The President: The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I apologize for taking the floor again, but I cannot allow those allegations against the Bank of England to go unaddressed.

I reject completely the allegations made by the Venezuelan Ambassador. He has made them before. I wrote to the then President of the Security Council — the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea — on 21 February, rejecting the allegations (S/2019/176). I will have that letter circulated again and we will put it on our website. But for the benefit of the record, the Bank of England's reputation is world-renowned.

It operates to the highest standards. It has operational independence from the British Government.

The President: The representative of Peru has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall be very brief. I do not believe there is a need to respond to a person who does not represent a country but instead represents an illegitimate Government.

What we would like to highlight — I think it is very important, and several speakers have mentioned it — is the issue of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Many countries in the region are making enormous efforts in that regard. We in Peru host 750,000 migrants, whom we have welcomed with our own resources. I mentioned this issue a little more than a month ago (see S/PV.8476), and Mr. Maduro's representative could not respond to the question of why he did not mention this very grave situation being lived by hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans.

Also on that occasion, we listened with great surprise how frivolously we were being told that the situation in Venezuela was normal and that people were preparing for the carnival festivities and to go to the beach. And, once again today, we heard that the situation is basically caused by sanctions — by foreign action. As I said in my statement, the very grave humanitarian and economic crisis is of internal making. For years, like other countries, Peru has been receiving increasing flows of refugees, which will grow even larger unless there is a change in the situation. We can therefore in no way accept that argument being used to confuse global public opinion when it comes to a crisis that is exclusively of internal making.

The President: The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, on the Bank of England, we are going to circulate to all Members of the United Nations and to the general public the truth about this situation. The Bank of England is not independent, as confirmed in letters to our representatives stating that it is following the sanctions imposed by the Government of the United States. The Bank of England is not independent when it communicates with representatives of the dictatorship imposed by the Government of the United States — rather, that it wants to impose — on

Venezuela. The Bank of England does not enjoy great prestige, given that what it is doing to us now it did to Libya previously. The Bank of England simply takes advantage: when it sees an opportunity to confiscate the wealth of a country it thinks has weaknesses, it changes its mind.

The latest example is this: the British Government says that its traditional policy is to recognize States, not Governments, and that they are not going to change it. But they did change it in the case of Venezuela. Now they are saying that they are not recognizing a State, but a new puppet Government that does not even control a single street in Venezuela. The Bank of England adjusts itself to that new policy, and now the President of the Central Bank of Venezuela, with whom the Bank of England has dealt with for years, says that he is not recognized because the British Government changed its mind. That is not an independent bank. And those who keep their gold there have to be very careful, for it is in danger.

With regard to what the Ambassador of Peru said, he has to be reminded that the United Nations is not a club of the friends of Peru, or the United States, and that Peru's bilateral relations — for whoever recognizes Peru, or not — has no bearing on my participation as the representative of the State of Venezuela at the United Nations. My rights here are conferred by the legitimacy of my Government within Venezuela, and not by what the Ambassador of Peru or the Vice-President of the United States might say. Whoever thinks that their enemies have to be pushed out of the United Nations and the Organization of American States has not understood the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations or those of multilateralism. I therefore raise the warning about the campaign that is starting today to try call into question our rights and those of all Members of the Organization.

With regard to the issue of migratory flows, I must say that there is in fact migration in Venezuela — and there is an economic cause behind it. But it is ridiculous to talk about refugees here, for a refugee is technically someone fleeing a political situation whose life is in danger and has no possibility of going back. Anybody who wants to can come back to Venezuela. In fact, thousands are going back from many countries. They come and go, yes. There are countries where thousands of people come and go every day. They cannot be called refugees; they are economic migrants.

However, the Ambassador of Peru wants the issue of economic refugees to be made a criminal or security matter here at the Security Council. If that is the case, then he should also be concerned about the refugees travelling in caravans to the United States border and the fact that President Trump is responding with a wall and an army and is declaring an emergency humanitarian situation. But the Ambassador of Peru does not seem to think that such a serious matter should be addressed in the Security Council, only the issue of Venezuela. That double standard is what we came here to denounce. The economic situation is in a bad state and is difficult, but what cannot happen to bring in the Security Council to try to criminalize the Venezuelan Government and create the conditions for an invasion. That is what we came here to denounce. We also came here for the Council to investigate and determine whether there really is a legal basis for the aggression against our people.

The President: As the briefers have been addressed during our discussion, I would like to give them the opportunity to take the floor.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: You asked me a question, Sir, about the basis on which we are assessing humanitarian need in Venezuela, and I would be happy, if the Security Council wished, to provide a written explanation of how we do that. In summary, however, in the interest of time, as I said in my statement, the work we have done so far has been on the basis of all of the available data. We have, in the best way we were able to in Venezuela, applied our tried and tested methodology that we use all over the world to assess humanitarian need. We have applied our standard system for caveating and quality controlling the use of the data and the judgments we make on the data. Again, as I said earlier, we are keen to sustain the consultations we have with the Government and others, because the only basis for principled humanitarian action as the situation evolves is a serious and professional ongoing effort to assess humanitarian need.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Stein.

Mr. Stein: I will refer to only two points.

First, with respect to the legitimacy of the data, we carefully picked our data based on the immigration data of legal crossings at Government border installations of the migration authorities of the

receiving countries, and, of course, the hardest hit has been Colombian territory. But if we were to include the various video recordings of irregular footpaths, blind trails or unofficial border points, which are used on a daily basis by different numbers of unrecorded Venezuelans crossing irregularly, the numbers would go well above the mark of 4 million. As those present know, irregularity increases vulnerability. But we have chosen not to include those irregular numbers of blind crossings.

Secondly, with all due respect, I would like to set the record straight about what was said by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the Security Council today. I was officially invited by his Administration last year, and on 16 November I personally met with Foreign Minister Arreaza. I never ever resisted or gave any indication of not being willing to accept the invitation to go to Caracas. The only request I made was for an agenda of the visit, in other words, the reason they were inviting me. Insofar as I must remind the members of the Security Council, our mandate is basically humanitarian, to attend to those people who have left Venezuelan territory. But, in any case, Foreign Minister Arreaza agreed that they would send a proposed agenda for my visit, for which I am still waiting.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Page.

Ms. Page: With regard to the question regarding the data, as I mentioned, we did some site visits,

we spoke to workers within and outside Venezuela and also reviewed public data published by the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. Further details about our methodology are published in the peer-reviewed article in *The Lancet* that came out two weeks ago, for those who are interested in reviewing that.

I also want to highlight that we in fact obtained official data, when we could. To highlight one point, as I mentioned, childhood mortality and maternal mortality increased pretty significantly from 2015 to 2016. That data comes from official reports from the Venezuelan Ministry of Health, and that increase preceded the economic sanctions were mentioned.

The President: The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I hope that this is the last time I take the floor. I would like to point out to Mr. Stein that we have a letter that he himself signed that states that he cannot come to Venezuela, despite our invitation, because his mandate does not allow it. That is why we made a formal complaint to the Office of the Secretary-General, as we have a document that proves that he did not want to meet. That is why we said that we have proof in hand.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.