



Security Council

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New York

Provisional

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

Agenda

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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

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

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

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: Exactly a month ago, I briefed the Security Council on the protracted crisis in Venezuela, including its political, economic, human rights and humanitarian dimensions (see S/PV.8452). Since then, we have witnessed an alarming escalation of tensions. As I reported in my previous briefing to the Council, on 23 January the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, invoked provisions of the Constitution to declare himself interim President of Venezuela during an opposition-led protest. The application of those constitutional provisions was strongly contested by the Government.

As part of the actions he has taken since then, Mr. Guaidó announced that food and medical supplies would be transported to Venezuela. In response, the United States and other countries stockpiled food and medical supplies at the Colombian and Brazilian borders, as well as in Curaçao. Separately, the Russian Federation and China delivered supplies to Venezuela in coordination with the Venezuelan Government, to be distributed to those in need.

On 22 February, the Venezuelan Government temporarily closed several international bridges at

the border with Colombia, as well as border crossings with Brazil. It also increased its security presence in those areas. On 23 February, Mr. Guaidó led efforts by volunteers and lawmakers to transport food and medicine that had been stocked in Brazil and Colombia across the border to Venezuela. Violent incidents occurred at different points along the borders with Brazil and Colombia, as the Venezuelan security forces blocked the aid supplies coming into Venezuela. At the Colombia border, two trucks were burned as they attempted to cross the border, with the Government and opposition accusing each other of burning them. According to Colombian migration authorities, at least 285 individuals were injured on the Colombian side. It is our understanding that no aid from this site was allowed in.

Along the Brazilian border, indigenous groups supporting the opposition attempted to deliver aid stockpiled in Brazil and met resistance. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), between 22 and 23 February four deaths were confirmed near the Brazilian border, and another 64 individuals were injured, most of them by gunshot. The OHCHR also received several reports pointing to the involvement of pro-Government armed elements in the violent attacks on protesters.

In a statement on 23 February, the Secretary-General stated his shock and sadness at the recent violence and loss of life that brought additional suffering to the Venezuelan people. He reiterated the appeal he had made to Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza on 22 February that lethal force not be used by anyone under any circumstances. The Secretary-General also called for calm and urged all actors to lower tensions and pursue every effort to prevent further escalation.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet condemned the violent scenes that took place at various points along Venezuela's borders with Brazil and Colombia. She condemned the excessive use of force by the Venezuelan security forces and said the Government must stop its forces from using it. She also urged the Government to rein in its proxy groups and arrest those among them who have used force against protesters.

The Secretary-General is concerned by the serious humanitarian problems facing the country and their impact on vulnerable populations. While the lack of official data is a serious challenge in assessing the

situation, available information depicts a grim reality, with the economy continuing to deteriorate and with people dying of preventable causes and leaving the country in search of assistance. Civil society groups report that maternal mortality has increased by over 50 per cent since 2017, as has the number of infant deaths. Dialysis patients among other groups of people that suffer from chronic conditions have taken to the streets to protest the lack of medicines and services they require to stay alive. Data used by the Pan American Health Organization indicates that measles is under control, but 80 per cent of hospitals lack the required medicines, and 30 to 40 per cent of medical personnel have left the country. New estimates by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration place at 3.4 million the number of Venezuelans who have left the country.

In Venezuela, the United Nations system is working in cooperation with relevant State institutions and other actors to support efforts to address these challenges. Seven resident agencies, funds and programmes and a non-resident agency have moved from policy-oriented support to a strengthened, prioritized and coordinated United Nations effort that delivers assistance closest to people in need. Since 2018, the United Nations has been implementing a scaled-up effort that consists of three pillars of action: life-saving, economic recovery and conflict prevention and human rights. The scale-up was developed in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Venezuela. Delivery of assistance is guided by General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Such assistance must be free from political objectives and delivered on the basis of need.

Much more remains to be done to address the extremely urgent needs of the Venezuelan people. The United Nations is ready to continue expanding these efforts. We will continue to act in accordance with humanitarian principles working with Venezuelan institutions to assist people in need. The Secretary-General has stressed repeatedly the importance of these guiding principles and has called on all stakeholders and Member States to respect them.

As he has repeatedly stated, the Secretary-General is ready to exercise his good offices if the parties avail themselves of this option. Venezuelan actors across the entire political spectrum have the responsibility to put

the interests of the Venezuelan people at the centre of their actions at this most critical time.

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

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

Mr. Abrams (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her very sobering and comprehensive briefing.

We are here today because of the de facto Maduro regime's refusal to allow humanitarian aid to enter Venezuela on 23 February, which led to deaths, injuries and violence on two international borders. Those actions showed once again the true intentions and nature of the Maduro regime. Armed gangs, thugs and criminals released from prisons were mobilized to control the border. Their actions led to the burning of humanitarian assistance rather than its protection.

And while Venezuelans were shot, beaten and killed as they tried to bring food and medicine into their country, Maduro was literally dancing in Caracas. Four people died, more than 80 Venezuelans were injured — it may be many more than that — after vigilantes from the regime opened fire. Protesters, aid workers and journalists marched to the border to welcome much-needed aid and were instead greeted by tear gas and rubber bullets.

The United States and the international community must support the Venezuelan people as they strive to reclaim their democracy. We should respect their Constitution and their sovereignty, which is why we must support Juan Guaidó's interim presidency. And we must address the de-stabilizing results of Maduro's corrupt, fraudulent and incompetent reign, which just this weekend brought instability and violence to the borders of two other Member States, Brazil and Colombia.

Maduro, his cronies and some in this body claim that delivering humanitarian assistance is a political show and a cover for military intervention, but it is very clear that only the Maduro regime is using violence, only the regime has called in both its security forces and armed gangs, only the regime has betrayed Venezuelan independence and sovereignty by submitting to the influence of Cuban officers who permeate the security and intelligence agencies, and only the regime has a

history of using humanitarian aid as both a political tool for social control and a resource for rampant corruption.

Maduro wants to maintain power in the current crisis, and he has continued to politicize aid, via the Local Committees for Supply and Production programme, providing benefits to his supporters while rejecting the needs-based focus assistance must, as Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo said, have. Any additional time Maduro spends in power is additional time he will use to repress the Venezuelan people. That has been proven time and again, and this weekend was yet another example. And when he was brought face to face with the truth — that contrary to his false claims that aid was not needed, Venezuelan children were filmed by Univisión combing through garbage to search for food — what did Mr. Maduro do? He detained the journalists, seized their equipment and ordered them deported. But the truth remains, and the sad plight of millions of Venezuelans remains unchanged.

We are grateful for the leadership of our partners in supporting humanitarian assistance for the people of Venezuela and supporting their demand for democracy. The European Union, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Peru all swiftly condemned the use of violence and called for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance. Their words and their actions can make a real difference in this crisis.

The cure for this misery and tyranny is a free, fair and transparent election that embraces all sectors of society and all political parties. That, of course, includes Chavistas, whose party has been usurped, much like the country itself, by Maduro. We believe that both Guaidó supporters and Chavistas can rebuild their country together and can construct a newly prosperous and democratic Venezuela. We are also deeply concerned about the safety of interim President Guaidó upon his return to Venezuela. It is our duty as Council members to ensure that interim President Guaidó is able to return home freely and safely.

Now is the time to strengthen our commitment to the brave Venezuelan people. We call on the members of the Security Council to join us in meeting the growing needs in Venezuela and the region. We call on Member States to consider what resources and tools they have to contribute to Venezuelan democracy and to pressure the illegitimate Maduro regime to peacefully step down. We ask that others join us in sanctioning those who

were involved in the violence over the past weekend and who are fattened by the spoils of the Maduro regime's corruption. We ask that Member States contribute to addressing the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, as dozens of nations generously have already done. We ask that they recognize the nature of the Maduro regime and question the purpose and likely outcome of so-called dialogue with someone who would rather block and burn donated medicine and bread than see it in the hands of Venezuelan children. Ask Jorge Ramos of Univisión about the value of dialogue with Nicolás Maduro.

The people of Venezuela need our solidarity and our help if they are to prevail against a vicious and violent regime, emerge into democracy and begin to rebuild their country. Let us resolve to give them that help, to give them that solidarity and assistance.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this timely meeting and the important information provided by Ms. DiCarlo.

Peru and the Governments of the region that make up the Lima Group met yesterday in the city of Bogotá and adopted a declaration on the serious crisis affecting Venezuela — which was transmitted to you, Mr. President, for distribution as an official document of the Security Council — the main points of which are reflected in my statement today.

In that declaration, the Lima Group condemns the violent repression of Nicolás Maduro's illegitimate regime, which, ignoring the suffering of the Venezuelan population and the appeals of the international community, prevented the entry of basic necessities and international assistance last weekend. Those deliberate actions have caused deaths and injuries on the border with Colombia and Brazil. Those actions have aggravated the risk to the life, dignity and integrity of the Venezuelan people, and have affected regional peace and security.

This situation is compounded by the massive migration crisis involving more than 3.4 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees who have fled tyranny, abuse, poverty and corruption, which has forced almost every South American country to adopt emergency measures to accommodate those people in need.

Today Peru wants to be the voice of the almost 700,000 Venezuelans it has welcomed in its territory in

reiterating its unwavering commitment to democratic transition and the institutional, economic and social rebuilding of Venezuela, while expressing our solidarity with its courageous and resilient brotherly people. The continuation of this illegitimate regime in and of itself represents an unprecedented threat to the peace, security, freedom and prosperity of the entire region:

In the past month, ever since the Council met to address the situation in Venezuela (see S/PV.8452), we have observed a rapid deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in that country. More than 80 per cent of the population is experiencing food insecurity as a result of the intentional policies of the Maduro regime, which deprives its people of food and medicine, as well as access to basic services, in order to ensure that it remains in power.

We have also seen the use of indiscriminate violence by armed groups in the service of a regime that has been accused of the systematic and strategic use of murder, imprisonment, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, with the aim of terrorizing the Venezuelan people and crushing opposition to the regime. We condemn the use of violence by the dictatorship against its population, which is expressed, among other forms, in the unjust imprisonment of political prisoners and arbitrarily detained journalists.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing commission of those serious crimes with impunity, we renew our request to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to initiate a prompt investigation into the crimes against humanity committed by the Maduro regime in Venezuela since 12 February 2014. We also call on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to address the situation in that country, and on the Human Rights Council to initiate investigations to bring those responsible to justice.

Peru, together with the Lima Group, reiterates its conviction that a transition to democracy must be carried out by Venezuelans themselves peacefully, within the framework of the Constitution and international law, and supported by political and diplomatic means, without the use of force. We therefore back the need for the prompt holding of free, fair and credible elections open to the participation of all political forces, with international support and monitoring, organized by a neutral and legitimately constituted electoral authority.

That course of action is necessary given the regime's repeated and proven lack of commitment to

promoting peaceful and negotiated solutions through dialogue. Past attempts have been used only to gain time and then engage in new abuses and violations of human rights.

Consequently, Peru reaffirms its recognition of, and support for, the National Assembly and the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, and his representatives in their efforts to restore democracy, focus urgently on the humanitarian crisis and rebuild the economy. In that connection, we join the Lima Group in calling on the armed forces, the courts and the justice system in Venezuela to recognize the interim President, respect his constitutional powers and stop being used as instruments of oppression against their own people.

We welcome the growing support of a large number of States that are committed to democracy and have recognized President Guaidó. We call on those members of the international community that maintain links with the Maduro regime to facilitate the search for solutions that will allow for a democratic transition and the holding of elections in Venezuela. The Lima Group has also called on the Secretary-General, in accordance with his competencies, to mobilize the United Nations system to react to events in Venezuela. In the meantime, we will continue to advocate for addressing this serious situation in this forum, as well as in the Organization of American States.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the courage and determination of the Venezuelan people in their heroic struggle to regain stability and democracy in their country, as well as to reaffirm our solidarity with, and full commitment to, Venezuelans' right to live in democracy and freedom.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her very informative briefing on the unrelenting tragic situation facing the Venezuelan people.

As Venezuela undergoes the most serious humanitarian crisis in its history and civilians, especially women and children, are dying for lack of access to adequate health care and basic needs, Mr. Maduro's regime decided on 23 February to prohibit international aid from reaching the country's population. His forces did not hesitate to kill, and they wounded several hundred people in clashes with unarmed civilians on the borders. The regime resorted

to using armed militias in its pay, known for their particular brutality. Hundreds of Venezuelan soldiers preferred to defect rather than attack their compatriots.

Since the beginning of this crisis, France has affirmed its unfailing support for the Venezuelan people and their legitimate demands. We are referring to the women and men who are suffering from shortages in basic necessities and a health-care system in shambles; to the women and men who have had to flee their country, as they can no longer live in dignity and security; and to the women and men who are calling for the return of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. In that regard, I would like to stress two points.

First, this political and humanitarian crisis did not come about by chance. As the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini, recalled on 24 February,

“The origins of the ongoing crisis in Venezuela are political and institutional; hence, the solution can only be a political one”.

Accordingly, the crisis is the result of the regime’s multiple violations of the rule of law and the Venezuelan Constitution, which, on 20 May 2018, culminated in the holding of presidential elections lacking in transparency and credibility and held in oppressive circumstances. Nicolás Maduro, who claimed to be the winner, enjoys no legitimacy based on that claim. Many countries, including France and its European partners, drew the necessary conclusions. The President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, became interim President, not propped up by foreign support but through respect for the Constitution of Venezuela, in order to organize the holding of new, free, credible and transparent presidential elections.

Although the situation seems at a stalemate, the European Union and Uruguay have launched an international contact group in which France is taking part. The group has two clear goals, which France shares. The first is to encourage a negotiated and peaceful exit out of the crisis, as the use of force and violence must be avoided in Venezuela. France especially stresses the latter point. There can only be a political and peaceful solution to the crisis, and such a solution involves the holding of democratic presidential elections as soon as possible. The second goal is to allow the delivery of international aid, in accordance with international

humanitarian principles, so as to meet the urgent needs of the Venezuelan people.

In blocking humanitarian aid in the middle of an unprecedented crisis the regime is acting disgracefully in the eyes of the international community and its own people. For several years now, millions of Venezuelans have faced the greatest challenges in terms of providing food and caring for themselves, as victims of a severely corrupt system. In its national capacity and under the aegis of the European Union, France is committed to helping those women and men who are in desperate need. We will pursue our efforts in close cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, with full respect for the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. In particular, we must collectively increase our efforts to help international, governmental and non-governmental organizations meet the needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

We call on the Venezuelan regime to demonstrate humanity and facilitate access for United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to carry out their activities in the country aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Venezuelan people. It is a question of life or death for thousands of people; each minute we lose represents lives lost. I commend once again the courage of those Venezuelans who have stood ready for several years now to help their fellow citizens. They deserve our unreserved admiration and full support.

Allow me to conclude by underscoring the following point. Although today Venezuela is on the edge of the precipice, our responsibility is not to substitute ourselves for the Venezuelan people. It is to provide them once again with a voice and allow them to express themselves freely to reclaim their destiny through the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. That is the direction in which France is working.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting. We also thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her detailed briefing on the recent events in Venezuela.

At the outset, we reiterate what we said in this same setting exactly a month ago (see S/PV.8452). The Dominican Republic served as mediator to encourage dialogue between the opposition and the Venezuelan authorities, in an attempt to reach an understanding to resolve the political crisis in the Bolivarian Republic

of Venezuela. Despite initial optimism, neither the political will nor the maturity needed to reach an agreement prevailed. We therefore understand that there is no other possible solution than the holding of free and competitive elections without delay, with guarantees for all political groups and actors. Those elections can be held only in an environment of respect for human rights and with the support of the international community.

In that regard, we believe that the good offices of the United Nations are appropriate for building the trust necessary for the electoral process' success. We are increasingly concerned about the tragic situation experienced by Venezuelans, who are suffering from a general climate of insecurity as well as a shortage of goods and basic medicines. As a region we have shown solidarity with the millions of Venezuelans who have been forced to leave the country. However, we cannot ignore the high cost incurred by flows of impoverished people, which could threaten the stability of host countries and the region. We cannot lose sight of what is at stake in the medium and long term.

Before concluding, we would like to make one important point. In recent days the Dominican Republic has been prejudicially accused of allowing its territory to be used for third-country military actions against Venezuela. Specifically, Cuban and Venezuelan authorities have claimed that foreign planes have landed at a military airbase near Santo Domingo to participate in such manoeuvres. We would like to make our position very clear: military intervention is not a solution to the Venezuelan crisis. Therefore, such claims are absolutely false and continuing to repeat them will not make them true. We hope that those who promoted that disinformation campaign will correct the information and have the decency to apologize. I repeat, we hope that those who promoted that disinformation campaign will correct the information and have the decency to apologize.

Lastly, we deplore the events that took place this weekend at several border crossings in Venezuela. We call for moderation on the part of all those involved, not only in the abuse of force against unarmed persons but also in the use of inflammatory rhetoric that escalates day after day. We would like to end with a call to create the conditions for the unhindered delivery of the aid needed to alleviate the grave humanitarian crisis affecting our Venezuelan brothers and sisters. We reaffirm that the Dominican Republic hopes that Venezuela will find a democratic and peaceful solution,

in accordance with international law — one that helps rebuild national trust and cohesion in Venezuelan society for the future.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

Belgium is of the view that the situation in Venezuela is a clear threat to the stability of the region. In order to prevent the situation from deteriorating, we call upon all members of the Security Council to work together to promote a peaceful solution to recent events. We call for violence to be avoided at all costs. In that regard, I would like to make three points: first, with regard to an appeal for restraint and de-escalation; secondly, on the importance of complete humanitarian access, in line with humanitarian principles; and, thirdly, about the need to launch as soon as possible a peaceful political process that paves the way for free and transparent elections.

First of all, I should like to call on those with influence on developments in the country to demonstrate restraint. We call for calm and encourage all actors to spare no effort to reduce tensions. We firmly condemn the excessive use of force by security forces, as well as by pro-Government factions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported four deaths and more than 300 injured, in particular among the Pemón indigenous community. Belgium extends its sincere condolences to the families of the deceased. We call for an independent investigation and recall the importance of respect for the rights of demonstrators and the freedom of the press.

Secondly, the regime's refusal to acknowledge the humanitarian emergency has led to escalating tensions. Belgium calls on all actors to authorize the entry of aid and facilitate the movement of humanitarian workers. We underscore the importance of humanitarian aid that seeks to ease the suffering of the most vulnerable, under the supervision of the competent agencies of the United Nations and in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is unacceptable for irregular armed groups to intimidate civilians and members of the National Assembly who have come together to distribute aid.

Thirdly, Belgium calls for the rapid launch of a peaceful political process, which would pave the way for free and transparent elections, enable the people to freely express themselves and lead to reconciliation

in Venezuela. The current crisis in Venezuela is political in nature; the solution must therefore also be political. The presidential elections held in May last year were not free, fair or credible, and therefore deprived the Government of Nicolás Maduro of its democratic legitimacy. We support Juan Guaidó in his constitutional duty to organize free, fair and democratic presidential elections. The European Union established a contact group during the transition period to support the process.

The Venezuelan people have already suffered enough. It is high time to let them decide their own future. Belgium calls for a peaceful democratic transition, restraint, de-escalation by all parties and respect for political and human rights, in the broader sense. Those are the essential tools for moving towards lasting reconciliation in Venezuelan society. Belgium will continue to closely monitor the situation on the ground.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): First, allow me to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing to the Security Council.

We have witnessed over recent days a further escalation of violence and a deepening of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Hundreds of people are crossing the borders as we speak, joining the more than 3 million Venezuelans who have already fled the country and leaving behind many more millions inside the country in extremely miserable conditions. The Council cannot remain idle in face of a crisis that has such an adverse effect on peace and security in the region.

We particularly condemn the indiscriminate and excessive use of force against unarmed protesters by the Venezuelan security forces and pro-Maduro irregular armed groups, which has already led to deaths and hundreds of injuries. We also deplore the systematic and widespread human rights violations and abuses committed by security forces and irregular armed groups. They must stop, and they must stop now. We call on everyone to refrain from violence, which can spiral out of control and further complicate this multidimensional conflict. We call for respect for democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and of expression. Because of the political origin of the conflict, we strongly believe that the solution to it can only be political. There is no other alternative.

We reiterate our recognition of the National Assembly and its President, Mr. Juan Guaidó, as the only legitimate power in Venezuela with a democratic mandate, won in free and fair elections, in line with the Venezuelan Constitution. We join President Guaidó's call for the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections in accordance with international democratic standards. It must be heard by Venezuelan authorities.

The oppressive regime of Nicolás Maduro has led to an unprecedented migration and humanitarian crisis that has an undeniable impact and tremendous consequences on the situation in neighbouring Latin American countries. No matter how eloquently and passionately representatives of Nicolás Maduro deny it, the humanitarian catastrophe in Venezuela is real and its citizens are in dire need of urgent humanitarian aid. It is Maduro's policy that has led to it, and it is Nicolás Maduro who is further exacerbating the crisis by not allowing foreign humanitarian aid and deliberately hurting his own citizens. Let us stress that this is a human-made humanitarian crisis.

It falls to regional organizations to play a special role in diffusing this crisis. We believe that the genuine efforts of the Lima Group and the International Contact Group to de-escalate and find a way to move forward should be recognized. In line with the common European Union approach to the recent events in Venezuela, Poland excludes the use of military force and calls for talks leading to a durable, peaceful and democratic solution.

In conclusion, I would once again like to underline that the demands of society cannot be left unanswered. People have massively called for democracy. Their voices shall not and cannot be ignored.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We are grateful for the informative briefing provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo. We also welcome the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Jorge Arreaza.

The Security Council is the principal organ charged with maintaining international peace and security. Yet today we are witnessing the Council being divided on the internal affairs of a State Member of the United Nations, with some even threatening to use force against the territorial integrity and political independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a fellow Member

of the United Nations. That is inconsistent with the purpose of the United Nations, which was founded to maintain international peace and security among nations, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its States Members.

It is important to note that the Charter of the United Nations and international law proscribe the threat of force. For us in South Africa the threat of force sets a very bad precedent. We on the African continent have suffered a great deal, as external forces used undemocratic tools of regime change to solve problems on our continent. In principle, we are strongly opposed to that way of solving any problem. That approach takes away the basic rights of the people of the country to determine their own future.

Let the people of Venezuela decide their future. All that we can do is help them, but the decisions remain Venezuelan. We recognize the democratic processes followed by Venezuela in choosing a President, but we also recognize that Venezuela is currently facing humanitarian challenges. South Africa draws from its experience in overcoming one of the most repressive and insidious racist regimes through dialogue, and believes that internal, inclusive dialogue remains the only viable and sustainable path to ending the political crisis in Venezuela. Political dialogue should seem obvious and the first logical port of call, yet the actions of some in the international community have not been conducive or encouraging to that approach. Isolating and vilifying one party and calling for a specific, prescribed course of action that would preclude dialogue will only foment possible recourse to armed conflict. I reiterate: that is inconsistent with the purpose of the Security Council.

While South Africa does not believe that the situation in Venezuela poses a threat to international peace and security, the efforts of the Security Council in confronting the situation in Venezuela should be framed by Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, in that parties are encouraged first of all to seek a solution through negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement, or other peaceful means of their own choice. Forcing the parties to accede to and accept a prescription to resolving their own crisis, including through ultimatums, will only encourage further antagonism and division. We therefore call on the Council and all those truly interested in the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Venezuela to consider the question: What is the alternative to dialogue? The alternative — as we have seen in other cases where

dialogue was ignored by some in the Council — will be a prolonged crisis and possible military entanglements. That will only be to the further detriment of the people of Venezuela.

South Africa is deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. We are alarmed at the unrest and loss of life over the past weekend. Instead of assisting the people of Venezuela, the politicization and weaponization of humanitarian assistance has served to aggravate tensions in Venezuela, which can lead only to violence and confrontation. It is of the utmost importance that support for the people of Venezuela does not serve as a focal point for increased tensions and antagonisms or become a tool in the political dispute that is being stoked by some external parties and actors. We believe that humanitarian aid should not be used for the political ends of parties to the crisis, but should be delivered through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in order to ensure its neutrality and impartiality.

The Council cannot predetermine the will of the people of Venezuela. The international community should therefore promote a framework of inclusive internal dialogue in order for the people of Venezuela to determine their own destiny.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for her briefing.

At the outset, I would like to emphasize our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations when dealing with issues on the Council's agenda. We also emphasize the importance of preventive diplomacy in addressing disputes and crises at an early stage through peaceful ways and means and dialogue. In that regard, we stress the pivotal role played by regional and subregional organizations in ensuring preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts with a view to maintaining international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

We have followed with concern the accelerated events of recent days in Venezuela, which have resulted in the death or injury of a number of victims. We stress the importance that those responsible for these deplorable acts be held accountable, as well as of respecting people's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration, as guaranteed by international

law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in accordance with the national laws governing those rights.

We call on the parties concerned to respect all principles of international human rights law, the interests of the Venezuelan people and the future of their country above any other interest. We share the international community's concern about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, which in recent years has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans to neighbouring States. It has been a tremendous challenge for the host countries to provide safe and secure shelter to those people, constituting a threat to regional security and stability. In that regard, we are grateful to a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries for hosting those large numbers of displaced persons. We call on all stakeholders to cooperate and take the necessary measures to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need, in accordance with accepted humanitarian principles, without discrimination or distinction.

The crisis in Venezuela requires all relevant stakeholders to give priority to national interests above personal or partisan interests and to commit to a comprehensive political dialogue in order to address the current crisis. We urge all parties to exercise restraint, reduce tensions, renounce violence and make every effort to prevent further acts of violence. In that regard, we support all efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a political solution to ensure the stability of the situation in Venezuela as soon as possible, while preventing the region from descending into a humanitarian crisis and a cycle of violence and instability.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): One month ago, we reminded delegations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and said that there were blatant violations of the Universal Declaration (see S/PV.8452). Yet here we sit, one month later, and the situation continues. The Maduro regime has become even more cynical, and I refer to the example that the representative of the United States used in his statement, in which he said that Maduro is dancing while children and people were dying and suffering because they do not have anything to eat or any medical supplies.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for putting this on the Council's agenda today. I disagree with my South African friend — I think that this issue belongs on the Council's agenda. It is a threat to international

peace and security for two reasons. First, as I mentioned last time, there are 3.4 million refugees across the border, now living in the border areas of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, affecting stability, wealth and conditions in those countries. The representatives of those countries will speak later to confirm that having all of those people fleeing Venezuela to their territories is a threat to them. Secondly — and I thought we would have agreed on this — human rights are not solely an internal affair, but rather, and I quote from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations”. I would have thought that, given South Africa's background, it would have supported the view that it is very important to respect human rights and that if human rights are blatantly violated, then we must look to address that.

The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, gave a terrible description of the current situation in the country. I predict — as my Polish colleague has also predicted — that the representative of the Maduro regime will deny what is happening and say that they are not oppressing, that there are no arbitrary detentions, that there are no irregular armed groups and that there is freedom of speech. But they must look into our eyes and say that they know that there are children dying as a result of not having any nourishment; that there is maternal mortality, as the Under-Secretary-General stated; and that there are many people dying from preventable causes.

The most important thing now is to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance into the country. I do agree with my South African colleague and others that we must prevent any politicization of the delivery of humanitarian assistance. That will not lead to anything positive and undermines the safety and security of humanitarian workers. This is a historic moment for Venezuela and we must not leave its people to feel alone. Humanitarian aid must get there, in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Let me briefly turn to the political situation. I simply want to echo what my French and Belgian colleagues said earlier. The European Union, through its International Contact Group, stands ready to provide support. There can only be a political solution and we reject the use of force. We also support the declaration made by the Lima Group, which I wish to quote, “for

a process of peaceful transition through political and diplomatic means without the use of force”.

We therefore renew our call for the restoration of a democratic process and constitutional order through free, transparent and credible presidential elections, and we support Juan Guaidó in conducting that process towards a lasting peace, based on democratic values and respect for the rights and freedoms of the Venezuelan people.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): First of all, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing. I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Minister of the People’s Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We have been closely following the situation and the escalation of tensions in Venezuela, and we deeply regret the loss of lives resulting from recent events. We cannot afford to witness another loss. We fully support the Secretary-General’s statement calling for calm and for violence to be avoided at any cost, and we appeal to all of the parties involved, both within and outside the country, to make serious efforts to substantially reduce tensions and avert any escalation of violence.

Indonesia believes that dialogue, reconciliation and negotiation must be the preferred options for the resolution of any issue. It is our strong conviction that there will always 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, which provides us with various tools to be utilized in addressing the situation. We therefore urge all parties to follow that path, while taking into account the safety and prosperity of the people of Venezuela. In that connection, we welcome and support the Montevideo Mechanism, which seeks to preserve peace in Venezuela based on the principle of non-interference and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Indonesia has always been consistent in upholding and respecting the principles of non-interference, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of all countries, including Venezuela. At the same time, we are cognizant of the fact that the humanitarian situation in Venezuela is increasingly concerning and requires proper attention. We therefore encourage the delivery of all humanitarian aid for the people of Venezuela through a proper channel of the United Nations, in close coordination with the Venezuelan Government.

We strongly believe that the Council has an important role to play — based on the Charter of the United Nations — in assisting Venezuela to return to normalcy. To that end, it should speak in unity. Indonesia hopes that the Security Council can promote avenues that create the environment conducive for all relevant actors to commit to inclusive and credible political dialogue. The Council must also be able to insist that all relevant parties promote national dialogue and accept the Secretary-General’s good offices in order to help resolve the crisis. It is high time for the Council to play its pivotal role in avoiding the exacerbation of the situation in Venezuela. We hope that Venezuela will be able to peacefully overcome this crisis, while ensuring security, stability and prosperity for its people.

I would like to end my statement by quoting Herbert Hoover: “Peace is not made at the council table or by treaties, but in the hearts of men.” Let us all use our hearts and minds for the people of Venezuela.

Mr. Adom (Côte d’Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the convening of this meeting and commend Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing.

Côte d’Ivoire has been closely following the latest developments in Venezuela and deplores the sad events that have taken place in recent days at the Venezuelan border with Brazil and Colombia, resulting in the loss of human life and extensive material damage, which we of course regret. Côte d’Ivoire therefore wishes to extend its condolences to the bereaved families and its best wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured. We also hope to see humanitarian assistance reaching those who need it, regardless of where it comes from.

In underscoring the need to maintain a climate of peace and stability, my delegation calls on all parties to show restraint and encourages them to seek a peaceful political solution through inclusive dialogue in confronting a problem that is essentially political and institutional in nature. We believe that the role of the Secretary-General is useful and urgent in that regard. The parties to the conflict in Venezuela would benefit by availing themselves forthwith of his support in order to save a population that they claim to love and for whom they claim to be ready to spill the very last drop of their blood.

Convinced of the fact that there is no military solution to this crisis, my country urges all parties to use all legal and peaceful means to find appropriate

solutions to the institutional and political conflict. My delegation therefore calls on all stakeholders to engage resolutely in a process of negotiation to seek consensual solutions to the root causes of the crisis.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire urges the international community, including regional actors, to support the Venezuelan people in their efforts to emerge from this crisis by supporting all peaceful initiatives that may help to reduce tensions.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo and welcome the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Jorge Arreaza, to the Chamber.

I fully agree with my German colleague that the topic of today's meeting should have been "Threats to international peace and security", given the threats to Venezuela posed by a number of States. In fact, I think that the topic should be different. We should not be discussing the situation in Venezuela, but rather that surrounding Venezuela. Today, we find ourselves forced to attend the next episode of the United States' spectacle with regard to Venezuela. For those who have been unable to follow the entire story, I will provide a brief recap of previous episodes.

In a sovereign Latin American country, an impostor suddenly appeared. He began proclaiming himself President of the country and was immediately recognized as such by the United States of America. A number of European and Latin American countries hesitated at first before they too recognized him as President. According to that group of countries, the legitimate leader of the country, Nicolás Maduro, won the elections last spring in an unfair manner, owing to the opposition boycotting those elections. The fact that Washington, D.C., itself had encouraged opposition leaders to withdraw from that election is, of course, not mentioned. I believe that those now talking about due constitutional process and the legitimacy of the authority of Juan Guaidó on the basis of the Venezuelan Constitution understand that their claims are hypocritical, null and void of any legal basis and simply absurd.

What we are now witnessing is the abuse of constitutional law. Are they not ashamed to speak in this manner? Do they not realize that it is abundantly clear to all of us? Do they not understand that no self-respecting lawyer or judge would subscribe to that

mockery and disregard for the law? They should at least read the conclusions of the German Bundestag and its legal service, which has clearly pronounced on all this.

At the same time, we are hearing moans and groans over the terrible economic situation in Venezuela, its starving citizens and skyrocketing prices, among other problems. We are told that Venezuela must be saved at any cost, for the sake of its citizens. The fact that United States sanctions have been imposed against that country since 2013 — which many believe to be the cause of the current economic situation — is, of course, kept quiet. The fact that the overall damage to the country's economy as a result of those sanctions is estimated at \$345 billion is, of course, ignored.

And now, in a situation in which Venezuela has reached the boiling point, Washington, D.C., blames Nicolás Maduro for all of the country's troubles and organizes an operation it calls "the delivery of humanitarian assistance". This culminated on 23 February, when an unverified and uninvited American cargo arrived in Cúcuta, Colombia. Attempts were made to illegally smuggle the cargo into neighbouring Venezuela, using the civilian population as human shields. The legitimate Venezuelan authorities, in fulfilling their duty to protect the national border, mobilized their security forces with the sole objective of ensuring the inviolability of the country's border.

The video footage clearly shows that people coming from Colombian territory behaved aggressively and initially provoked the Venezuelan military and police officers on duty.

At that moment, the first victims among the demonstrators also appeared. People in uniform drove a car from the Venezuelan side and rammed a barrier on the Colombian side at high speed. This insane act was captured on videos posted on social networks that leave no doubt that it resulted in injuries and perhaps even deaths. The media immediately began trumpeting about victims dead at the hands of the bloodthirsty regime. The purposeful ramming of people anywhere in the world means only one thing, terrorism, but in Cúcuta it is proclaimed as the heroism of deserters challenging the authorities, while Juan Guaidó approvingly slaps the so-called "heroes" on the back. The so-called humanitarian workers on the Colombian side of the border very quickly turn to violence, with stones and Molotov cocktails flying at the defenders of the Venezuelan border. I think Council members can

agree that a scenario like this is reminiscent of almost anything but the delivery of humanitarian aid. By the way, the protesters themselves later set fire to one of the trucks with one of the Molotov cocktails. In the pictures that have flown around the world one can clearly see one of the demonstrators on the Colombian side, whether accidentally or on purpose, throwing a lighted bottle into a truck that never got to cross the bridge.

So on 23 February, by all indications, we observed an attempt to illegally cross a State border in order to bring in an unknown cargo. I would like to ask Council members which of their countries would have acted differently in this case. One country even wants to build a huge wall along one of its borders to prevent illegal entry. At this point, how can we not recall 1986, when humanitarian aid for Nicaragua turned out to be a batch of weapons for the contras? That episode is giving us some déjà vu today.

Let us call a spade a spade. This is not humanitarian aid. If the United States really wanted to help the people of Venezuela, it would be acting through any of the United Nations agencies accredited there, as other countries are successfully doing. For example, last week we delivered 7.5 tons of medical supplies to Caracas through the World Health Organization and encountered no obstacles, especially since the Venezuelan authorities are willing to accept the humanitarian technical assistance that the country needs. In order to make this process work, all that has to be done is to unblock Caracas's ability to make the payments for supplies of essential food and medicine. But the Americans and their allies do not want to do things lawfully. They have another goal. Calling it humanitarian is a travesty. What happened on Saturday was more like what is called force feeding here in the United States than aid. If anyone does not know what that is, it is a kind of torture. Apparently, having trained on their prisoners at Guantanamo, the American authorities have now decided to force-feed an entire country.

If anyone believes that the United States and its allies had the right to act this way, take a look at General Assembly resolution 46/182. It established the normative legal framework for international humanitarian assistance. Just now my colleague the Permanent Representative of Germany listed almost all the principles of humanitarian assistance but forgot one very important one. The resolution clearly states that in the provision of humanitarian assistance,

“The sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.”

It goes on to specify that

“the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of assistance” and that “humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country”.

Was there any such appeal? No.

At this point I would like to thank all our colleagues from United Nations agencies and their partners in major humanitarian organizations for refusing to support this act of political provocation. We demand an end to these violations of General Assembly resolutions and respect for the borders, sovereignty and national unity of the people of Venezuela, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Instead of a hypocritical attempt to import \$20 million worth of so-called aid, it is vital that the frozen Venezuelan state enterprises' accounts in American banks be immediately unblocked in order to free up \$11 billion allocated by the Government for the purchase of medicines, food and essential goods. And what about the \$7 billion in assets of *Petróleos de Venezuela*? And the \$1.2 billion in Venezuelan gold in the United Kingdom? Washington and London have just recently robbed the Venezuelan people of a total of \$30 billion in oil and banking assets. Let us call a spade a spade. A sovereign country is being blatantly robbed before our eyes. They are trying to reduce it to penury so that within the framework of the humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect, concepts unrecognized in international law, they can change a regime they do not like. One might then ask why Russia and other countries against such noble concepts. The answer is staring us in the face. Have there been so few examples of this — and in the history of Latin America alone? Let me cite an American historian, Harry Stout. He says, “I have charted 280 military interventions ... outside the United States on every corner of the globe”. He goes on to say,

“the American consensus consists in America's faith in the institution of war as a divine instrument and sacred mandate to be exercised around the world.”

I appeal to the countries supporting the self-proclaimed President Juan Guaidó. Are they really so naive as to believe that they are immune to this kind of thing? Have they not heard the American leaders declaring that Cuba and Nicaragua are next? Do they imagine that they will not come for them? But this warning is not only for them, it is a warning to all, to anyone who refuses to play by Washington's rules. And those who support Washington in this are complicit in violating the Charter and international law, and perhaps, heaven forbid, in an armed intervention, which they claim to categorically reject. We especially do not understand why Venezuela's neighbour Colombia, instead of resolving its own numerous internal problems in implementing its Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, has decided to throw itself into helping to organize a reckless venture against its neighbour. That is particularly disappointing considering that Colombia itself has only recently emerged from a protracted civil war whose consequences will take a very long time to overcome and for which sustainable peace is still not guaranteed. Incidentally, when times were hard for Colombia, its neighbour Venezuela opened its borders to more than 5 million refugees, many of whom still live there.

This is a warning against taking reckless steps to implement a military scenario in Venezuela, which we are hearing about more and more often. They could have the worst and most unpredictable consequences for both the region and the whole world. We urge all the States of the region, regardless of their political preferences, to express their firm support for the Charter of the United Nations and for refraining from the threat or use of force and from massively blatant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State. We have said it before, and we will say it again and again. Any solution to Venezuela's problems is the exclusive right, remit and responsibility of Venezuelans themselves, and they must be able to own that without any provocative interference from outside. The international and especially the regional assistance should be aimed at finding a formula that can put an end to the turmoil within this country in full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We therefore welcome the goals expressed and pursued by Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia and the countries of the Caribbean Community, the participants in the Montevideo Mechanism. For our part, we are ready to assist in the quest for a mutual understanding between all of the constructive and

patriotic forces in Venezuela, especially since the Venezuelan authorities are calling for and insisting on the imperative of an intra-Venezuelan dialogue.

Rather than discussing the possibilities of dialogue and national reconciliation, National Assembly President Juan Guaidó is calling on States to keep the military option open. It is difficult to describe such appeals as the responsible behaviour of a politician who cares about his country and his people. The humanitarian show put on by Washington on 23 February ripped the masks off those who usually remain backstage. They were all out there, taking centre stage.

It is now perfectly clear that Washington's sole aim in Venezuela was neither to resolve Venezuela's problems nor to care for its people, but to achieve regime change and to threaten to do so via military intervention. The fact that this is being done in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and civilized norms is of no concern whatever to its perpetrators. Unfortunately, disrespect for these core principles of international relations has long been the norm for the United States. It scarcely pays attention to them.

Let me conclude with a little experiment. On 21 February, the United States delegation proposed a text of a Security Council press statement on the events in Haiti, which all members of the Security Council unanimously supported. If I may, I will read out this brief document:

"Members of the Security Council expressed concern about violent demonstrations and the death of innocent civilians and urged all citizens to express themselves peacefully.

"Members of the Security Council reaffirmed their commitment to working with the people and the Government of Haiti towards a more secure and prosperous future.

"Members of the Security Council underscored that it is important for all actors to demonstrate a willingness to engage in good faith in efforts to address Haitian political and socioeconomic issues."

My question is as follows: Are our American colleagues willing to adopt, as a Security Council press statement, a similar text regarding Venezuela? It is hard not to notice that we are touching on a virtually identical situation. The difference lies solely in the fact that, with regard to Haiti, Washington, D.C., decided to side with

the legitimate authority — at least for now. For some reason, we have no doubt what the response to this will be, but we would still like to hear it directly from our United States colleagues. We will circulate this press statement among members of the Security Council.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing. I welcome the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, Mr. Jorge Arreaza, to our open meeting today.

China is paying close attention to the current situation in Venezuela and supports the efforts of the Venezuelan Government to safeguard State sovereignty, independence and stability. The affairs of Venezuela should be up to the Venezuelan people themselves. China calls on the Venezuelan Government and opposition to seek a political settlement, within constitutional and legal frameworks, through dialogue and consultation.

China notes that, recently, the Venezuelan Government has remained calm, exercised restraint and shown dedication to upholding domestic peace and stability. China maintains that all countries should abide by the basic principles of international law and international relations. China opposes foreign interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela, military intervention in Venezuela and using the issue of so-called humanitarian assistance for political purposes to destabilize or create turbulence within Venezuela and the neighbouring region. That does not serve the interests of any party.

China calls on the international community to take measures that are truly beneficial to the stability and economic development of Venezuela and that improve the lives of its people. We hope that the international community will, on the premise of respecting Venezuela's sovereignty, provide constructive assistance to Venezuela in order to facilitate a smooth resolution of the relevant issues.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Rosemary DiCarlo for her informative and timely briefing and by thanking the United States for requesting this meeting.

Let me also begin by saying that I agree with everything that the German Ambassador said today, in particular about the importance of the Security Council addressing this issue. I note that the agenda for today's

discussion does not mention the situation in the region or wider threats to international peace and security. The agenda item, to which we have all agreed, is the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Years of misrule and corruption have wrecked the Venezuelan economy. The actions of the Maduro regime have led to economic collapse, which threatens the peace and security of the region. Over 3.5 million Venezuelans have left their country for other countries in the region. This is one of the greatest migrant crises ever faced by Latin America. It has placed huge strain on the social services of nations of the region. That is why, together with the human rights situation mentioned by my German colleague, it is completely appropriate that the Council continues to address the issue.

I was disappointed to hear the Russian Ambassador attempt to ridicule what he called moans and groans about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela. No one on the Council should belittle the suffering of the Venezuelan people. I also note that the Russian Ambassador asked all of us a question, which I will attempt to answer. He asked which of us on the Council would have acted any differently, faced with unwanted attempts to deliver humanitarian assistance. Well, let me tell him that we would have acted differently and, looking around the Council today, I think a majority of Council members would have acted differently. We would not have used live fire against civilians attempting to deliver aid. We would not direct paramilitary thugs to attack civilians. We would not arrest and detain our political opponents and we would not have mismanaged the country through years of misrule and corruption, causing economic collapse and a humanitarian crisis. I hope that goes some way to answering his question.

The United Kingdom joins other members of the Council in condemning the violence that took place on Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil at the weekend. Maduro's use of deadly violence against his own people and other concerning acts of aggression to block the supply of desperately needed humanitarian aid are simply repugnant. The Maduro regime's oppressive policies affect all sectors of the population, from the innocent civilians — including women and children — who lack access to essential medical and other basic supplies, to journalists whose work is censored by the regime. As we heard from the United Nations, just yesterday the renowned journalist Jorge Ramos was reportedly detained in the Miraflores

Palace, later to be released and deported while his team's equipment was confiscated.

As with the lack of freedom given to journalists, other essential freedoms — such as democratic ones — are simply not present in Venezuela. Only a democratic solution will resolve this crisis. The United Kingdom thanks the Lima Group and the Organization of American States for their clear words and strong action towards that goal. It is important that the region continue to take the lead. We stand with these regional bodies and with Juan Guaidó in pursuit of our shared goal to bring peace and stability to Venezuela.

The only way to achieve peace and stability is by democratic transition through free and fair presidential elections, as demanded by interim President Guaidó and the National Assembly in line with the Venezuelan Constitution. Until this is achieved, the current humanitarian crisis caused by the Maduro regime's corrupt policies will continue. The United Kingdom has committed to giving \$8.6 million dollars in emergency aid to treat malnourished children and provide vaccinations and clean water to the most vulnerable communities affected by the crisis.

We encourage our partners in the international community and on the Council to consider what more can be done to send a clear signal to the Maduro regime that nothing short of free and fair presidential elections will do. This includes considering additional sanctions against individual members of the Maduro regime who have benefited from their corrupt policies. This should not negatively affect the dire humanitarian situation, which is solely the responsibility of the regime.

The world cannot stand by in the face of this man-made crisis. The Venezuelan people deserve a better future. They have suffered enough at the hands of the Maduro regime. Free and fair presidential elections are the only solution. The Council and the international community should do our utmost to support this aim.

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

I thank Ms. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for the enlightening briefing she has just given to the Security Council on the current situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We welcome the presence of Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Minister of the People's Power

for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, among us at this important meeting.

Today, we meet again after our meeting a month ago on the situation in Venezuela (see S/PV.8452), which the delegation of Equatorial Guinea has been watching with great attention and enormous concern. Last month, we expressed our concern that the momentum of events taking place in Venezuela could reach levels that would generate greater suffering for the population. It would seem that this situation is becoming more and more worrisome. We therefore urge all parties involved to refrain from any initiative that could lead to further acts of violence — clashes that could result in the loss of human life.

We believe that today's meeting is a fitting occasion for us to reflect on a possible political solution to the situation in Venezuela, which, as far as we are concerned, should be a solution negotiated among the Venezuelans themselves, with the mediation of a neutral party, such as the United Nations, as we proposed in our statement on 26 January. As we have heard in various interventions this afternoon, nearly the entire international community is opposed to a military solution to the issues that Venezuela is currently facing.

Given that this is a national matter, the politicians of the country must sit down to negotiate and reach agreements on the points of contention that are causing the problems threatening the stability of the country. We believe that any international approach must provide peaceful initiatives that do not go beyond this framework of negotiations, which provides an assured means of resolving conflicts and prevents further suffering for the population. In this sense, it falls to the Venezuelan Government — with the support of the international community — to pave the way for facilitating this inclusive dialogue. Here, the national interest must be prioritized so that satisfactory agreements can be reached among all parties and so that peace and social harmony can be restored in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude for the support provided by Venezuela's neighbouring countries and others that receive thousands of Venezuelan migrants on a daily basis. In this regard, we commend the solidarity of the humanitarian agencies that have supported the Governments of these host countries in serving the displaced. We therefore call

on the international community to bolster the efforts of these countries to assist the migrant populations.

I conclude my statement by reiterating our suggestion that, in the light of the fact that the sole viable alternative to resolving the crisis lies in inclusive dialogue between Venezuelan political actors, the United Nations — through Secretary-General António Guterres — should be involved in the organization and facilitation of such negotiations, with the support and coordination of initiatives such as the International Contact Group on Venezuela and the Montevideo Mechanism. The fact that we are discussing this matter in the Security Council for the second time in the space of one month is, in itself, a clear indication of the important role that the United Nations must play in resolving this conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Abrams (United States of America): I would like to respond briefly to the remarks of the representative of the Russian Federation.

I think we are all aware of efforts that are being made — far away from here, in Hanoi — over the next couple of days to solve some problems that arose during the Cold War. But that is not the rhetoric that we heard in the Council today. We heard a lot of Cold War rhetoric — the kind of rhetoric that we used to hear when that sign said not “Russian Federation” but “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics”. It is a bit surprising.

First of all, what the United States did in providing aid or attempting to provide aid was done at the request of the legitimate Government — the legitimate interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who requested such aid from the international community. The Russian representative said that his country delivered aid, but I wonder how much of that aid will get to the people of Venezuela, because it was not delivered to the people. It was delivered to the regime, which will take it, and we will never know how much of it was sold through corrupt practices and how much of it was simply given to supporters of the regime.

Then we heard a good deal about the freezing of accounts and about gold. Here, I think we get to the heart of the matter, which is that a lot of money is owed to Russia and it is no doubt worrying whether that

money is going to be repaid. Well, my answer is — not if this economy is driven further into the ground. The only way the debts that are owed by Venezuela will ever be repaid is if the economy can once again grow and if this terrible period of decline, which has impoverished what was once the richest country in Latin America, can be brought to an end.

Finally, I would just say that I reject completely — from start to finish and from top to bottom — accusations of military intervention from a country that is occupying the territory of Georgia and Ukraine, in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and in Crimea, respectively. We do not accept such accusations in this situation; I reject them completely and I am amazed to hear them in the Council.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I did not intend to engage in polemics with my United States colleague. However, given that he has taken the floor, I should like to make one remark and pose one question.

With respect to whose rhetoric aligns more closely to the Cold War, I have my own views on that. Mr. Abrams was an active participant in the Cold War and in a number of underground operations conducted during the era of the Cold War, so we are not going to discuss this issue. I think that Mr. Abrams has yet to hear the views of other members of the Security Council today, which will in one way or another align with what I have said.

For some reason, he is under the impression that the only thing that Russia is concerned about is the money that it will not be able to get as a return on the investment it has made in Venezuela. Why does it not occur to him that we might have other considerations besides commercial interests? We do not tolerate the blatant, arrogant trampling of the principles of international law and intervention in the domestic affairs of other sovereign countries. We do not allow anyone to take such liberties aimed at us or at other countries, and yet we hear many accusations regarding Russia’s intervention in the affairs of other States, including the United States of America. Given what the United States is doing in Venezuela, the accusations of the former are simply comical.

I do not wish to engage in rhetoric, because I am aware of the unfortunate fact that we will not find common ground on this issue. However, I want to reiterate the following question: Does the United States delegation stand ready to support elements to the press on Venezuela using the wording proposed by the Russian delegation, based on Security Council elements to the press made with respect to Haiti? The text is exactly the same; “Haiti” has simply been replaced with “Venezuela”. We will circulate the draft text among Council members.

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

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to be frank with the delegation of the United States. This meeting once more affords us an opportunity to speak the truth about what is happening in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Confronting Western intervention, imperialism, interference in domestic affairs and colonial arrogance, which we thought had disappeared from the Security Council, has been an exercise in patience.

First of all, we extend a greeting from the constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, and from the Venezuelan people, who are being subjected to international aggression. It is only fitting that we should discuss this here in the Security Council. When powerful countries and other countries that are subordinate thereto — I am referring to the United States and Colombia — organize aggression against the sovereignty of a free people, such as that of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we are talking about an issue that is undoubtedly a threat to the peace and security of our region, which in turn affects international peace and security, and that is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations in its entirety.

With all due respect, allow me to say that the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo was biased. She sought to disseminate information coming from one source. Furthermore, again with all due respect, that information does not correspond at all to what we discussed in the three meetings we held with Secretary-General António Guterres. We denounce the United States Government for organizing, financing and

leading this gross act of aggression against Venezuela, which in effect began many years ago. In some countries scandals are created by saying that some other country interfered in their electoral campaigns. Intervention by United States Governments has been taking place in Venezuela since the Bolivarian revolution came to power on 2 February 1999 — every day, every hour and every minute of the 20 years that have elapsed.

We would also like to take this opportunity to denounce here — according to information provided to us by friendly countries, such as Cuba and the Russian Federation — the mobilization of troops in the Caribbean and the purchasing of weapons from Eastern Europe intended for the radical opposition in Venezuela in order to foment intervention. When it comes to Venezuela, there have always been calls from the United States and Western power centres for the politics of death.

A well-orchestrated operation to violate the sacred sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took place over the weekend. Our national armed and police forces were able to contain it without using any kind of deadly force, and that is why you saw tear gas used at the two main bridges between Venezuela and Colombia — between Venezuela’s Táchira state and Colombia’s North Santander department — as well as progressive and varied methods. And where did the aggression come from? It came from Colombia. As to the outlaws who are said to come from the Maduro regime? They come from Colombia. Whether they are Colombians or Venezuelans I do not know, but I do know they were attacking Venezuelan law enforcement personnel abetted and protected by Colombian police.

This photograph shows a man setting fire to humanitarian vehicle with a Molotov cocktail — an image widely disseminated by the press. Here is the burning truck, which when inspected was found to contain not only food and medicines but also tools for putting up barricades and wire and nails for making weapons of a type we in Venezuela are used to seeing being used by the radical opposition. The proof right here; members can see the videos. That truck was burned on this bridge.

Here one can see Molotov cocktails being thrown to burn the humanitarian aid. But there were also some injured. Most of those injured — lo and behold, the media did not get the news on this — are officers,

enlisted men and law enforcement personnel from Venezuela's security forces. I have the report here.

This photograph shows a bus on Venezuelan territory, making this an internal matter. The “masked thugs” who burned it are not Chavistas. They are from the Venezuelan opposition who, as in 2014 and 2017, left our country in flames, including over a period of four months in 2017. There was no condemnation from any of those other countries.

Here they are on the Colombian side of the bridge — we can see Colombian migration — protected by Colombian security forces. There they are.

Here we can see the use of the Red Cross emblem, without authorization from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement or the International Committee of the Red Cross. That happened in Colombia and was denounced by the Red Cross.

This is under one of the bridges, where we see homemade bombs and Molotov cocktails being — by the way, with gasoline from Venezuela that was smuggled into Colombia. This is the reality, unfortunately.

Here we see security forces. And note where the Venezuelan barrier is. The truck was burned here, and they were throwing Molotov cocktails over there.

But how easy it is to say that Maduro is massacring his people and burning the trucks with humanitarian aid. Some have even gone so far as to say that we are in violation of the Geneva Convention with respect to international humanitarian law. My God, is that hypocrisy. This is what was in the truck: nails and wire. When the security forces inspected the burned truck, that is what they found. What was it for? To set up barricades in the state of Táchira and set Venezuela on fire.

This is the last photograph. I would like to ask the representative of the United Kingdom: What is this warship, which arrived last Saturday, doing just a few miles off one Venezuela's Caribbean islands? My goodness, what a coincidence. What is it doing there? Why did the Commander of the United States Southern Command meet with the head of the Colombian armed forces in Bogotá to talk about humanitarian assistance in Venezuela? Since when do the military personnel of other countries meet to discuss humanitarian assistance? It should be humanitarian organizations, whose be all and end all is precisely such work, that meet, not military personnel.

What about all the messages that were sent by Mr. Trump, Mr. Pence, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Pompeo, Mr. Marco Rubio, Mr. Duque and Mr. Guaidó? That is the chain of command, in that order, for the intervention against Venezuela, the purpose of which is to incite the Venezuelan military to rise up and break their oath to the Constitution. How many have there been? I have lost count of how many tweets Mr. Bolton has sent out using gangster-like language to attack the dignity of our military, our people and our revolutionary forces. It is truly incredible. But, as I said to Mr. Elliott Abrams at our most recent meeting here in New York (see S/PV.8452), the coup d'état failed. The last chapter in the coup d'état occurred on Saturday. Here they like to say, “read my lips”.

(spoke in English)

It failed.

(spoke in Spanish)

Now is the time to return to our senses and respect international law and Venezuela's Constitution. We are waiting to see the members of the Venezuelan opposition — Mr. Guaidó or anyone else; they will decide — sit down with the constitutional Government of Venezuela. Then, among Venezuelans, we can craft our own solution without intervention or interference from anyone, especially the United States. We can only hope that the White House will give Mr. Guaidó and the Venezuelan opposition the authorization to sit down with the Government so that we can find a solution through dialogue and negotiation to each and every political circumstance that may arise in Venezuela. Mexico, Uruguay and the countries of the Caribbean Community have proposed the Montevideo Mechanism. Here we sit; tell us when we should go to Mexico, Montevideo or Bridgetown, and we will sit down at the table without any agenda and with our Constitution in hand. Hold elections? Perhaps. Are other solutions a possibility? Perhaps. That is why we have such a rich Constitution.

The European Union and some Latin American countries have also come up with a mechanism they call the International Contact Group. Welcome. We met with them for four hours — I personally for two hours and then subsequently along with the Vice-President and a delegation they sent to Caracas last week. We hugged them and said thank you. Also, yesterday we agreed upon a mechanism for technical humanitarian assistance from the European Union through the United

Nations to Venezuela, but that was not reported in any news outlet anywhere. As several Council members have said, however, the Contact Group wants to impose the outcome of the dialogue. It wants to impose one solution only. By the way, I found it strange to see some European Union countries disagree with High Representative Federica Mogherini, who characterized that supposed humanitarian assistance as politicized and said that the European Union would not become involved until humanitarian agencies ensured that aid adhered to the criteria of humanity, impartiality, depoliticization and independence. But they have not been able to do so, and they will not.

We must also denounce the use of Colombia's territory to launch aggression against Venezuela. This is painful for us, given that 200 years ago the liberator Simón Bolívar and Venezuelan plainsmen were crossing the Andes and sacrificing their lives to fight for the freedom of New Granada, or what is now the Republic of Colombia. And they succeeded — without looting or taking territory or anything else, before returning to Venezuelan territory.

The Security Council is not here to make war or establish conditions for others to make war. The Security Council is not here to endorse violence or breaches of the Charter of the United Nations. Rather, the Security Council is here to maintain international peace and security and preserve future generations from the scourge of war. Let us preserve Venezuela and the present generation from the scourge of war, for the threat is here and now.

As the Ambassador of the Russian Federation has made a proposal, we would ask the Security Council — more than that, we would almost demand, and do so — to agree on and adopt a draft resolution. What do we want it to include? That it reject the threat or use of force against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; that the option be ruled out once and for all. Mr. Trump, Mr. Pence, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Pompeo, Mr. Marco Rubio, Mr. Guaidó and Mr. Duque are putting that on the table. I have here a quotation where Mr. Pence is saying “all options are on the table”, as well as others where Mr. Bolton and Mr. Rubio say the same. Look at this: here are 40 tweets from Mr. Rubio against President Nicolás Maduro. Could this man be representing the people of Florida? Are these the values of the people of the United States? Calling for the assassination of a President? Given the context, that is clearly what it means. And he does it, and nothing happens.

And the famous President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, said that last Saturday's events

“compel me to take a decision: formally tell the international community that we should remain open to all options to ensure the liberation of this nation, which is fighting to be able to continue to fight”.

What does he mean by “all options”? He is saying: we want a military intervention. Against my own country. He must not have any family or friends in his country, because, when the bombs fall in Venezuela, they will not differentiate between who is a Chavista or not, or between who is rich or poor. We have already seen that in Iraq. We have seen it in Afghanistan. We have seen it in Libya. We have seen it in Syria. And we have seen it in how many other countries? Wherever the United States goes, it leaves a humanitarian crisis behind. Who assumes responsibility in the aftermath?

It was said that President Maduro was celebrating on Saturday. That is absolute cynicism. The United States destroys countries. The United States invades them, alleging that there are weapons of mass destruction. Millions of people die in the country, and they celebrate it. The United States watches as a Head of State, Muammar Al-Qadhafi, is lynched alive, and then its Secretary of State celebrates and laughs about it. Is that not cynicism? How many people have died in Venezuela? They were expecting a tragedy. And it was planned, as happened so many times over the past 20 years, including in 2002 when the United States and the opposition used paid snipers to justify the coup against President Hugo Chávez. It is all planned. It was all a show to produce fatalities and then blame President Maduro. It did not work out. However, they blame Maduro, as Ms. DiCarlo did. “Yes, some people died in Santa Elena de Uairén; we are investigating the facts”. In fact, it was a group of armed persons from the opposition who were attempting to overtake a military unit. They were contained through the use of progressive and varied measures and the tools of the police, with a view to maintaining public order. What happened? How did those people die? “We are investigating all the facts.” Yet they have already accused and judged. They already have autopsies in hand. That is something really shameful.

Allow me to continue. What are we asking for in that draft resolution? We ask that the threat or use of force against Venezuela be rejected. That might

even be enough. But, in line with the United Nations Charter, they should reject the blockade and pillaging of Venezuela's funds and resources, which is making the Venezuelan people suffer but which is being ignored here. From August 2017 to date the cost has been \$30 billion. There is also the \$15 billion lost because of the confiscation of Citgo, which they stole from us through United States imperial pillaging. There is the \$1.2 billion in Venezuelan gold held in the Bank of England. There is the \$1.4 billion being held by a Belgian intermediary, Euroclear. And that is in addition to the tens of billions of dollars blocked in banks. We have to pay war-risk insurance to be able to bring imports into Venezuela today. Is nothing happening in my country? People are working in Venezuela. People are going to school. People are going to university. They are going to the beach. There are carnivals. Service provision is better than last year and the year before. On prices, yes, we have a problem with inflation. But we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, with the exchange rate beginning to stabilize, as well as some prices. But no, every day it is said here "the situation is worsening dramatically" and "we have to intervene in Venezuela". The Council is starting off with lies, and the United Nations cannot stand for that.

We resolutely say that what we saw last Saturday was a case of propaganda. Would it be too much to ask all the members of the Security Council to at least agree and adopt a draft resolution rejecting the use of force against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela? Or do we have to help the United States leave "all options on the table"? Or help President Trump eventually win Florida? For we too are a product of domestic politics. They use us in American domestic electoral politics. They need the Cuban-American vote. And how do they pull in those votes? By attacking whom? Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. They ideologize foreign policy so that Mr. Trump can secure Florida, should he succeed in being a candidate, which he intends to be. They have to attack Nicolás Maduro. And if it goes quite badly in his campaign and there are many scandals that compromise his integrity as President, then perhaps they will decide to launch a military operation against Venezuela. And some countries here are standing behind them. They say so openly. Mr. Bolton has said repeatedly that it is about oil. Mr. Trump himself has said that they will have to get spoils when they intervene — we cannot just kill people and seize political control over the Government; no, we need to hang on to territory and resources, as wars used to be. So in the case of Venezuela it is about

oil. And Mr. Bolton has already said that United States companies will go and produce oil and take Venezuela's oil. My God.

Venezuela was attacked. Some spokespeople, including from the United Nations system, claim that we were the aggressors last weekend. That is painful to hear. Our national Bolivarian police, national guard and armed forces, in a gesture of stoicism, restraint and proportionality, were able to contain the madness. However, it is easier to say, "Maduro massacred", "Maduro burned" and "Maduro killed". Is that not easier? Is that not better for the script justifying war?

Mr. Trump has threatened migrants that if they reach the southern border of the United States they will be shot at. Is anyone saying anything about that? Mr. Trump declared a humanitarian crisis in the south of the United States so that his contractor friends can build a racist wall. Well, what would happen if there truly were a humanitarian emergency and Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua were to arm a convoy and try to force it through the southern border to get humanitarian assistance to the population in the south of the United States, where according to its Government one in fact exists? What would happen? What would happen to those who tried to do so? Council members should ask themselves that question. There is a lot of hypocrisy, cynicism and arrogance at play here. That is what the Security Council should underscore.

Let us take a look at the injuries. Major Ribero Quevedo Iván Alfredo with a contusion to the temple; and a Second Sergeant with an irregular tibia fracture. Injured civil servants. A Third Sergeant. A civilian chief, Jennifer Yulente, with a fracture to the wrist. Indeed, our people were injured. And who talked about that. Where was it in the media? Who here mentioned it in their statements today? It is as if we did not exist, just like the almost 10 million Venezuelans who voted to elect Nicolás Maduro last year do not exist. Just as Chavism does not exist, which in fact accounts for more than half the country. It is easy to try to erase history, but attempts to do so will be unsuccessful.

There was a false-flag operation in which members of the national guard were paid as much as \$20,000 to desert. They are also after diplomats to get them to defect. They went after the people, almost killing them, including a Chilean journalist who was covering the events. Did anyone here denounce that here? No one. They were received as heroes by Mr. Duque, Mr. Guaidó,

Mr. Piñera and others, and the President of Paraguay, whose name I cannot remember at the moment.

Also on the subject of false-flag operations, they face two challenges in Colombia, regrettably, as the Council will know — and this is the truth, it cannot be denied — cocaine production and “false-positives” operations. That is what is being endorsed here.

I want Venezuela to be left out the domestic debate and electoral campaign in the United States. It cannot be that they have to attack Venezuela to win the state of Florida. Is it not just shameless? But it is clear; they say it. Where did Mr. Bolton go to make a few important announcements? To Miami. Where did Mr. Pence go to meet with the Venezuelan community and others to make some important announcements? To Miami. Where did Mr. Trump go last week to announce sanctions against Venezuela? To Miami. And the former Governor of Florida and its senators were there, already preparing the ground for the elections. They use Venezuela. They use Cuba. They use Nicaragua. That cannot be allowed. Where does the Charter of the United Nations say that can be allowed? That is not possible.

The coup d'état failed. Yesterday Mr. Pence, Mr. Duque and Mr. Guaidó called on the cartel group of countries against Venezuela — which is called the Lima Group, even though Lima is a very beautiful Bolivian country; it should instead be called the Washington Group. We have information that in that debate many countries — and they should be acknowledged — opposed the use of force and military intervention proposed by those gentlemen to attack Venezuela militarily. The Secretary-General must pronounce himself in that regard. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, whom I hope to see in a few hours, must do the same. Or are we going to leave unaddressed the fact that there is an intention to invade a country militarily and nothing is being done preventively using international law — not bombs, but international law? We think it is high time to do so. We therefore underscore the need for a draft resolution in that regard.

How are institutional crises resolved? And we can indeed call it that in our case; I would even go so far as to say that one of the five branches of Government in Venezuela is in conflict with the other four. We are prepared to sit down and craft solutions with Mr. Guaidó, Mr. Henry Ramos Allup and anyone else who wants to sit down with us. However, they do not want to sit down with us. They say, “the time is up

for dialogue”, “Maduro has to go”, “the regime has to change”, “Venezuela has to be invaded”. Why is there not a call to the Venezuelan opposition from the Security Council and the various spokespersons of the United Nations? They are the ones who do not want to sit down; we already have.

They say we are wasting time. We were in negotiations called by President Maduro from 2017 to 2018. The President appointed me Foreign Minister on one day, and the following Saturday I was in the Dominican Republic speaking with President Danilo Medina Sánchez and Foreign Minister Miguel Vargas Maldonado, from where we called on former Spanish Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero and Mr. Julio Borges to sit down at the negotiation table. We negotiated throughout November, December, January and February. When everything was ready and agreed, the Venezuelan opposition received an order not to sign what was agreed upon and made us waste our time, the time of the international community lose time and, worst of all, the time of the Venezuelan people. And yet it is said that Maduro is wasting time in the dialogue. We cannot countenance so many lies.

I am deeply indignant at this. I love my country. We love our people. How can you here say we want our people to die, when the Bolivarian revolution saw social investment on a scale unparalleled in Latin America. The Venezuelan people did not know what investment from oil meant until Hugo Chávez came to power. In spite of the blockade, difficulties, aggression and attempts to isolate us, President Nicolás Maduro has not sacrificed a cent of that investment. We continue to deliver housing. No schools or universities have been closed. We continue to promote the social services for Venezuelans free of charge, as far as we can. We continue to provide subsidized food. We have deployed 1,000 different tools to redistribute the profits generated by oil and our national wealth and to be able to contain international aggression. But nobody sees any of that.

I should like to conclude by thanking the Ambassadors who are here from many countries across the five continents, because a group has been created at the United Nations which saw 60 delegations present at its most recent meeting. The spirit of that group is to defend the principles of the Charter of the United Nations — peace and security. It is not to defend Venezuela — although in this case it is to defend Venezuela, but if Nicaragua were in need tomorrow, it would be Nicaragua; and if the day after that, for some

reason, it were Indonesia, it would be Indonesia. To recover the principles of the Charter; to recover the principles of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we have agreed on the need to put a stop to this. As the Ambassador of South Africa said at a meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries: “Today it is Venezuela. Who will it be tomorrow?”

(spoke in English)

Who is going to be next?

(spoke in Spanish)

It could be anyone, if we do not put a stop to the madness of the United States and its pretensions. To our friends in Europe — I would show the German Ambassador that I have here a report from the Bundestag research services division. Regarding recognition of the supposed Government of Mr. Guaidó, the report states:

“There are therefore important reasons to hold the view that the recognition of an ad interim Head of State in the present case involves interference in the internal affairs of other States. Thus the question of whether interference in internal affairs in the present case should be defined as unlawful interference continues to be appropriate”.

The report continues:

“Such recognition must not be premature, that is, it must not take place before the new Government has been definitively inaugurated”.

That is something that will never happen.

It goes on:

“Premature recognition of itself does not turn a Government into a legitimate Government”.

It therefore has not effect on international law.

In addition, such recognition constitutes a violation of the legitimate Government whereby those who recognize,

“... bear criminal responsibility under international law. It also raises serious questions about the maintenance of peace”.

Did it not matter to the German Government that the Bundestag’s legal unit issued such information? Ask the Bundestag now, because it turns out that Mr. Guaidó made an interpretation of Article 233 of the Constitution supposedly to determine that President Maduro was

nowhere to be seen — President Maduro disappeared. The ground swallowed him up; he vanished into thin air. He does not exist. The 10 million Venezuelans who voted for him do not exist. The other branches of Government do not exist either. Then, faced with this total absence, the utterly unconstitutional illegal interpretation here is that Mr. Guaidó could become President of the National Assembly to undertake the presidency of the Republic for 30 days, during which elections would have had to be organized and held.

Those 30 days were to be just for that. But what do we have 30 days on? We have a gentleman from the National Assembly who illegally approved something called a transition statute, claiming that those 30 days can be renewed as many times as they want. Where is that in the Constitution? President Maduro was in charge of the presidency when Comandante Chávez died. Elections were held in 35 days, not 30, because the National Electoral Council requested five more days and the Constitutional Chamber, the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, granted five extra days for the organization and holding of elections.

Therefore, this transition statute means that Mr. Guaidó has now assumed executive powers, legislative powers, citizen’s powers, electoral powers and legal powers. But it turns out that Europe and the United States have recognized an absolute dictator. Fortunately, this Government is a fiction. It is like the Government of Narnia — it does not exist. But it poses a risk, for it opens the doors to this international intervention. If it were not so dangerous, it would be funny, but we cannot laugh. It is a total risk. I call on the Council to reflect on this.

Please excuse my tone, but I speak as someone who is outraged because he loves his country and its people and its peace. I have heard so many groundless statements here that are so biased it hurts to listen to them, because one would hope that the United Nations and multilateralism are what would halt the unilateralism that the United States and the dictatorship that the United States intends to impose upon the world. I am sure that will be the case. I call on the Council to reflect on behalf of my people, on behalf of President Nicolás Maduro.

At one of our meetings, I gave Mr. Elliott Abrams a book: *Free Peoples Defeat Powerful Empires*. It is possible — we have done it — but we do not want war in our country. We do not want a war in Venezuela; we

must prevent war in Venezuela. Read it. There is even a quotation from Mr. Thomas Jefferson. I swear that I will close with this, because I know that I have spoken for a while, but the history of Latin America and the United States must be understood. This is from one of the founding fathers — incidentally, President Duque thanked the founding fathers the other day for having helped win the independence of our republic. That is false. In 1786, Jefferson said the following:

“Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South, is to be peopled. We should take care to not to think it for the interest of that great continent to press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them, piece by piece.”

That was in 1786 — before the Monroe Doctrine, before Manifest Destiny, before the Roosevelt Corollary and before the current imperialist doctrine of President Trump. That is the history of Latin America. With our people, with our dignity, with our peasants, with our indigenous peoples, with our communes and communal councils, we — with the Venezuelan people and with our Government — will always triumph.

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

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the presidency for having organized this meeting and for allowing us to participate in it. We also welcome the presence among us of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza.

We will not tire of repeating that Latin America and the Caribbean is a peace-loving area that has ratified its commitment to the pacific settlement of disputes in order to forever banish the use and threat of the use of force in our region, as well as strict compliance with its obligations not to intervene — directly or indirectly — in the affairs of any other State. That includes observing the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and the self-determination of peoples within the framework of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law.

The situation that Venezuela is experiencing demands the attention of the Security Council, not because that country constitutes a threat to international peace and security, but because the actions that have been taken against Venezuela indeed pose a very serious threat to peace and stability within our region.

During the past weekend, an operation directed by the United States Government was deployed, with the aim of using humanitarian aid as a Trojan Horse to achieve its political objective: regime change in Venezuela. Despite ideological bombardment and the massive media campaign deployed around the so-called “delivery of humanitarian aid”, neither the United Nations nor the International Committee of the Red Cross nor the Catholic Church allowed themselves to be instrumentalized in such a way, because that so-called help violates the principles of independence, impartiality, neutrality and humanity. Today, as reported by the media, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations indicated:

“we have very clear principles regarding humanitarian aid and, in the case of Venezuela, there have been attempts to politicize it”.

The debate we are having today is important and timely, especially when various officials of the United States Government have spoken about the situation in Venezuela and are constantly repeating the slogan that “all options are on the table”. We, and the Council, should pay a lot of attention to those words and gauge their gravity. My region and the world have suffered the tragic consequences of “all options being on the table”.

How many massacres do the countries of Latin America have to take when all the options are on the table? How many invasions such as those suffered by the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama or Haiti must be endured when all the options are on the table? We remember Operation Condor, the School of the Americas, the forced disappearance of persons, torture, murder when all the options were on the table. The Iran-Contra affair in relation to the war in Nicaragua also comes to mind. In this regard, let me read what the ruling of the International Court of Justice in *Nicaragua v. United States of America* of 27 June 1986 says:

“The Court ... decides that the United States of America, by training, arming, equipping, financing and supplying the contra forces or otherwise encouraging, supporting and aiding military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua, has

acted, against the Republic of Nicaragua, in breach of its obligation under customary international law not to intervene in the affairs of another State.”

When all options are open, when “all options are on the table”, what comes to mind is the Monroe Doctrine, the National Security Doctrine and the internal enemy doctrine. What also comes to mind is the unconditional support of the United States to the dictators Somoza, Stroessner, Pinochet, Videla and Banzer. Let me digress — a result of those situations whose consequences we still support is the rise of caravans of migrants and refugees fleeing Central America.

The dramatic story that is unfolding before our eyes is the new version of many others. In this case, not only is the macabre script of interventionism and policies of regime change being repeated, but some of the most important actors in the aggressions against Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras or Iraq are the same ones that are playing a leading role in this tragedy.

It is possible that we are being told that we are bringing to the Security Council issues from an outdated past and that we are only motivated by resentment we have not gotten over. Let us talk about what happened in this century. Does the illegal aggression against Iraq, based on lies, and leading to a million deaths and the destabilization of an entire region for decades, not haunt the conscience of humankind and the Council itself? Have we forgotten so quickly the 500,000 dead in Syria, a situation also caused by a policy of regime change?

Via Twitter, the Venezuelan Foreign Minister has shown photographs from the United States of the assassination of Muammar Al-Qadhafi, which is very revealing gesture of its intentions. Libya is a matter of debate on a regular basis in the Security Council. I have a few questions about that country. How was humanitarian aid delivered in Libya? Where are the billions of dollars in Libyan international reserves? Who benefits from Libya’s natural resources? Is it the Libyan people? Is there peace, democracy and freedom in that beautiful country?

We do not want Venezuela to suffer the same fate as Libya. We do not want the Venezuelan people to suffer what the Libyan people are suffering today. Furthermore, we do not want South America or Central America endure what the Sahel region is enduring because of the policies implemented against Libya. The Security Council has an obligation to prevent this from happening.

Given its history of having organized, financed and promoted coups d’état in my region, it is clear that the motivation of the United States is not the defence of democracy, nor is it freedom, human rights or the prosperity of Venezuela. In addition to geopolitical control and the punishment of those that are not aligned with their plans, the true motivation of this onslaught is oil. The invasion of Iraq was for the same reasons. The hostility towards Iran now is for the same reasons. I am sure that all of us understand that Venezuela’s oil reserves are vast as those of Iraq and Iran combined.

If it is true, as the Charter of the United Nations says, that we are determined to preserve succeeding generations from the scourge of war, then not all options are on the table. If the effort made to uphold the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole is of any use, then not all the options are on the table. If we support multilateralism rather than unilateral actions, if we prefer international law to barbarism, if we defend peace rather than war, then not all options are on the table.

In this regard, Bolivia salutes the efforts of the Montevideo Mechanism based on the principles of the Organization, as well as the Lima Group declaration and statements by several members of the Security Council specifically referring to the use of peaceful and diplomatic methods, without the use of force. However, the country that made the threats has not yet ruled out the use of force. To resolve this critical situation, our options are in the use of all diplomatic resources and in the primacy of policy.

If we truly want to support the Venezuelan people we must, first, respect the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter; secondly, lift all unilateral sanctions as being contrary to international law, including the financial and economic blockade; depoliticize and demilitarize humanitarian aid; eradicate any possibility of a violent output to this crisis; and support the initiatives to promote a process of dialogue by and for the Venezuelans, in respect of their sovereignty and self-determination.

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

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Security Council and to express Mexico’s opinion on this issue, which has the highest attention of my Government. I am also grateful for the information that

Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo has provided to the membership on the situation on the ground and the vision of the Organization.

Mexico is a country that is deeply respectful of international law and the rules governing coexistence among States and is also a firm promoter of peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes. That is why we have noted with concern the events that have taken place in recent days in Venezuela. We urge the parties to the conflict and the international community to maintain a position of caution and avoid actions that could unleash a further escalation of violence. We deeply regret the loss of human life and respectfully call on the Venezuelan authorities to avoid the excessive use of force and to protect and respect the human rights of the population.

We are aware of the serious difficulties faced by the Venezuelan people. That is why we believe that the delivery of humanitarian aid is necessary. But if it is to reach those most in need expeditiously, it must be channelled under the coordination and supervision of neutral and competent international entities such as the International Committee of the Red Cross or agencies that form part of the United Nations system and operate under the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Secretary-General António Guterres has reiterated his rejection of any type of violence in Venezuela and has called for a peaceful and negotiated solution. Mexico fully agrees with the Secretary-General. It is precisely in these moments of high tension when it is most timely to favour diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation, in accordance with international law and respect for human rights. In our view, that is the best way to achieve a legitimate and sustainable solution to the crisis Venezuela is living through, in strict compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

That is why the Montevideo Mechanism, which was endorsed by 16 countries of our region, remains a viable and inclusive option for dialogue as an alternative to achieve a peaceful, negotiated solution and has become all the more relevant given the most recent developments. If the two parties agree to participate in a dialogue, Mexico stands ready to fully support it and to immediately deploy the effective diplomatic mechanisms that we know have been helpful in the past with the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Government of Mexico renews its commitment and readiness to work with all parties in the pursuit of a peaceful solution in Venezuela for the peace and well-being of its people.

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

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to welcome my brother Foreign Minister of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to this meeting.

The Government of the United States, with the irresponsible complicity of several countries and actors, staged a dangerous provocation that sought to violate the sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela through the use of pressure and force, which endangered the lives of thousands of people. The attempt to enter Venezuela by force, under the pretext of delivering and distributing supposed humanitarian assistance, constitutes a serious violation of international law and of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and such actions are to be condemned.

The United States continues to try to invent pretexts for military aggression against Venezuela. It has openly declared the validity and application of the Monroe Doctrine, which for the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean implies the imposition of Governments designed in Washington, D.C., or totally subjugated to the will of United States imperialism.

The Cuban Government has already denounced the escalation of pressure and actions of the Government of the United States to prepare a military adventure disguised as humanitarian intervention in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and called on the international community to mobilize to prevent that from taking place. Those actions are aimed at provoking acts with unpredictable consequences that serve as a pretext for a military adventure to overthrow the legitimate and democratic Government of the constitutional President, Nicolás Maduro Moros. The decision to set a deadline to force the entry of so-called humanitarian aid constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law, reveals the political manipulation of that aid and lays bare the pretext for launching a foreign intervention in Venezuela.

We reiterate that the United States is laying the groundwork for military action under a humanitarian pretext. The Presidents of Costa Rica, Guatemala

and Peru and the Vice-President of Brazil declared yesterday that the solution to the current situation is not military intervention. The Foreign Minister of Spain and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, among others, also echoed that sentiment over the past few hours.

Nevertheless, Vice President Mike Pence said the following yesterday in Bogotá:

“As we continue to bring economic and diplomatic pressure on the Maduro regime, we hope for a peaceful transition to democracy, but as President Trump has made clear, all options are on the table.”

I wish to emphasize that we have heard the phrase “all options are on the table” repeated over and over again in recent weeks by various senior officials of the Government of the United States. Similar behaviour and pretexts were adopted by the United States in the prelude to the wars it launched against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya.

Numerous United States sources have detailed how the coup is to be coordinated in order to put into power in Venezuela a Government at the service of Washington. In addition, a great communications and political operation is under way — generally a prelude to actions of greater magnitude by the Government of the United States, which are possible only with the complicity of the large corporate media.

We strongly condemn the attempted coup d'état in Venezuela and the attempt to impose on that country a Government at the service of the United States. We also condemn the recurring calls to the Bolivarian military to join this onslaught and attempts to infiltrate the Embassies and Consulates of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela abroad, in violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

United States military transport aircraft have conducted flights from their bases at United States military installations that house special operations forces and marine infantry units used to carry out covert actions, including against leaders of other countries.

The mode of operations of the White House National Security team and various State Department officials and United States Embassies is well known. That Government is exerting overwhelming pressure against other countries in an attempt to force them to recognize the so-called President, self-appointed and proclaimed

by Washington, or to call for new elections in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in open disregard for the popular will and the institutional integrity of that country, as expressed in the 20 May elections.

Those who claim to be concerned about the so-called humanitarian crisis in Venezuela are the same ones who increasingly apply and strengthen unilateral, and therefore illegal, coercive economic measures against the sisterly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — by seizing or freezing its financial assets in third countries; pressuring Governments that supply Venezuela, the Venezuelan oil industry and third-country banks to prevent them from carrying out legitimate financial transactions, even in third currencies; and confiscating and stealing the subsidiary of *Petróleos de Venezuela* in the United States.

Cuba rejects and condemns the hypocritical calls for the provision of humanitarian aid by those who apply measures that violate international law and international humanitarian law, thus causing hardship and human suffering and depriving the Venezuelan people and Government of more than \$30 billion.

The accusation made by the representative of the United States against my country is disgraceful. Our Government rejects such slander in the most energetic and categorical terms, while, at the same time, we reaffirm the duty and commitment to continue providing our modest cooperation with the brotherly Venezuelan people, in which more than 20,000 Cuban aid workers are participating, 94 per cent of them in the area of health care and the rest in the area of education — just as we are doing in 83 countries around the world. To contradict those facts is an offence to the truth and demonstrates how little respect its Government has for the Security Council and the United Nations.

Our country reiterates its unshakable solidarity with the constitutional President, Nicolás Maduro Moros, with the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution and with the civil-military union of the Venezuelan people, and affirms that, in the sisterly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we must defend today the tenets of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace. Today we must defend the sovereignty, independence and sovereign equality of every State in the region.

Cuba has called on the international community to act in defence of peace and avoid, by pooling the efforts of all actors without exception, a military intervention

against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Cuba has called for an international initiative to bring peace to Venezuela in opposition to war and the military intervention of the United States, which would harm the independence, the sovereignty and the interests of the Latin American peoples from the Rio Bravo to Patagonia, and in favour of the supreme good for humankind — peace and the right to life.

Let us not allow a repetition in Venezuela of the sad and painful history of United States military interventions, on more than one occasion, in Mexico, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, more recently in Grenada and Panama, and in our own country, Cuba. Given the urgency of the situation, we encourage the Montevideo Mechanism, especially the Government of the United Mexican States, the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, the Governments of the Caribbean Community and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to continue to spare no effort in moving towards achieving a solution based on dialogue and absolute respect for the independence and sovereignty of Venezuela and the validity of the principles of international law, especially the principle of non-intervention.

At this moment, as we decide to ensure the validity of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that the basis of any Government's legitimacy resides in the support and vote of its people and that no foreign pressure can replace the sovereign exercise of self-determination, in such circumstances, one can only be for or against war.

We hope that the Security Council will fulfil its role and responsibility as the primary guarantor of international peace and security and will not lend its support to military adventures. We call on Security Council members to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and not to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State, while respecting the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and self-determination of peoples in upholding peace, which is precious for humankind, our America and the Venezuelan people.

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

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this second Security Council meeting (see S/PV.8452) to address an issue of the utmost gravity that is severely affecting the

region, for which the Council is called upon to play a fundamental role in the search for ways to find a solution to this pressing humanitarian and political crisis. We appreciate the briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. She not only provided a summary of events over the past several days but also, with that information, a dramatic overview of the humanitarian situation in Venezuela.

In our previous statement on this subject in the Council we indicated that Chile promotes democracy as the central element of its foreign policy and as the political system that constitutes the appropriate framework for full respect for human rights. The values of tolerance, dialogue, equal opportunities and the full exercise of fundamental freedoms are best guaranteed within a context within which the rule of law prevails, there is respect and balance among the powers of the State and where public institutions operate responsibly.

Unfortunately, in recent days we have witnessed once again the profound crisis that Venezuela is undergoing, which is affecting its institutions and has led to an unacceptable deterioration in the living conditions and inalienable rights of the country's citizens. All of this is happening under an authoritarian and repressive Government.

With regard to the events of two days ago, under the leadership of the President of my country, Mr. Sebastián Piñera, Chile participated in the international and solidary effort to assemble the humanitarian aid that Venezuela desperately needs, as confirmed by the briefing by Under Secretary-General DiCarlo. However, the distribution of aid through that collaborative effort was not possible owing to the negative and violent reaction by the Maduro regime.

Accordingly, the Government of Chile reiterates in the strongest terms its categorical condemnation of the violent acts committed by the police and para-police forces of the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro in areas bordering Colombia and Brazil, set off by the attempt to peacefully deliver humanitarian aid, during which many people tragically lost their lives and many others were injured.

We join in the condemnation made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as those acts of indiscriminate violence affected unarmed civilians who were only seeking access to the humanitarian aid that was supposed to be delivered.

There is no justification or explanation whatsoever for this most recent flagrant and unacceptable violation of the human rights of all Venezuelans, who are today overwhelmed by the profound social, humanitarian, political and economic crisis affecting their country. For that reason, it warrants the determined repudiation of the international community.

The Government of Chile renews its full support for the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, and also conveys to him its most sincere condolences for those fallen Venezuelan citizens, as well as its solidarity and wishes for the speedy recovery of those wounded.

We also support the commencement of the democratic transition process in Venezuela so as to hold new elections as soon as possible, with the participation of all political actors and the international guarantees and standards needed for a process of this scale. We call for the guarantee of the rule of law, the fundamental rights of persons and social peace so as to facilitate the Government's transition.

Chile is a member of the Lima Group, and accordingly emphatically reiterates its support for a political, diplomatic and peaceful solution to the crisis that Venezuela is going through. In that regard, I wish to stress that Chile does not, and will not, support alternatives that run contrary to international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. That is why, together with other States of the region, we will continue to work through diplomatic channels in constant dialogue with the international community to reach a solution to this prolonged crisis in our region.

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

Mr. Fernández de Soto Valderrama (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Sir, for convening this second meeting on the issue at hand, which is of the utmost importance to Colombia and my region. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

Our presence in the Council is a reaffirmation of an essential principle underpinning my country's international relations — our belief in multilateralism to uphold the values of the Charter of the United Nations and the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Let there be no doubt about that. The meeting of the Lima Group that took place yesterday in Bogotá is an

excellent example of the validity of multilateral action. More than 50 nations of the world recognize interim President Juan Guaidó and the legitimate authority of the National Assembly and agree on the need to recover freedom and democracy for Venezuela.

The serious situation in that brotherly country is one of the most intense in the history of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is marked by massive human rights violations, a deep economic recession, an erosion of the separation of powers and an unprecedented humanitarian and migration crisis that has spilled beyond its borders and affected Colombia. According to statistics from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), food shortages, lack of medicine and medical supplies have led 3.4 million Venezuelans to abandon their homes. Likewise, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in Venezuela the prevalence of hunger almost tripled between 2010 and 2012 and between 2015 and 2017. An estimated 3.7 million Venezuelans, like those I just mentioned, were undernourished between 2015 and 2017. Those statistics are from the organizations I just mentioned and are contained in sobering reports issued to the world.

Given the increasing flow of migration from Venezuela to the countries of the region, in September 2018, at the request of the Colombian Government and convinced about the urgent need to provide the Venezuelan people with humanitarian aid and the good offices of the Secretary-General, UNHCR and IOM announced the appointment of Mr. Eduardo Stein as Special Representative for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, in order to meet the needs caused by the mass exodus. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia noted yesterday,

“with the support of the Lima Group, several countries made a considerable effort to facilitate the operation of a humanitarian channel, provide basic international assistance and alleviate, even partially, the serious humanitarian situation affecting so many Venezuelans”.

Since its first declaration in August 2017 — and not just recently — the Lima Group has pointed out the need for humanitarian aid and repeatedly asked the dictatorial regime not to impede the entry and transit of humanitarian aid to Venezuelans. Those are the facts. The response of the illegitimate regime that has

imposed the tyranny of fear, repression and violence as a mechanism of intimidation, and has organized collectives of armed civilians, is known to all. Despite the insistent appeals of the international community, they have blocked access to the assistance offered, even going so far as burning aid that had managed to cross the border.

While thousands of Venezuelan citizen volunteers tried to deliver aid to improve the lives of their families, the dictator celebrated with indifference to the agony, anguish and despair inflicted on his people. That merely reiterated what was already clear to everyone. The dictatorship stopped thinking about its people years ago and its actions on the weekend have sealed its moral and diplomatic defeat.

I have with me the protocols of the operation that took place on Saturday. I invite the Security Council to look at the information with us. I would like the Security Council to delve deeply into the protocols that clearly reflect what was done hour by hour. An additional report issued by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, which assisted in the operation, is also available. It would be very easy to write a novel about what happened on Saturday. As one eminent Colombian has said, if you lie and lie some more, something will stick. I invite Council members to look at the protocols and compare them to the information Mr. Arreaza provided here today.

I too have photographs that I could pass around in the Security Council but, out of respect for colleagues who have not yet spoken, I will not do so. The facts are surprising. The entire world saw them. It is very easy to twist and manipulate the facts, including the memory of Bolívar, but there can be no doubt about the fact that Colombia, too, has information about the events as they occurred minute by minute. We are ready to submit that information and share it with the Security Council so that members know that what has been said is the absolute truth and reality.

The coordination effort of the Lima Group has shown the usurping regime that its dictatorship is increasingly isolated as a result of its deliberate actions against the Venezuelan people. The Lima Group, with the presence of President Juan Guaidó at its meeting, will continue with his consent to provide humanitarian aid, guided by the responsibility of the international community, use diplomatic and humanitarian means to support the population in need, achieve democratic

transition, call free elections, restore constitutional order and achieve institutional, economic and social reconstruction in Venezuela.

That firm conviction is contained in the historic declaration issued at the 11th meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Lima Group, which states that the transition to democracy must be spearheaded peacefully by Venezuelans themselves, within the framework of the Constitution and international law, supported by political and diplomatic means, without the use of force. The members of the Lima Group know that very well and the international community knows it too. One fundamental principle is that we decided to share this experience to strengthen and rescue democracy for the benefit of the Venezuelan people. Within multilateral forums, we will of course continue working to ensure that the relevant resolutions and sanctions are adopted and complaints lodged following the events of 23 February.

Colombia has endured violence. We understand very well the suffering of our people and are working tirelessly to ease it. The Ambassador of Russia made a few observations that are truly surprising because, with the help of the Council and the various organizations and agencies of the United Nations, we are making progress with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The President of Colombia has also made a genuine commitment to implementing and advancing the goal of stabilization in the peace agreements signed. Colombia recognizes, and its President has confirmed, that legality, the rule of law and democracy are the forms of coexistence that ensure peace and the future of citizens. The Security Council cannot fail to heed the demands of Venezuelans who aspire to live with freedom, well-being and democracy.

Allow me to take a few more minutes, but obviously the events that have transpired in my country oblige me to do so. I will address two or three aspects.

The preliminary report to which I referred clearly indicates that, at noon, four trucks arrived carrying humanitarian aid, with almost 50 people in each truck. The Bolivarian National Guard immediately began launching tear gas towards the convoy, and most of those affected were on the Colombian side, causing a temporary retreat. The Organization of American States directly observed that more than 30 people were injured, most of them from the organizing entities.

At 1:45 p.m., the first and second aid convoys were seen ablaze on the Venezuelan side, with no confirmation of the facts of the incident. Throughout the day, shots were heard constantly on the Venezuelan side, and at some point tear gas was launched and pellets were fired, leading to an undetermined number of people being injured, in addition to the uneasiness and fear of the population.

Four trucks with humanitarian aid arrived at the Simón Bolívar International Bridge and were stuck at the crossing. They made several attempts to enter, although that was not possible. In the afternoon, given the order for the vehicles to return and the bridge to be closed, a strong opposition was mounted by Venezuelans, who continued to prevent the implementation of that order until the publication of this report.

Colombia fully complied with the protocol to receive the humanitarian aid that it was given. It is very easy to claim that a novel could be written about what happened in the span of those days, but I would recommend that Mr. Arreaza write such a story, because it is nothing more than fiction — a make-believe story that seeks to manipulate the truth of what happened. Everyone can draw their own conclusions about what has been said here. Colombia is willing to share information in that regard.

On 21 February, Ms. Mogherini stated that what is happening in Venezuela is a multidimensional crisis that is increasingly affecting Venezuelans, and of course it is the obligation of the international community, as demonstrated throughout time in the classical theories on international humanitarian law, to fulfil its duty and show solidarity by helping to ensure that the people receive due care and attention.

I will end my remarks on that note. I apologize for being emotional, but in the defence of the legitimate interests of Colombia and the region we must always ensure that we place the proper emphasis so that there is no doubt as to the reality and the good faith in which my country has acted.

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

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the convening of this meeting to address the tragic situation in Venezuela, which is of particular interest to my country, the Latin American and Caribbean region and the rest of the

international community. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Peacebuilding Rosemary DiCarlo.

Argentina believes that the serious political, economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela requires urgent and concerted international action and that the Council has an important role to play, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in order to prevent the further deterioration of the situation and an increase in the terrible suffering of the Venezuelan population. The crisis in Venezuela has deteriorated at an alarming rate, as evidenced by the recent events beginning on 23 February on the border with Colombia.

Maduro's dictatorial regime used force to block the multilateral, peaceful humanitarian initiative to deliver food and medicine to alleviate the desperate situation in which millions of Venezuelans find themselves. It did so by stifling with unacceptable violence the innocent and unarmed civilian population that was trying to help the entry and distribution of such assistance. That deliberate action taken by the Maduro regime, which violated human rights and international law, left at least four dead and hundreds injured.

Argentina strongly condemns the fact that the Maduro regime has prevented the entry of humanitarian aid into Venezuela and firmly repudiates once again the repressive and violent actions of the regime against the Venezuelan people. In view of the recent serious and deplorable events of 23 February, on the understanding that indiscriminate violence against civilian populations and the denial of access to humanitarian aid constitute crimes against humanity, the Lima Group, of which Argentina is a member, decided on 25 February to ask the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into those events, within the framework of the proceedings brought by Argentina and other countries before the Court in September 2018.

For all these reasons, Argentina and the other countries of the Lima Group have come to the unanimous and resounding conclusion that the continuity of Maduro and his illegitimate regime in power represents an unprecedented threat to the security and peace of the whole region.

That grave situation has created a regional and global migration and refugee crisis. More than 3 million Venezuelans have had to seek refuge in other countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Argentina has received

more than 130,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees, while continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to the Venezuelan people through various missions carried out by the White Helmets Commission of Argentina.

The United Nations cannot remain indifferent to the crisis in Venezuela, given its gravity, depth and manifold impacts. We recall that the Lima Group, as early as October 2017, asked the Secretary-General to contribute to resolving that serious crisis and the ongoing human rights violations in Venezuela. We reiterate that call on this occasion.

It should also be recalled that, in September 2018, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 39/1 on the promotion and protection of human rights in Venezuela, sponsored by Argentina and other countries, which expresses deep concern about human rights violations in that country and urges the Government of Venezuela to accept humanitarian aid to alleviate the shortage of food and medicine. In that regard, the Lima Group also decided to promote the appointment of an independent expert or commission of inquiry on the situation in Venezuela, in addition to reiterating its call on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take the actions she deems appropriate in fulfilling her mandate.

Argentina renews its support for the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, and reiterates its support for the efforts he is making, together with the National Assembly, to allow the entry of food and medicine in order to alleviate the suffering that the policies of the illegitimate Maduro regime have imposed on the entire Venezuelan population, and to achieve the restoration of democracy.

Argentina believes that the United Nations system, in addition to providing support for the opening of a humanitarian channel, should contribute to facilitating a peaceful transition to democracy in Venezuela, without the use of force, led by Venezuelans themselves through free, democratic, transparent and fully guaranteed presidential elections as soon as possible. For my country, that is the only way to solve the serious crisis that has gripped Venezuela for too long. A true and lasting peace cannot be achieved through oppression and at the expense of democracy and civil and political liberties. Therefore, we make call for the urgent restoration of the rule of law and full respect for human rights in Venezuela.

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

Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil): Let me first congratulate you on convening this important meeting at a crucial juncture of the history of Venezuela and the broader Latin American and Caribbean region.

The events of 23 February were a wake-up call to the dangers that the international community — most especially Latin America and the Caribbean — will face if the crisis in Venezuela is not defused swiftly. They also confirmed who ultimately sides with the Venezuelan people. The regime's actions to block humanitarian aid that would help feed the hungry and heal the sick were not only inadmissible by any reasonable human standards but were brutally cruel and claimed human lives, including the lives of indigenous people living at the Brazilian-Venezuelan border.

Ours is a region where the path of democracy and development has been chosen. The Inter-American Democratic Charter, alongside several subregional instruments on the same topic, is a testament to the strength of that commitment. We are all keenly aware that the brutal and illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro has taken a regrettable detour from any vision of a free and prosperous future for its people.

It was only fitting that the president of the democratically elected National Assembly, the only legitimate power standing in Venezuela, swore himself in as interim President of the country. This was done in strict obedience to the national Constitution since Maduro rigged elections, suffocated the voice of Venezuelans and ultimately usurped power. Since then, a growing number of members of the international community — 50 countries as of today — have denounced the regime's unlawfulness and recognized Juan Guaidó as the rightful President of Venezuela until free and fair elections are finally held. Brazil has added its voice to that call because we hope to see a democratic and prosperous Venezuela flourish in the aftermath of this protracted crisis.

Conscious of an escalating situation along our borders, the Lima Group met in Bogotá just yesterday to show hemispheric solidarity to our brothers and sisters in Venezuela and also to help pave the way for the democratic transition in the country. The Lima Group does not claim to speak for the entirety of the region, but our voice carries the weight of a group of nations that, since August 2017, has been shouldering their

responsibility in finding a way to help Venezuelans in their struggle against authoritarianism.

As stated in the Bogota communiqué, we condemned the regime's criminal use of violence and military force against the provision of humanitarian assistance and reiterated the appeal to the Venezuelan Armed Forces to adhere to the legitimate authority of President Guaidó. The Lima Group conveyed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) its support for a request submitted last September that the ICC examine the humanitarian catastrophe committed by the Maduro regime against its own people.

Latin America and the Caribbean is first and foremost a region of peace. Brazil, its largest country measured by territorial mass and population, has not fought a war with its neighbours for the past 150 years. That is no small achievement and did not happen by chance. It is the by-product — or rather the direct consequence — of the determined choice of diplomacy and an irrevocable preference for peaceful means to resolve international disputes, as befits those who remain true to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, the Lima Group, through its Bogotá communiqué, decided to encourage the nomination by the Human Rights Council of an independent expert or an investigation commission on the human rights violations in Venezuela, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 39/1 of 27 September 2018. The Lima Group also requested the Secretary-General to engage the United Nations system in addressing the situation in Venezuela.

Brazil calls upon the international community, especially those countries that have not yet recognized President Juan Guaidó, to join the efforts for the democratic transition in Venezuela, recognizing the legitimate Government of Mr. Guaidó and demanding that the regime's violence against its own people be stopped.

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

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We recognize the presence among us of our brother Jorge Arreaza, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Allow us to congratulate you, Sir, your team and the people and the Government of our sister Republic of Equatorial

Guinea on the excellent conduct of the work of the Security Council this month.

The Government and the people of Nicaragua have continuously reaffirmed — and we reaffirm today — our full commitment and our absolute responsibility to comply with the instruments of the United Nations, including the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its mechanisms and everything that represents the possibility and duty of peacefully transcending conflicts. Our commitment is reinforced by the outrageous threats that arise from interference and intervention in the affairs of States, as well as by any practice, proposal or discourse that seeks to revive the offensive history of Latin America and that, by means of intimidation, disrespect and the use of means and technologies of information, seeks to promote hatred and separation between peoples and States and between brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Nicaragua fraternally summons all those present, in particular the Governments and peoples of our America, to defend the Charter of the United Nations, which embodies the right to live and coexist in peace and harmony, rejecting speeches and practices that injure the dignity of peoples, the strength of our institutions, our laws and above all the Constitution of each State — the Magna Carta that each State defends as it defends its honour, its pride, its national rights.

We call on our fellow countries to respect the will of the people. We call on our fellow countries to rule out threats and actions that bring instability, suffering and death to millions of human beings, and that by denying them peace deny them the possibility of living with security and well-being. We call on our fellow countries to cease aggression and hostilities, which seek to subdue our peoples, condemning us to poverty, harassment and humiliation while destroying economies and exposing so many human beings to misfortune, vulnerability and dependence.

Triggering chaos, instability, violence and economic strangulation and issuing threats of death and war constitutes a serious violation of universal human rights, and alienates countries and peoples that have been objectified and singled out from the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, thus increasing the number of human beings and families living in exclusion, poverty and insecurity by millions.

In the spirit of brotherhood, and with all the respect that we owe each other as fellow inhabitants of our planet, we are called upon to defend — with every fibre of our strength — peace, respectful relations, and the right of every country to choose its political, economic and social model without interference, threats or coercive actions that contradict the intention of the United Nations Charter and all instruments of international law.

We have chosen the path of peace and not of war. At the summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in 2014, the Heads of State and Government in our America and the Caribbean proclaimed our entire territory a zone of peace, justice and development, and we must respect — and ensure respect for — that proclamation.

In this sad, unfortunate hour, which seems to repeat a historical cycle that we thought we had transcended, we are called upon in brotherhood to defend peace everywhere, and at this particular moment in Venezuela, as well as throughout our America and the Caribbean. We want peace, agreement and dialogue, with a view to resolving with all problems, contradictions or conflict in good faith, so that our peoples do not suffer the scorn and brutality of war in any of its forms, or the poverty that snatches away all our rights.

Nicaragua welcomes the efforts that the international community and the organizations defending international law are carrying out, and that we are carrying out, so as to avoid other tragedies that repeat, as we have said, the history of discord and the desire of the powerful to dominate and force into submission peoples of dignity. We have learned — and must now know — how to choose life with respect, and, with the strength of our unbending and indestructible identities, dismiss anything that seeks to ruin the brave and noble and brave soul of our American and Caribbean, which emphatically wants peace.

Nicaragua welcomes the Montevideo Mechanism created by our America and the Caribbean, which, bringing together Mexico, Bolivia, Uruguay and the countries of the Caribbean Community, seeks to foster understanding, agreement, respect and dignity, in order to promote fraternal and fair solutions in Venezuela.

We salute the heroic and magnificent people of Simón Bolívar, as well as their President, Comrade Nicolás Maduro, and in embracing Venezuela, we embrace all the peoples of our America who proclaim

homeland, life, love and hope. War offers us nothing; we wish to live in peace.

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

Mr. Castañeda Solares (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Guatemala thanks the presidency of Equatorial Guinea for convening today's open Security Council meeting on the situation in Venezuela.

Today's meeting is very timely owing to the events in recent days and because yesterday the 11th meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Lima Group was held in Bogotá, Colombia. Taking part at this meeting were the President of the Republic of Guatemala, Mr. Jimmy Morales Cabrera, and our Foreign Minister, Ms. Sandra Erica Jovel Polanco, which shows my country's commitment to restoring constitutional order in Venezuela. They reiterated our support for the Interim President of Venezuela, Mr. Juan Guaidó, and the importance of alleviating as soon as possible the humanitarian and security crisis that the Venezuelan people are enduring.

As already mentioned by several member countries of the Lima Group, our Foreign Ministers adopted a declaration yesterday supporting the process of democratic transition and reconstruction in Venezuela, and condemning the deliberate actions of the Nicolás Maduro regime, which, without taking into account the suffering of the population or the insistent calls of the international community, prevented, on 23 February, the entry of basic necessities and international assistance through acts of violent repression that caused multiple injuries and deaths on the border with Colombia and Brazil. We express our repudiation for the violent actions of the illegitimate Maduro Government that have further worsened the humanitarian crisis that represents an enormous challenge for millions of Venezuelans, as well as for neighbouring countries and for our entire region. We urge that international humanitarian assistance be allowed to enter without further hindrance or delay.

We reiterate the urgent call for the immediate restoration of democratic order in Venezuela through the holding of free, transparent and fair elections, called by the legitimate authorities, in accordance with international standards, and as soon as possible. These elections must be conducted with appropriate guarantees and the participation of all political leaders

and with international observation, as well as the appointment of a new national electoral council.

Keeping Nicolás Maduro and his illegitimate regime in power represents an unprecedented threat to peace and security, freedom and prosperity in the region. We support the interim President, Juan Guaidó, in pursuit of his efforts to defend and comply with Venezuela's Constitution. More than 50 countries around the world have extended support to him and have recognized the constitutional authority of the National Assembly and the interim President Guaidó.

It is important for any democratic order to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its citizens, which are the conditions needed for institutional, economic and social rebuilding in Venezuela. We call upon the United Nations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter for the prompt resolution of the crisis in Venezuela.

It is important to emphasize that, for Guatemala, the transition to democracy should be conducted by Venezuelans themselves, in a peaceful manner and within the framework of their Constitution. It is important to reiterate that we reject any military solution or threat of use of force or any act of provocation that endangers peace and security in our region. Together with the countries that make up the Lima Group, Guatemala will continue to work with the objective of achieving the restoration of democratic order in Venezuela, peace and security in the country, respect for the human rights of all Venezuelans and the recovery of a dignified life for them, without confrontations and through dialogue.

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

Mrs. Sweeb (Suriname): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname.

At the outset, I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The countries for which I speak continue to follow closely the current unsatisfactory and increasingly volatile situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It is with grave concern that we also follow

the highly polarized and polarizing circumstances surrounding Venezuela at this time, as well as the deteriorating situation in that country. In all of this, we are most concerned about, and motivated by, the plight of the people of Venezuela.

The countries for which I speak do not choose one side or the other. Instead, we choose principle — the principle that led to the founding of the United Nations and the inclusion, in the Charter of the United Nations, of Article 2, paragraph 4, which calls for Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force. That principle gave rise to Article 21 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, which recognizes territorial inviolability and the principles of human rights, international law, the rule of law, the sanctity of national sovereignty and the pivotal principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the pursuit of peace, dialogue and compromise to ensure the preservation of the dignity and worth of the human person.

Those principles form the root of multilateralism — indeed the very foundation upon which the United Nations was built. Today we reaffirm our adherence to those principles. Also critical for us is the maintenance of the area of the Caribbean and its wider regions as a zone of peace. We remain steadfast in our view that economic strangulation and military intervention not only run counter to those principles but will also exacerbate the already great suffering of the people of Venezuela.

It is our position that there must be a political solution that is crafted and owned by Venezuelans themselves and their leaders. We support and call for a pathway to peace — forged not by threats but by dialogue, not by escalating tensions but by cooling them down, not by marksmanship but by mediation and not by the suffocation of sanctions but by the tools of diplomacy.

Those of us who wish for the peace of Venezuela and the prosperity of its people must actively encourage dialogue in which both sides sit, talk and listen so that common ground on which they can move forward may be found. It is in pursuit of that broad objective that our heads of Government have offered their good offices to facilitate dialogue among all parties with a view to creating a peaceful resolution to the deepening deadlock.

Our countries fully support and endorse the Montevideo Mechanism, which has four main phases.

The first phase, the dialogue phase, creates conditions for direct contact among the actors involved in an environment of security.

The second phase is the negotiations phase, which provides a strategic presentation of the results of the dialogue phase, as well as opportunities for the relaxation of positions, finding common ground and the identification of potential agreement.

The third phase is the commitments phase, which fosters the construction of, and subscription to, agreements that are based on the results of the negotiations phase.

Finally, the implementation phase sees the materialization of the commitments assumed in the commitments phase, with international support.

Four distinguished citizens of recognized international experience and competence from Latin America and the Caribbean have been identified for that purpose. They will act as honest brokers and assist in actualizing the Montevideo Mechanism by supporting attempts to bring the contending parties to the table of dialogue and diplomacy. We urge all parties, inside and outside Venezuela, to give the Mechanism the time and space it needs to work for the benefit of the well-being of the people of that country.

From the painful experience of history, both ancient and recent, the United Nations knows the high and awful price of military intervention and the scourge of war. Ancient and recent history have also taught us that peace and prosperity are indivisible. The people of Venezuela have already suffered enough. They deserve to live in peace. They deserve a future that offers prosperity. We urge all sides, difficult and complex though it may be, to enter into a constructive dialogue and work together to build a pathway to peace for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

I would now like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

First, we would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

The Government of Suriname follows with increasing concern the situation regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Reports of humanitarian aid efforts aggressively being carried out at the Venezuelan border, while stability and tranquillity seem to remain in that country, are particularly alarming, as such

actions undermine the principles of independence, impartiality, neutrality and consent, which should govern all humanitarian operations.

Suriname restates its strong commitment to the principles of international law as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in our own Constitution. Suriname therefore denounces all acts of aggression that violate those principles.

Given that international concern should first and foremost be directed to the welfare of the Venezuelan people, my delegation rejects the politicization of humanitarian aid offered without the consent of the legitimate Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Suriname reiterates its call for meaningful and inclusive dialogue, such as the Montevideo Mechanism, as the only way to reach a peaceful and lasting solution to the internal conflict that has arisen in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We again implore all the parties concerned to engage in such a dialogue in order to secure and sustain our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, as a zone of peace.

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

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today is exactly 30 days since the previous meeting on this issue (see S/PV.8452). We must ask ourselves why we are gathered here again at the Security Council. The answer is obvious — the continuation in power of Nicolás Maduro and the fact that his illegitimate regime has generated a humanitarian crisis that poses an unprecedented threat to the security, peace, freedom and prosperity of the people of Venezuela and affects the entire region.

On this occasion, we once again express our concern about the deterioration of the political, social and humanitarian situation of Venezuela, as well as the systematic breakdown of the rule of law, democracy and the fundamental freedoms of the citizens of Venezuela.

On 23 February, we observed the criminal acts of the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro, who blocked the entry of international humanitarian aid in defiance of the demands and suffering of the people of Venezuela and the call of the international community. We reject and condemn those violent repressive acts, which left many dead and injured and thus increased the risk to the

life, integrity and dignity of the people of Venezuela, who are victims of a cruel and merciless oppression.

We ask the International Criminal Court to consider the petition submitted by a group of countries, including Paraguay, on 27 September, asking for the Court to consider the grave humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, the criminal violence of Maduro's regime against civilians and the denial of access to international assistance as crimes against humanity.

The presence of President Mario Abdo Benítez in the Colombian city of Cúcuta, which borders Venezuela, is a clear display of Paraguay's firm commitment to, and solidarity with, the brotherly people of Venezuela in safeguarding values, ethical and moral principles, the rule of law, human rights and public liberties.

We recall that Paraguay was the first country to break off diplomatic relations with the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro. In that regard, we reaffirm once again in the Security Council our full support for, and recognition of, the National Assembly, which was legitimately elected in December 2015, and Mr. Juan Guaidó, as interim President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Likewise, we resolutely support the agreement for the promotion of a national rescue plan, adopted by the National Assembly on 29 January. We also reiterate that the process of democratic transition and the institutional, economic and social reconstruction of Venezuela must be led peacefully by the Venezuelans themselves in accordance with their national Constitution and respect for international law and supported through political and diplomatic means, while eschewing the use of force and violence. The Venezuelan people must be the protagonists in their own liberation. We urgently call for the holding of fair, transparent and credible elections.

Lastly, we extend a special greeting to the brotherly and courageous Venezuelan people on behalf of the Paraguayan Government and its people, who support and encourage them and hope that this process will renew the example that Venezuela provided for us in the past as a beacon of democracy enlightening Latin America.

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

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her detailed briefing. I also welcome the

presence of the Minister for Foreign Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Jorge Arreaza.

Uruguay is following with deep concern the escalation in tensions in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the regrettable incidents that were reported this past weekend, which led to the loss of life and dozens of wounded. We believe that, now more than ever, we must call for caution and restraint, which must guide our actions so as to prevent a further deterioration of the situation at a time when initiatives are under way that seek to bring the parties together in order to reach an understanding aimed at a reaching peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis.

The Montevideo Mechanism and the International Contact Group are helping search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict. The Montevideo Mechanism calls for creating channels of dialogue that would provide the conditions necessary for direct contact and negotiation among stakeholders. The International Contact Group also proposes a political, peaceful, democratic and Venezuelan-owned solution. Both the Montevideo Mechanism and the International Contact Group held meetings in Montevideo on 7 February. In that regard, we encourage exploring those pathways and building others leading to understanding, while sparing no effort to move forward in the search for a solution fostering the stability and the well-being of the Venezuelan people and the restoration of peace.

Uruguay reaffirms its position that there is no other possible solution to the situation that Venezuela is undergoing than one which is freely decided by the Venezuelans themselves. An environment of dialogue and negotiations, such as the one we are advocating for, would naturally lead to the holding of free and credible elections with reliable international oversight. That will be the best way to safeguard against a potential scale of bloodshed that we all want to avoid. My country will continue to make every effort within its means to encourage dialogue and understanding, including with regard to the conditions necessary for the delivery of humanitarian aid on Venezuelan territory in order to alleviate the situation affecting the country's population. We believe that the delivery of such aid must be carried out in strict compliance with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. To that end, Uruguay will continue to adhere strictly to the same principles that it has always abided by in its international conduct, namely, full respect for international law, the peaceful settlement of

disputes, the sovereign equality of States, the principle of non-intervention and respect for human rights.

As a democratic and profoundly pacifist country, Uruguay will always opt for dialogue and concerted action and will exert its maximal effort to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to this crisis. In his statement yesterday at the opening meeting of the fortieth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, emphasized,

“Uruguay is not willing to contribute to increasing tensions and polarization with regard to positions, given the very serious risk of a civilian and military confrontation, including foreign intervention, which we reject in the strongest terms”.

We therefore urge all the parties involved to decrease tensions and renew dialogue and negotiations that will allow for restoring stability and peace to all Venezuelans without exception.

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

Mr. Bynoe (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Permit me to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, Minister for Popular Power of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to express to him solidarity with the people and the duly-elected Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela during this difficult period.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Suriname on behalf of the mentioned Caribbean Community countries.

It has been exactly one month since we assembled in the Security Council and received a briefing on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo (see S/PV.8452), Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peace Building Affairs. On that occasion, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voiced its concern regarding the disturbing events unfolding in Venezuela and echoed a clarion call for adherence to the fundamental principles of respect for sovereignty, the rule of law, non-intervention, non-interference and respect for human rights and democracy, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Today we reaffirm our unwavering

commitment to upholding those bedrock principles and ensuring the continued viability of all the provisions of international law, which together form the core of multilateralism.

During the time between the previous meeting of the Council to address the situation in Venezuela and today's, we have witnessed increased tension in our region, triggered primarily by unilateral and extraterritorial coercive measures from third countries. Undoubtedly, economic asphyxiation and military intervention lead only to severe humanitarian consequences that blatantly disregard the principles that the United Nations and all its Member States have traditionally championed.

We cannot prematurely sacrifice the Montevideo Mechanism in the search of a quick fix of militarism or ill-advised unilateral action. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains guardedly optimistic that the Montevideo Mechanism can serve as a catalyst towards a political solution for Venezuela that is crafted by Venezuelans for all Venezuelans, once given the time and space.

The archives of the Organization will reveal that the very drafters of grandiloquent resolutions — especially in the Council — have often discarded the letter and spirit of those documents before their ink has dried, in the frantic pursuit of military solutions to every dispute. As a small, peace-loving nation with a tiny population, open borders and no standing army, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines owes its continued peaceful existence as an independent and sovereign nation to the robust and universally accepted body of international law, which includes the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore cannot and will not stand aside while larger and more powerful nations manipulate and violate international law or the central tenets of the United Nations Charter.

As always, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines believes that dialogue based on mutual respect and adherence to international law is the only path to peace and progress, however difficult that path may be. Over the years, our good friend, the United States of America, has demonstrated commendable restraint, patience, global leadership and belief in diplomacy and that is emblematic in its current admirably dogged pursuit of dialogue in the second bilateral summit with North Korea. We believe that the same constructive dialogue approach should be exhibited with Venezuela

to safeguard our region of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and, more specifically, to ensure the well-being of all Venezuelans. We simply cannot and must not foreclose on dialogue in our main Organization dedicated to multilateral diplomacy.

The people of Venezuela have threatened no one and neither sanctions nor their deleterious side effects will coerce the heroic people of Venezuela to surrender their sovereignty or their right to freely choose their destiny without foreign interference, even across ideological divides.

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

Mr. Blanchard (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for inviting Canada to join today's debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Many thanks to Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for an excellent and sobering briefing.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada welcomes the opportunity to discuss Venezuela in the Security Council. Since we last met on this issue (see S/PV.8452), the situation in Venezuela has only deteriorated, with grave consequences. On 23 February, regime actors employed deadly force against their own people instead of accepting the delivery of aid from neighbouring countries. Canada offers deepest condolences to the families of the victims and we reiterate our call, as many others today have done, for the events to be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

The Nicolás Maduro regime continues to hinder access for much-needed humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people in Venezuela. Let there be no doubt that Venezuela is under the control of a dictatorship that would see its people starve rather than cede one iota of power. Fleeing such conditions, more than 3.4 million people have left Venezuela since 2015 and neighbouring countries have generously offered refuge and support.

On 4 February, during the 10th ministerial meeting of the Lima Group, Canada announced some \$53 million in development, stabilization and humanitarian assistance to help those affected by the crisis in Venezuela, including refugees, migrants and host communities. However, despite the international community's efforts, it is clear that the deepening crisis

in Venezuela is having a growing effect on regional stability and security.

(*spoke in English*)

The Lima Group, including Canada and now with the full participation of Venezuela's interim Government, met yesterday in Bogotá, where we affirmed that the continuance of Nicolás Maduro and his illegitimate regime in power represents an unprecedented threat to security, peace, freedom and prosperity throughout the region. We also reiterated our commitment to democratic and peaceful transition, based on the Venezuelan Constitution, and our rejection of the Maduro regime's illegitimate claim to power.

Let us be clear. The presidential elections in May 2018 were clearly — I repeat, clearly — fraudulent. When opposition leaders are jailed, placed under house arrest or forced into exile and when the media is unable to report freely, it is not a free, fair and legitimate election. It is a sad travesty; it is a fraud. Even during his original mandate, Nicolás Maduro demonstrated a record of repression, corruption and serious human rights abuses that violated the constitutional rights of Venezuelan citizens and denigrated their democratic institutions. The regime's attacks on democracy included the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly, created to usurp the powers of the democratically elected National Assembly because of the opposition majority in that body.

It is clear that the Maduro regime has no authority to govern Venezuela. Together with more than 50 democratic countries around the world, including most countries of the Americas, we have recognized Juan Guaidó as the legitimate interim President of Venezuela. That recognition is based firmly on Venezuela's own Constitution.

On 15 January, the democratically elected National Assembly declared that the presidency had been usurped by Nicolás Maduro. According to article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution, in the absence of a legitimate President Juan Guaidó, as President of the National Assembly, shall assume the functions of interim President. The Lima Group supports his agenda to call free and fair elections as soon as possible in order to peacefully restore constitutional democracy in Venezuela.

Let us recall that the democracy clause of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, signed by then-

President Chávez in Quebec City in 2001, clearly rejected any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order. In that spirit, we repeat our call on the Maduro regime to cede power immediately. Tens of thousands of Venezuelans have taken to the streets in recent weeks demanding genuine change. The Lima Group has made it clear that it supports a peaceful and democratic transition in Venezuela — a transition that is already under way, based on the Venezuelan Constitution — and that it rejects the use of force.

We call on all member States that are in communication with the Maduro regime to urge an end to violence. Peaceful protesters seeking food and medicines should not face tear gas and bullets. Until that time, Canada stands with the people of Venezuela in their peaceful struggle for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is those principles that we have expressed in the Ottawa declaration for Venezuela, and we encourage all those present to endorse that document to demonstrate their shared commitment.

We will continue our efforts in cooperation with our partners in the Lima Group, through the United Nations system and in other multilateral forums. Canada calls on all members of the international community to likewise support the Venezuelan people as they seek to liberate their country from the Maduro dictatorship.

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

Ms. Young (Belize): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting of the Security Council to receive a briefing on the latest developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Belize also thanks the Foreign Minister of Venezuela for his participation in this briefing and for helping to provide balance to the discussion.

Belize, as a country of the Latin American and Caribbean region and a member of the Caribbean Community, as well as of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), is desirous that the international community shall ensure that peace remains the only option for the people of Venezuela.

Less than five years ago in 2014, at the second summit of CELAC, the leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean proclaimed our region as a zone of peace, based on respect for the principles and rules of international law, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I wish to recall

that in that proclamation, the leaders pledged their permanent commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes with the aim of forever uprooting the threat or use of force in our region, and reiterated their pithy commitment to, first, non-interference in the internal affairs of any State, the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and the self-determination of peoples; secondly, foster cooperation and friendly relations among themselves and other nations; and thirdly, fully respect the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system as an essential condition to ensure the peaceful coexistence of nations. Notwithstanding our differences in the region, that proclamation stands as ever more relevant today than it was in 2014.

Belize urges the Security Council, which holds the mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, to likewise respect our leaders' commitment to maintaining Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and so, directly and clearly, to dissuade any actions that would lead to any military conflagration in Venezuela.

In recent weeks, the humanitarian plight of the Venezuelan people has gained worldwide visibility and many good intentions have been mobilized to render humanitarian assistance. At the same time, there are real concerns that such good intentions may in fact be a mask for nefarious political objectives. It is for that reason that any humanitarian assistance, when requested or welcomed, should be channelled through institutions such as the United Nations agencies set up for that purpose, or otherwise through other traditional modes for providing assistance, such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The situation in Venezuela is, in plain view, unwell. Belize, like others in the Latin American and Caribbean region, feels duty bound to encourage the earliest steps for dialogue towards a peaceful resolution. We recall in that regard the Montevideo Mechanism of 11 February, to which the Government of Venezuela has given favourable consideration. It is Belize's considered view that dialogue leading to compromise and accommodation of political plurality must take place between the Government and the opposition and, above all, that it must be done entirely unaccompanied by the threat or use of force.

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

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country thanks the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for convening this open meeting to once again address the deep political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. We also thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for the important briefing she delivered to the Council.

Ecuador reaffirms the right of all peoples of the world to democracy and the obligation of their Governments to promote and defend it. Likewise, we reiterate the constitutional and democratically elected authority of the National Assembly of Venezuela, as well as our firm support for the actions taken to request international humanitarian aid, the release of political prisoners, the freezing of the assets of corrupt Government officials and the provision of guarantees to civilian and military officials who support the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela.

Ecuador's belief in the urgent need to reach a political, peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in Venezuela has been confirmed by the recent acts of violence in connection with the blockade of humanitarian aid shipments. Ecuador rejects the use of public force and the action of paramilitary groups against peaceful demonstrators, as well as condemns that such acts led to the death and injuries suffered by some of those demonstrators, as was the case of Venezuelans from the indigenous community of Pemón.

Independent information gives an account of the urgent needs of a good part of the Venezuelan population for medicine and food, and of the suffering resulting from the economic and institutional crisis that has led more than 3 million to migrate to other nations. The delivery of essential goods to the poor should not be prevented by blockades or acts of force against those who want to facilitate it; on the contrary, it is necessary to seek channels of coordination that promote it, regardless of considerations that are not strictly humanitarian.

The shortages and conflicts in Venezuela demand an immediate political solution in order to avoid additional negative effects on its people and the region. Urgent understandings are required to lead to free elections, without exclusions of any kind, transparent and with guarantees of neutrality from transitional authorities and international observation, within the framework of Venezuelan law. Only democratic legitimacy will guarantee the future institutional stability of the

country and restore the economy and social order, which is the responsibility of Venezuelans and will require the support of the international community.

Our country has always shown its solidarity with the Venezuelan people, which is why we have welcomed more than 240,000 Venezuelans into our territory, of whom about 101,000 already have a regular-stay visa, not including international protection visas. Furthermore, on 8 and 9 April, Ecuador will convene the third regional meeting on the problem created by the migration of 3 million Venezuelans, which will serve to structure a joint work plan to solve the greatest humanitarian problem in our region.

It should be noted that Ecuador is also the Latin American country with the highest number of recognized refugees: 63,537 people from more than 70 countries. Since 2016, Ecuador has received a significant number of requests for refugee status from Venezuelan citizens.

Ecuador does not support a military intervention in Venezuela. The solution to the Venezuelan crisis will be achieved only through dialogue and consultation. We call for continued work to ensure that Venezuela has a peaceful transition to a democratic path that safeguards and guarantees the integrity, exercise and full respect for the human rights of its people.

Mr. Thomas (Antigua and Barbuda): The Government of Antigua and Barbuda continues to monitor the situation in Venezuela with great concern and appeals to all sides to remain calm and focused on the Montevideo Mechanism, which is being facilitated by the Governments of Mexico and Uruguay and the Caribbean Community. All parties involved should resist any escalation of rhetoric, which does nothing but undermine a regional effort to bring about peace.

As we have stated on previous occasions, that matter is of grave concern to Antigua and Barbuda, as well as to all countries within our region. We cannot overstate the importance of our region remaining a zone of peace. We have had decades of interference into the affairs of countries within our region that have left the region broken. We cannot and must not return to those days. Settling conflicts in countries is firstly a matter of internal affairs, with no outside interference, and most of all, it is a matter of finding peaceful ways to reach agreements to solve conflicts.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda remains concerned about the events of the past few days that have resulted in the loss of innocent lives and increased human suffering, and about the effects that this has had on millions of Venezuelans, including women, the elderly, the disabled and children. Therefore, my Government believes that where there is a need for humanitarian aid, the United Nations should always facilitate any form of aid distribution and support. The application of aid supply should be free from international political influence and preconditions and should be done in a manner that is consistent with international humanitarian aid relief.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda reiterates that, as States Members of the United Nations, we are bound by principles enshrined in international law. Those principles make it abundantly clear that no State or group of States should interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign countries. The Charter of the United Nations also makes its abundantly clear, in Article 2, paragraph 4, that

“all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”.

This rule was enshrined in the United Nations Charter for a good reason — to prevent States from using force as they felt so inclined, either unilaterally or by a self-selected few. Diplomacy, dialogue and peaceful negotiations should always be encouraged; in fact, history has taught us that diplomacy garners greater results. Any other process, including military intervention, will undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations in promoting peace and risks destabilizing the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting in damaging effects for years to come.

As we have stated in this Chamber, unilateral declaration of support for one side in Venezuela over the other is blatant interference and uninvited influence in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. It does nothing but undermine a process that requires urgent attention, international diplomacy and respect for legal processes within the society. International sanctions and the strangulation of a country's international finances are tools that do nothing but hurt the most vulnerable people of a society. We must cease the practice of using

international institutions built to serve as instruments of cooperation as instruments of war. Might cannot be right.

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

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to see the representative of a friendly country presiding over the Security Council this month. I also welcome the Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

My delegation wishes to reiterate before this forum what was previously expressed on the occasion of the debate held on 26 January (see S/PV.8452), exactly a month ago, and to express its deep concern about the recent events in the brother country of Venezuela, which has not been able to find a peaceful way to address the differences among the parties involved. Worse still, these actions are fuelling an ongoing political confrontation that is affecting the stability and development of the Venezuelan people.

Once again, we reiterate our conviction that it is up to the Government and other internal Venezuelan political forces to resolve all differences through dialogue conducted by the Venezuelans themselves, peacefully and within the framework of the Constitution and international law, supported by political and diplomatic means, without the use or threat of the use of force.

El Salvador, as a responsible State, calls on the international community to guarantee full respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including, as we all know, respect for the sovereignty of States, non-intervention in internal affairs and the prohibition of the use or threat of use force. As members of the international community, we must therefore advocate for a peaceful solution through dialogue, as the best way to contribute to overcoming any difficulties that Venezuela may face and to contribute thereby to lasting solutions and regional peace.

Finally, the Government of El Salvador expresses once again its support for the diplomatic initiative of those countries that, committed to peace and stability in the region, promote and hope to contribute to finding a political and peaceful solution to the differences in Venezuela.

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

Ms. Flores (Honduras): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate. Honduras ascribes to the Lima declaration, adopted in Bogotá on 25 February.

Our hearts go out to the people of Venezuela in their yearning for liberty, democracy and peace. We express our solidarity with President Juan Guaidó, interim caretaker of the Venezuelan Republic by virtue of its Constitution, in the outstanding effort to make available humanitarian relief to all who are suffering and to form a transitional Government, in order to commence the process of calling and organizing free and fair elections. It is not an easy task under the prevailing conditions, but a necessary one if Venezuela is to recover its sovereignty and to fulfil its duties and obligations as a Member of the Organization.

The population of Venezuela has been deprived for far too long of fundamental human rights and has been subjected to barbarous acts under a cruel dictatorship. Many people have lost their lives and many others their voice and freedom, and millions have fled to escape the infernal situation. Yet many brave and heroic individuals have remained, enduring terrible hardships. A country rich in all forms of resources is today devastated and desecrated.

The Organization of American States is a regional agency and a key strategic partner of the United Nations, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The Organization of American States Permanent Council, at its special meeting of 10 January, adopted a resolution in which it resolved "to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduro's new term as of the 10th of January of 2019" and

"[t]o urge all Members States and invite Permanent Observers of the Organization of American States to adopt, in accordance with international law and their national legislation, diplomatic, political, economic and financial measures that they consider appropriate, to contribute to the prompt restoration of the democratic order of Venezuela".

The constitutional legacy in Latin America is one that protects citizens from tyrannical rule. Nevertheless, former President Nicolás Maduro Moros continues to usurp the powers of the executive branch, undermining

the rule of law and all independent institutions. The blocking, burning and depriving Venezuelans of humanitarian aid in the form of food and medicine on 23 February will be accounted for in the list of crimes against humanity upon investigation and review by the International Criminal Court.

Honduras supports a peaceful solution whereby elections are called without delay. Nevertheless, we recognize and respect the authority and faculties of the National Assembly and the mechanisms outlined in the Venezuelan Constitution, pursuant to the diligent restoration of democracy. The many acts of aggression committed by Nicolás Maduro and his supporters against the rule of law, including breaking with the principles of equality in the General Assembly and the United Nations, have a great impact beyond our region. Venezuela's internal dynamics are a matter of concern in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security, where there is an urgent responsibility to protect the innocent a civilian population amid an impending conflict.

Finally, this house was created to ensure world peace and must work to prevent all actions that call into question the credibility of the United Nations or undermine the critical role of the Organization of American States, which is the most important regional organization of the Americas. Rebuilding a thriving and prosperous Venezuela in the hands of Venezuelans is possible with the timely restoration of a functional democracy and strong, independent and complementary institutions.

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

Ms. Quiel Murcia (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): A month after the first meeting of the Council to consider the subject that brings us together today (see S/PV.8452), it should be noted that concern continues to grow, as confirmed in her briefing by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

Acts of violence continue to cause injury and claim human lives, in addition to the thousands of Venezuelans who have been forced to leave their country in search of better opportunities as a result of a political, economic and humanitarian crisis that threatens their safety and security.

As a country that promotes dialogue and peace and with a manifest humanitarian vocation, Panama strongly condemns the use of force against the Venezuelan people, the repression of human rights and all the acts of violence that prevented access to humanitarian aid last weekend, despite the obvious needs which the assistance was intended to meet. My country, together with the more than 50 others that have censured the perpetuation of a de facto regime, has ratified its recognition of the interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, to whom it has offered its support in the light of its determined commitment to democracy, freedom and peace in our brother country.

The illegitimate regime must allow a transition to a democratic process, decided through fair elections with the equitable participation of all political actors. It must above all avoid further confrontations among the Venezuelan people. As a member of the Lima Group, Panama has also called at the highest level for the political, economic and humanitarian crisis affecting more than 27 million Venezuelans not to be turned into a geopolitical conflict.

The superior purpose of the international consensus that my country has joined seeks only for Venezuela to return to the path of democracy, freedom and prosperity for its people, within the framework of a peaceful solution, without violence and without the use of force. We therefore hope that dialogue and prudence will prevail. Concern over the situation in Venezuela has been and remains genuine, and under no circumstances can it be interpreted as interference in the internal affairs of that brother country. With this vision, we endorse the contents of the declaration issued yesterday by the Lima Group in Bogotá, in the firm conviction that the international community's efforts in favour of the rights of the Venezuelan people and institutional recovery in Venezuela are also critical to the development and tranquillity of our region.

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

Mr. Carazo (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks you, Sir, for having convened this meeting and Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

Not all options for finding a solution to the tragic situation in Venezuela are open. I repeat — not all options are open. In order to find a solution to this crisis, the well-being of the Venezuelans must be our top priority. Costa Rica therefore reiterates its irrevocable

commitment to mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, diplomacy and dialogue as fundamental tools, as well as the mechanisms of international law and multilateralism. Our position has always been and always will be one of firm rejection of any course of action that implies the exercise of violence, the use of force or military intervention in Venezuela.

In that vein, Costa Rica repudiates the regrettable use of force and acts of violence committed under the authority of Nicolás Maduro in recent days — in particular on 23 February, a regrettable day for the Venezuelan people, who are suffering the most serious consequences of that regime, resulting in a population that is beset by hunger, lack of health care and the most basic sanitation services, and that now finds itself deprived of its most fundamental rights and freedoms.

Costa Rica strongly encourages the safe and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance — in line with the international principles of humanitarian aid, humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence — that reaches those who need it the most. We request the cooperation of the relevant United Nations agencies in this effort.

We reiterate our concern over the distressing situation of the Venezuelan people and, above all, the violations of human rights in that country, which have already been extensively documented by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and analysed by the Human Rights Council. Costa Rica has been and will continue to be consistent in its support for the efforts of the international community in this regard.

We reaffirm our conviction that the solution to the crisis facing the brotherly country of Venezuela must be peaceful, democratic and defined by the Venezuelans themselves. As we have said before, we believe that in order to restore democratic and constitutional order in Venezuela, elections must be free, fair, transparent, open to the participation of all political actors, take account of all sectors, adhere to international standards and convened in the shortest possible time. This is consistent with Costa Rica's position of non-recognition of the electoral process of 20 May 2018, which, we reiterate, fell short of standards for transparency and inclusiveness and did not enjoy the international guarantees and norms necessary for it to be considered legitimate. Costa Rica therefore does not recognize the legitimacy of the regime that was inaugurated on 10 January. As Mr. Maduro's regime

lacks that democratic capacity, Costa Rica recognizes Mr. Juan Guaidó as interim President of Venezuela.

Costa Rica will remain committed to participating in all efforts and measures aimed at bringing the parties together and supporting the peaceful restoration of constitutional order and respect for human rights in Venezuela. We call on the international community to continue and increase diplomatic efforts towards opening effective avenues of negotiation for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Venezuela.

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

Mrs. Bannis-Roberts (Dominica): I also wish to recognize the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica again expresses its continuing concern regarding the ongoing occurrences in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and their disturbing potential outcomes.

The Commonwealth of Dominica also associates itself with, and reiterates, the sentiments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on this matter.

The Commonwealth of Dominica strongly upholds the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of every sovereign State. We continue to promote and uphold the principle of article 21 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, which recognizes territorial inviolability, as well as the principles of human rights, international law, the rule of law and the sanctity of national sovereignty, and the pivotal principles of peace, dialogue and compromise as an essential basis for the preservation of the dignity and worth of the human person.

We believe that to peacefully and sustainably resolve the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, there must be meaningful dialogue and diplomacy among all parties that is geared at reaffirming the right of the people of Venezuela to peace and democracy. Every effort should be made to help build peace, promote reconciliation and find an amicable and lasting resolution to the situation.

Dominica fully supports and endorses the Montevideo Mechanism, which comprises four major phases — the dialogue phase, the negotiation phase, the commitment phase and the implementation phase. Dominica strongly believes that, on the basis of that

approach, there will be a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the situation in Venezuela. Our region is widely known as a zone of peace and all necessary and precautionary measures should be taken to ensure that our region continues to enjoy peace and tranquillity. It is Dominica's desire for an amicable and lasting resolution to the situation.

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

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Security Council for taking the time to take up an issue that deserves the attention of the United Nations, namely the aggression against Venezuela.

I just wanted to restate a few points very briefly.

First, as has been repeated here from a permanent script on humanitarian assistance, the Government of President Maduro has been working with the United Nations for several years now, most recently in the face of the economic crisis provoked by the criminal blockade against the Venezuelan economy. In September last year, President Maduro was here at the United Nations and met with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, agreeing with him a mechanism to increase cooperation and receive technical humanitarian assistance through the United Nations. As noted by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation and other countries of the region, we have been receiving assistance through this mechanism from the United Nations.

I also wish to emphasize that we agreed with the European Union that this mechanism, which is already in place and operational, could not only manage the delivery of assistance to Venezuela but also, for an economy that has been blockaded like ours, it could facilitate procurement — purchases — because of the problem of over-compliance, as the experts call it, of international banks with the so-called sanctions imposed by the United States blockade, so that they are afraid of dealing with Venezuelan institutions and also with the suppliers, who are imposing special terms, such as insurance against acts of war and very high prices, and very often these transactions do not even go through.

For that reason, we have been receiving help from friendly countries and from the United Nations through

this mechanism, which we designed in cooperation with the most beautiful multilateral institutions that exists, the best creation of humanity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which is the United Nations

Secondly, in the light of today's meeting, I would like to note that Venezuela insists that the Security Council the other organs of the United Nations should dedicate themselves to preventing a war against my people, against Venezuela. We know that they have the capacity to do so and also to lift the blockade against my country. Those sanctions have affected the key businesses at the heart of the Venezuelan economy. They have affected the capacity of our country to trade its own bonds and to seek financing as a State from multilateral institutions.

They have blocked billions of dollars of Venezuelan money — \$30 billion, as I noted in my previous statement. That is the cost of the blockade, but in terms of assets that have been frozen, that figure is doubled, and if we were to make an actuarial analysis of the loss of production, the loss of exports and the loss of sales resulting from the sanctions, we are talking about billions and billions of dollars.

The Security Council should also call on the parties to sit down at the table together. We are sitting at the table and have always been there, as we have said. There is no way of doing political business in a democracy, a democratic revolution or a revolutionary democracy without sitting down at the table, especially with our political adversaries who have different positions from ours — that is exactly where dialogue should take place.

We must work for peace. We must reject any threat of the use of force. Unfortunately, the delegation of the United States is not ruling out that option. Neither its President — the chain of command that we mentioned before — President Trump, Vice-President Pence, Secretary of State Pompeo, National Security Adviser Bolton, members of Congress, such as Senator Marco Rubio, Mr. Elliott Abrams nor others who fall within that chain of command, has ruled out war against Venezuela.

I would like the Security Council to ensure that the United States, if it is a Member of the United Nations and if it respects the Charter of the United Nations, rules out the use of force and the threat of the use of force — or why else is it a Member of the United Nations? Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter is very

clear and anybody who fails to abide by them — of course, there are other articles that the United States is violating, such as that on non-interference. But this is very dangerous — the use of force — and that is why we are emphasizing this point — it is the obligation of the United States.

We have been informed that the Russian Federation informally proposed a very simple draft resolution calling on parties in Venezuela to sit down for a dialogue and the United States delegation rejected it. I would like to bring to the attention of the Council the evident lack of will of that delegation and to remind the Council that all of us, as States Members of the United Nations, should see dialogue as an obligation and oppose the use of force, in particular the members of the Security Council and especially the permanent members of the Security Council. We therefore now have a very irregular model of behaviour — contrary to the principles of United Nations — within the five permanent members of the Security Council. We call for the situation to be corrected. It is important that it be corrected.

Lastly, I thank my region, Latin America and the Caribbean, and all countries therein without exception, including those that have differences with Venezuela, for participating today and, despite the United States opposition, for having ruled out the use of force and the military threat as a solution for the institutional situation in my country. This is a victory for our region, which, through its regional body the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, has been proclaimed a zone of peace since 2014.

By way of summary, we can say that we must avoid war and blockades against peoples. We have to protect peace. We believe that today's meeting, regardless of who convened it, will prove to be a great victory for peace and we must continue to work in that direction.

The President: The representative of Peru has requested the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It was not my intention to speak again, given the late hour. We have heard various positions, including Mr. Arreaza's account of events, which we dispute substantively. But we do agree that all the Latin American countries represented here, as well as many others, have come out clearly against any use of force. I agree with him on that. However, we have asked to speak because, among

the many issues he raised in his statement, he failed to mention one factor that we believe to be essential.

One key element that has been referred to by many speakers today is the exodus of Venezuelans that has taken place over the past few years and which is the most serious in the history of the region. I deeply regret that he did not utter one single word of concern — not one *mea culpa* — about the situation facing his compatriots throughout the region. Some 3.4 million Venezuelan citizens have fled the country; 700,00 of them are in Peru. Lima is 4,300 kilometres from Caracas. Why have 700,000 citizens come by land in very difficult circumstances? They have done so because of the economic disaster caused by the regime and because of repression, but we believe that they also did so because they had lost hope that one day things might change. Unfortunately, the elections, which have been widely discussed here, did nothing to give them such hope.

That was the reason for the establishment of the Lima Group and its proposal for the use of political and diplomatic means to put an end to the situation and to re-establish democracy.

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

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize for taking the floor again. All Venezuelans are dependent on the situation and conditions in our country. Some 6 million Colombians live in Venezuela. We welcome and appreciate them. Last year, we received almost 100,000 Colombians, who came because of the conditions in their country, with which we are all familiar. We have Ecuadorians and Peruvians in our country. There are almost a million of them. They are welcome and we want them in our country.

We have sent many diplomatic notes to the Foreign Ministries of those countries that claim to be receiving Venezuelans, asking them for precise information on the numbers, because the figure of 3 million refugees is absolutely absurd. It does not correspond to reality, although there is heavy migration. How could there not be emigration in a country that has been subject over the past four years to an economic blockade that is designed to make the people suffer? The United States has admitted that its intention is to strangle the Venezuelan people in order to spark regime change.

The Peruvian Government recently decided not to recognize our diplomatic personnel, who are entrusted with protecting the community of Venezuelans in Peru. That decision seems to be contradictory, but I would ask for a demonstration of good faith so that our Foreign Ministry can work with Peru, Chile and Ecuador to gather the information we need, including names and locations, so that we can fully address the needs of the Venezuelan groups that have left our country.

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

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I shall not keep anyone here for long but, building on what was said by the Foreign Minister of Venezuela, I wish to inform the Council that, as we have been holding this meeting, the United States delegation has already managed to kill our draft statement by introducing amendments condemning the Maduro Government and so on. It is clear that the United States approach to Haiti is not appropriate to Venezuela. It reflects a blatant double standard.

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

Mr. Ordeman (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor at this late hour, but I feel that we have no other choice.

We did in fact engage in a statement that the Russian Federation had proposed. We had hoped that it would track with the actual situation on the ground, as opposed to applying an approach that had been used with Haiti. With that in mind, we had hoped to note that Maduro had been given numerous opportunities to engage in good-faith efforts to address Venezuela's political and socioeconomic issues and that he has consistently used such opportunities to consolidate the power of his regime, at the expense of the Venezuelan people. We therefore would have liked the Security Council to underscore the importance of a true democratic process, and that that would have been allowed to proceed.

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

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize once again, but the only

thing we would ask the delegation of the United States is that it honour its obligations, as clearly laid out in the Charter of the United Nations. We do not need a resolution or a statement. I simply wish to hear him say

that the United States, like any other Member of the Organization, rejects the use of force against the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.