



Security Council

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Letter dated 22 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela convened on Wednesday, 20 May 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

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

(Signed) **Sven Jürgenson**
President of the Security Council

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Annex I**Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary A. DiCarlo**

Venezuela is mired in a deepening protracted crisis that only Venezuelans can resolve. Attempts at reaching a negotiated solution have been unsuccessful despite the significant international facilitation efforts that have been made. The path of negotiation seems to be stalled.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that on 3 and 4 May,

“armed groups of mercenaries and terrorists, organized, trained, financed and protected by the Governments of the Republic of Colombia and the United States of America, illegally entered the Venezuelan territory”.

According to the letter, the “declared purpose” was “[to] perpetrat[e] criminal acts” against the Venezuelan people and “[to] carry out selective assassinations against high officials of [the] Government”, including President Nicolás Maduro.

The letter pointed to the involvement in the operation of an “extremist sector of the Venezuelan opposition”, referring explicitly to “Deputy Juan Guaidó”, who is recognized by a group of States Members of the United Nations as the interim president of the country. According to the letter, the operation was “frustrated by the Venezuelan authorities” and, as of 13 May, the Prosecutor General of Venezuela had confirmed the arrest of 47 people in relation to the operation.

The Governments of Colombia and the United States have rejected allegations by the Venezuelan Government regarding their involvement. The leader of the Venezuelan opposition has also denied involvement in the operation and called for establishing a national emergency Government. On 4 May, through his spokesperson, the Secretary-General affirmed that we stand against any escalation of the situation in Venezuela and that the way to resolve the situation is through political dialogue and full respect for human rights.

There is heightened concern regarding the stand-off and the absence of any serious negotiations between the main political parties in the country, especially amid the potentially far-reaching effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Until restrictions imposed by the pandemic forced the suspension of its activities, the Applications Committee of the National Assembly, established to work on the selection of members of the National Electoral Council, was the only formal space bringing together lawmakers from the Government and the opposition. The Committee was also significant in that it was poised to lay the groundwork for necessary agreements between the Government and the opposition over the electoral calendar and process. Legislative elections are due before the end of the year.

We have taken note of the position of members of the opposition who have called for presidential elections to take place together with legislative elections. We call on the main political actors to engage in a constructive negotiation to create conditions conducive to the holding of credible, inclusive and participatory elections.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Assembly has called for a global response based on unity, solidarity and multilateral cooperation. The United Nations COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan includes Venezuela. The 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan is expected to request some \$750 million to cover humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Venezuelans and support the response to the pandemic. More funding is urgently needed.

The Government of Venezuela has been calling for a humanitarian agreement for health and peace among all political sectors. While such calls are welcome, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) has received reports of detentions of political leaders and journalists reporting on COVID-19 and threats and intimidation against health workers for, for example, expressing concern about the lack of equipment to fight the pandemic or for giving information on the number of cases. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed concern about the excessive use of force in some countries, including Venezuela, in the context of protests for access to such basic rights as food, water and medicine.

Politicization of humanitarian aid in Venezuela has continued during the pandemic, which remains a major concern. Humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations and our partners across the country is governed by the principles of independence, humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Mark Lowcock, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, has asked all parties to respect this principled humanitarian approach and not manipulate the needs-based assistance.

Another concern is the nationwide fuel shortages, a key operational constraint for humanitarian organizations trying to sustain their response. The Venezuelan Government attributes the fuel shortages to unilateral sanctions. While available social and economic indicators show that the economic crisis predates the imposition of economic sanctions, the measures are exacerbating an already critical situation.

In his address to the Group of 20 on 26 March, the Secretary-General appealed for the waiving of sanctions that could undermine countries' capacity to respond to the pandemic. Meanwhile, in her update on Venezuela to the Human Rights Council on 10 March, the High Commissioner noted that

“despite exceptions to allow imports of medicines, food and humanitarian supplies, public services and the general population continue to suffer from the impact of over-compliance from the financial sector”.

In the context of the pandemic, she has recently affirmed that “humanitarian exemptions to sanctions measures should be given broad and practical effect”.

The United Nations system will continue strengthening its human rights and humanitarian action in Venezuela as well as its response in support of Venezuelan refugees and migrants outside the country. According to official figures, as of early May, close to 5.1 million refugees and migrants have left Venezuela. More than 80 per cent of this population can be found across countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since the start of the pandemic, there are reports of Venezuelans returning to their country due to the loss of livelihoods. Eduardo Stein, the Joint Special Representative of the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, has said that the pandemic exposes them to even greater hardship as many are now struggling to survive away from home. He urged the international community to generously provide support through the regional response plan for Venezuelans, which to date has only 4 per cent of the funds it requires.

In a statement on 15 May, the European Union and the Spanish Government announced plans to convene an international donors conference in solidarity with Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin American countries. The conference, which is set to take place on 26 May, will be supported by UNHCR and IOM.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly called for a negotiated solution among Venezuelans. He has supported international facilitation efforts and has offered his

good offices, should they be needed and should the parties request them. We remain convinced that a real negotiation among Venezuela's main political actors is the only way forward.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, an agreement that strengthens democratic governance, with full respect for human rights and the rule of law, is more urgent than ever. We call on the main political actors to resume serious negotiations. We urge all Member States to stand behind this call.

Annex II

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for her briefing.

The incident described in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela and in the Russian request for today's meeting raises a lot of questions. Where is the line between fact and interpretation? Where is the line between reality and assumptions? Who is benefiting most from this situation? How can we access neutral, non-partisan information?

To be clear, Belgium condemns the use of mercenaries in all circumstance, and relevant instruments under international law should be applied to the crime of their use. We condemn the use or threat of use of force and stress the importance of respecting each country's sovereignty. We also emphasize the importance of respecting human rights, including in anti-insurgency operations.

This incident raises many questions, but there a few things we know with certainty.

First, we know the population of Venezuela is suffering. We remain very worried about the human rights situation, the absence of the rule of law and the lack of democracy in the country. This situation has led to an exodus of historic proportions. We emphasize the need for transparent, free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections and denounce the ongoing intimidation of members of the National Assembly who must be allowed to exercise their parliamentary mandate.

Secondly, we know that only a political solution can resolve the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. The recent events divert attention from the human-made humanitarian crisis that is further being exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We hope the pandemic can also serve as an opportunity to focus minds and encourage people to work together in confronting this shared challenge.

Thirdly, the politicization of humanitarian aid is unacceptable. We reiterate the importance of respecting humanitarian principles and the need for full and unrestricted access. The threat posed by COVID-19 does not exempt Governments from their obligations under international law, in particular human rights law and refugee law.

Finally, we know that the population of Venezuela can rely on the support of the European Union (EU) and its member States. On the humanitarian side, the EU remains the largest donor in Venezuela. Politically, the EU-led International Contact Group on Venezuela will continue to support all initiatives in good faith that lead to a peaceful and democratic resolution of the crisis.

The political deadlock in Venezuela remains profoundly problematic and has negative impacts on regional stability. We call on all stakeholders to engage in a credible, representative and serious negotiation process such as the one facilitated by Norway. The only way forward resides in political talks.

Annex III

Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger

Allow me to express our sincere appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her insightful briefing.

The Americas, our region, is one of peace. We have a rich and successful history of democratic transitions that have ultimately translated into sustainable development, despite the many challenges.

At the outset, let us be clear about the position of the Dominican Republic, not only in the particular case of Venezuela, but with respect to any other matter involving accusations of this magnitude. We reiterate our full respect and commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations for the collective benefit of safeguarding international peace and security. The Dominican Republic rejects any use of force or threat thereof against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of any country.

Our demonstrated interest in the resolution of the Venezuelan crisis was evident when we facilitated a dialogue between the Government and the opposition in Venezuela in order to clear the path for a democratic process in the country. All these efforts were made in solidarity and based on our clear conviction that it is only through dialogue and peaceful means that a solution to the crisis in Venezuela can be achieved.

Likewise, we vehemently reject and condemn any act of terrorism as unjustifiable under any circumstances, recognizing the need to combat this scourge. We also reject the illicit trafficking by international criminal organizations of drugs, money, small arms and light weapons, and persons.

The regional implications of this crisis are great, but they are greatest for the Venezuelans themselves. Either as refugees or as persons enduring a harsh years-long economic crisis, they are the ones paying the highest price. In this context, we continue to have serious concerns about the dire humanitarian situation in the country, particularly with the advent of the coronavirus disease pandemic, and sincerely hope that priorities are established to provide and facilitate assistance to those in need and that the necessary measures to contain the spread of the virus are undertaken.

Allowing for a democratic transition to take place without further delay through the holding of free, fair and credible elections needs to be at the centre of all international efforts, in full respect of the United Nations Charter and the legitimate aspirations of the Venezuelan population, including those living outside their country. In the light of the accusations presented and the discussions held thus far, we also call for an independent investigation of the facts before jumping prematurely to conclusions.

We long for a path to open for Venezuelans where the fulfilment of their inherited individual and collective rights and aspirations are guaranteed and where a prosperous Venezuela regains its rightful place in the orchestra of democracies of the Americas.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing on the situation in Venezuela.

The situation in Venezuela is very concerning. The further deterioration of the political crisis and its destabilizing effects across the region must be addressed. The lack of dialogue between the regime and the opposition is steadily increasing the suffering of Venezuelans. Estonia firmly believes that a peaceful and inclusive democratic transition is the only sustainable solution to the current political deadlock and the severe social crisis.

We are concerned about reports of human rights violations against protesters, civil society activists and human rights defenders. The authorities must secure freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, protect peaceful protesters from violence, investigate all violations and ensure accountability.

The people of Venezuela are in urgent need of humanitarian aid as the current pandemic has worsened the situation even more. We urge all relevant actors to take all necessary measures to secure safe, full and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to all people in need and to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. The European Union is the largest donor to the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis, providing more than half of all funding.

Finally, more concerted efforts are needed to meet the extremely urgent needs of the Venezuelan people. We support United Nations efforts as well as those of all other key players.

Annex V**Statement by the Political Coordinator at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, Antoine Michon**

As members of the Security Council, we have the responsibility to contribute constructively to political and peaceful solutions to political crises. It is in that spirit that we approach today's discussion on the situation in Venezuela.

I wish first to reaffirm that the solution to the Venezuelan crisis can be found only in full compliance with international law and the Venezuelan Constitution. The use of force must be strongly condemned, without exception. Naturally, respect for international law also applies to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and Venezuela has an obligation to guarantee the normal functioning of all foreign embassies in Caracas.

In response to the Venezuelan political crisis, France, together with its partners in the European Union and Latin America, has engaged in diplomatic efforts with the creation of the International Contact Group on Venezuela to promote a resolution of the crisis through dialogue by taking into account the results of the Oslo and Barbados processes, among other elements. Inclusive, good-faith dialogue is indeed the only way forward with a view to the organization of free, transparent and credible elections. Venezuelans must be able to freely choose their future, and the prerogatives of the National Assembly must be respected in accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution.

Venezuelans are the first victims of the current crisis, which has lasted too long. Millions have had to flee their country, and we pay tribute to the generosity that many neighbouring countries have demonstrated in welcoming and protecting them. The European Union has shown its readiness to support those countries and will hold a donor conference on 26 May, together with United Nations agencies, following on from the solidarity conference that was held in Brussels in October 2019. Our response to this crisis, under the leadership of the United Nations, must be inclusive and collective and must take into account the dangerous spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, whose humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts on the region could be terrible.

Venezuelans are also suffering from the economic consequences of the political crisis. We call on all actors to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to reject any politicization of humanitarian aid. That is all the more necessary in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. I recall that France has been increasing its financial contribution over the last years; in total, the European Union provides more than half of the humanitarian aid to Venezuelans.

Finally, Venezuelans are suffering from serious and repeated human rights violations. France calls on Venezuela to implement all of the recommendations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly with regard to the release of political prisoners. We recall that European Union sanctions are individual measures adopted in response to those human rights violations and that they are designed not to affect the population and the response to the pandemic.

As the Council can see, France, together with its European partners, is committed to all aspects of the Venezuelan issue — political, humanitarian and human rights. We call on all parties to resume dialogue, which is the only way out of the crisis.

Annex VI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Juergen Schulz**

In our view, the Council members need to focus on the most pressing issue at hand: the unprecedented humanitarian emergency the Venezuelan people are suffering through and the overwhelming need for a political solution. We are aware of the Maduro regime's attempts to instrumentalize some reported incidents to divert the world's attention from the real issues. We see that as an effort at diversion by a regime that is responsible for the protracted political crisis and dire economic situation that Venezuelans from all walks of life are suffering.

We, as the Security Council, should not fall into that trap. If we really care about the fate of millions of Venezuelans and about regional stability, we need urgent action now. The only way forward is through a peaceful, Venezuelan-owned political process. We strongly renew our call for the restoration of democratic institutions and the rule of law in Venezuela through free, transparent and credible presidential elections. The European Union (EU), through the International Contact Group on Venezuela, stands ready to support that process. Echoing the Secretary-General's call to unite in our shared battle against coronavirus disease (COVID-19), now is the time to overcome the political deadlock and find an agreement, possibly within the framework of the Oslo process, which Germany has always strongly supported.

We also support the proposal of a transitional Government for Venezuela, representing both sides, to pave the way towards presidential and parliamentary elections and to unite in order to jointly respond to the challenge posed by COVID-19. We urge the Maduro regime to finally engage in meaningful negotiations.

In the context of collapsing infrastructure, mass migration and a Government in denial about the humanitarian emergency, COVID-19 could have disastrous implications for Venezuela. Humanitarian actors need unimpeded and sustained access to the most vulnerable people and must be able to deliver humanitarian assistance in full accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We urge the Maduro regime to grant access nationwide. Humanitarian assistance must never be exploited for political purposes or be misused as a propaganda tool. The politicization of the delivery of humanitarian assistance runs counter to the humanitarian mandate and undermines the safety and security of humanitarian workers. We call instead for a united attempt to combat COVID-19 that includes all political actors. The National Assembly of Venezuela has made a number of constructive proposals to strengthen the country's health-care system. The authorities in Venezuela and the international community must use all available resources at this point in time. That requires all of us to provide sufficient humanitarian assistance, first and foremost through the United Nations.

Let me reiterate in that context that EU sanctions do not stand in the way or impede the global fight against COVID-19 or more broadly the provision of humanitarian assistance. On the contrary, EU sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans, are targeted and are aimed at those responsible for the policies or actions that violate international law or human rights and aggravate conflict. To be perfectly clear, EU sanctions imposed against Venezuela do not apply to humanitarian assistance and humanitarian activities, including medical assistance.

We are alarmed that with the arrival of the pandemic in the country, intimidation and threats against health professionals, members of non-governmental organizations, journalists and human rights defenders have increased yet again. That is unfortunate and must stop. We therefore urge the regime once again to release

all political prisoners, especially bearing in mind the consequences of the current pandemic under conditions of detention.

Before closing, let me recall that more than 5 million Venezuelans have fled to neighbouring countries, often in search of medicine and basic health services. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates their plight. This is the biggest refugee crisis in Latin America's history. On 26 May, Germany will participate in a donor conference for Venezuelan refugees to be hosted by the EU, together with Spain.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

As I am the last speaker before the President, I have the luxury to have heard all of the members' statements.

Let me begin by once again reiterating that Indonesia's position on the situation in Venezuela has always been clear, consistent and principled. We have had the opportunity to express our position several times. For us, dialogue, reconciliation and negotiation remain the preferred option for the durable resolution of all issues. Having said that, let me make three very brief points.

First, the principles of non-interference, sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, should be the starting point in discussing any issues in the framework of the United Nations. That is also the case for the situation in Venezuela. It is imperative to respect those fundamental principles. With that in mind, we appeal to all the parties involved, both in and outside Venezuela, to put serious effort into reducing tensions and not exacerbating the situation. We would like to echo Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo's point that only Venezuelans themselves can resolve the protracted crisis.

Secondly, it is important for us, the Security Council, to be united and to take the right action. Within less than one month, the Council has met three times to discuss the situation in Venezuela. Those efforts have so far failed to make any difference for the people and the country. Last time we met, we could not even agree on press elements. Indonesia regrets that we have been unable to achieve unity in the Council on a mechanism for us, as a respected body, to move forward to address the situation of Venezuela, including its already dire humanitarian challenges. Despite our diverging views in the Council, Indonesia still believes that it is possible for us to arrive at a consensus in line with our responsibility and mandate.

That brings me to my last point, namely, that any solution for the situation in Venezuela should be focused on an inclusive political dialogue involving all parties. To that end, there is an urgent need to address the large trust deficit in the country. We therefore call on all parties to accept the good offices offered by the Secretary-General and again urge restraint against any action that could result in further deterioration of the already fragile situation on the ground.

In this time of coronavirus disease, responding to the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Venezuelans, including refugees and migrants, during the pandemic is imperative. However, if we really care about the people of Venezuela — as I believe we do — the first step is to demonstrate a united front in the Council and find common ground. We have continuously expressed the need to have a united front, but it is a pity that we have not done so, as we heard in the many divisive statements this afternoon. This is the time for us to put aside our differences and ensure that we will be part of the solution and not part of the problem. We still have the obligation to find ways and means to assist Venezuela and its people in finding a peaceful solution to their current challenges. Let us show the people of Venezuela that we stand with them and will not leave them in despair.

Annex VIII

Statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy

We thank Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo for the briefing.

I want to indicate from the outset that the situation we are facing today is unfolding around Venezuela, not inside the country. The recent incidents of breach of Venezuela's sovereignty by foreign agents pose a direct threat to the country's peace, as well as to regional security and stability. Moreover, the situation is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

To better illustrate the point of our meeting, I will summarize the facts. In the first days of May, an armed group of at least 60 people entered the sovereign land of Venezuela from the territory of neighbouring Colombia on two vessels. Forty-seven of them were arrested, among them two citizens of the United States of America, who confessed that their mission was to train forces in neighbouring Colombia for military operations in Venezuela and to take control of an airport in order to secure the transportation of President Nicolás Maduro to the United States.

We also know about a contract signed on 16 October 2019 by a deputy to Juan Guaidó and Jordan Goudreau, the chief executive officer of United States company Silvercorp, for some \$200 million. The aim was "to remove the current Venezuelan regime". According to the information available, the operation was to be financed through Venezuelan sovereign funds expropriated by the United States from Caracas and kept in United States banks. After the imposter President claimed that he had nothing to do with the contract, another financial document dated 28 April 2020 that demanded Juan Guaidó make a down payment of \$1.5 million to Silvercorp was published just a few days prior to so-called Operation Gideon.

We would like to question what role neighbouring Colombia had in that story. It is hard to imagine that the clandestine operation that originated on its soil was conducted without it having any knowledge of it. The United States authorities claim that they have nothing to do with it. We would be glad to believe them, but they fail to explain the fact that, according to the contract, two American citizens were planning to take the legitimate Venezuelan President hostage and bring him to the United States. For what purpose, may I ask? And how does it correlate with the constant all-options-are-on-the-table messages from the United States Government to Caracas, including the recent announcement of a \$15 million bounty on President Maduro? Who else can be behind this mercenary adventure? Nepal, as Mr. Pompeo once said regarding another issue?

The facts, as provided to the Council by the Permanent Representative of Venezuela in his letter of 13 May, are self-evident. Fortunately, the invasion was exposed and countered by the Venezuelan armed forces. As a result, a significant number of firearms were confiscated, including high-calibre weapons, all of which were meant to be used to trigger internal chaos and take over critical infrastructure and State institutions. It was an act of aggression and must be condemned.

The Venezuelan Government has warned numerous times that preparations were being made for armed attacks and paramilitary groups were being trained in neighbouring countries. Let me recall that the Security Council

"condemns any State which persists in permitting or tolerating the recruitment of mercenaries, and the provision of facilities to them, with the objective of overthrowing the Governments of States Members of the United Nations" (*resolution 239 (1967), para. 2*).

That was a direct quote from resolution 239 (1967), which appears to have been grossly violated in this situation, as have the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States, adopted by the General Assembly in 1981.

Unfortunately, the United States has a history of treating the whole of South America as its backyard, in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine, mothballed for some time until the United States Administration decided to give it a second chance. The Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba in 1961, overthrowing Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 and the 1986 Iran-Contra file in Nicaragua are just a few examples.

Today Venezuela is on the United States menu, and our American colleagues do not even make an effort to deny it. It is exactly because of this that the recent adventure of Silvercorp is especially alarming. And we cannot forget the troubling context — the so-called counter-narcotics operation in the Caribbean, which was in fact a military operation following the announcement of the bounty for President Maduro.

We want to ask today what the real aim of the American Navy parade in the Caribbean is. Are there more mercenaries on the ground in Venezuela? Who is responsible for attacks on Venezuelan critical infrastructure, including electricity networks?

We also hope Washington fully realizes the risks of incidents when deploying the *USS Lassen*, *USS Preble* and *USS Farragut* in an area where Iranian oil tankers are involved in legal activity near Venezuela.

I also want to use this opportunity and put a question to our European colleagues, who hastily recognized the imposter President two years ago. How do they see his role now that his role in this attempted coup d'état — let us call things by their names — has become so evident? How can the legitimate Venezuelan authorities engage in negotiations with him after this?

The absolute majority of the international community rejects military or subversive actions as an instrument in international relations. We appeal to all participants in today's discussion to unequivocally condemn the invasion attempt on Venezuelan sovereign territory. It is time for all of us to speak in support of the right of Venezuelans to solve their political disagreements themselves, including their right to choose their own leaders, in line with the Constitution of the country.

The Russian Federation will continue to do its utmost to help Venezuelans in that endeavour. We urge everyone to join us and to refrain from dictates, ultimatums, sanctions or coercive measures with regard to this or any other country.

With this in mind, we have prepared a draft Security Council press statement to address the above-mentioned issues. It reads as follows:

“The members of the Security Council discussed the latest developments in and around the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

“The members of the Security Council rejected the use or threat of use of force, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, reaffirmed relevant resolutions on the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and on the use of mercenaries.

“The members of the Security Council called for the current situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to be resolved through a dialogue by Venezuelans, without interference, through peaceful and political means, in line with Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, within the framework of

its national Constitution and in full respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Venezuela.”

We believe that such a short, politically neutral and concise text will raise no substantial objections from the Council members. We will distribute it immediately after my statement.

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

I begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her remarks, and I recognize the presence of my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Venezuela and Colombia.

This situation is not only close to home for us in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines by means of geographic proximity, it is also an enduring feature in the hearts and minds of many across the Caribbean region as we stand in solidarity with our Venezuelan brothers and sisters. Today we reaffirm the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and call on all Member States to recommit to their obligations under international law.

The recent attempted armed incursion into the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was only the latest in a long series of unwarranted aggressions meted out against this sovereign nation over the past two decades. We maintain that the internal political dispute within the country does not constitute a threat to international peace and security. More pointedly, the situation in Venezuela does not threaten the national security, territorial integrity or political independence of any external State party, and all acts of aggression, including unilateral economic coercion, carried out under these guises are unjustifiable and illegal.

These flagrant violations of international law undermine the internal political processes within the country. And now, following the \$15-million bounty offered for the capture of the country's duly elected leader, new sources of instability, including mercenary activity and terrorism, have precipitated an increasingly volatile environment. These acts of solicitation serve to inflame rather than quell the challenges facing the country and its people. We maintain that the only sustainable solution to the political crisis is an inclusive national dialogue that meets the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Venezuelan people, free from any geopolitical machinations designed to interfere with the outcomes of this internal political process.

We are deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in the country. The convergence of external economic and political forces to further the "regime change" agenda places unnecessary strain on the socioeconomic fabric in Venezuela and produces immense hardship and suffering for the people. Again, we reiterate our calls for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all unilateral punitive measures and urge all members of the international community to desist from all aggressions against the sovereign rights of the country and political freedoms of its people. During these unpredictable times, when efforts to combat the coronavirus disease pandemic should be consolidated, these geopolitical manoeuvres are both unhelpful and detrimental.

At a time when our multilateral system is faced with a crisis of credibility, we cannot afford to deviate from the rules and norms of international cooperation. In defence of the bedrock principles of international law, we must not sow seeds of discord or fan the flames of provocation. The Venezuelan people deserve so much more.

Before closing, my delegation wishes to support the press statement as proposed by the Russian Federation. We consider it to be factual and balanced.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her informative briefing. We also welcome the Permanent Representatives of Venezuela and Colombia to our meeting.

I will focus my intervention today on three issues, namely, the political situation, the humanitarian situation, and the exacerbating impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and regional peace and stability.

First, regarding the political situation in Venezuela, we reiterate our view that only a Venezuelan-led political dialogue will resolve the political challenges facing the country. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, Venezuela's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, and therefore attempts at the unconstitutional change of a democratically elected Government in Venezuela should be condemned.

The international community should rather support a Venezuelan-owned internal peace process and resolution without imposition or preconditions. Time and time again we have witnessed the disastrous impacts of attempts to forcibly and unconstitutionally change a Government, including protracted conflict and instability that reaches beyond borders and regions. We do not wish this for Venezuela.

In that context, we emphasize the imperative to respect the Constitution of Venezuela and its provisions on separation of powers. Furthermore, we reiterate our view and underline that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Venezuela should be respected by all and no attempt should be made by anyone to violate it. In the same vein, we wish to emphasize the position and principle of non-interference in the internal matters of any country.

Secondly, South Africa expresses its concern at the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, and particularly on those countries affected by conflict and instability. The pandemic requires all of us to draw from the deepest wells of global solidarity and cooperation.

During these trying times, the focus should be on addressing the humanitarian needs and concerns of countries such as Venezuela, which are enduring economic and political challenges as a result of a myriad of causes, not least of which are the prevailing economic restrictions imposed externally, and also the exacerbating effect of COVID-19. South Africa therefore urges all parties to respect the need for impartiality, neutrality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Venezuela. Humanitarian assistance should not be used as a political bargaining chip, which holds the people of Venezuela and those most vulnerable to ransom.

We appreciate the work of the United Nations system in assisting Venezuela to address the humanitarian situation, as well as the indispensable work of the World Health Organization in helping the country to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In that regard, South Africa fully supports the Secretary-General's calls for enhanced international solidarity and the removal of economic sanctions that will severely limit the ability of countries to recover from the pandemic. We also support the call for a global ceasefire in all parts of the world. We must be clear that our common enemy today is the COVID-19 pandemic. Our narrow national agendas should be set aside as we jointly address the pandemic. As Congresswoman Barbara

Lee said this morning at the Africa Dialogue Series organized by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Ms. Bience Gawanas, “no one is safe until all are safe”.

South Africa is concerned by the increase in tensions in the region and urges all countries to heed the call of the Secretary-General for solidarity at this time of global crisis and not to perpetuate divisions and friction. Such solidarity and unity of purpose are essential in assisting the world to emerge from the pandemic with minimized adverse impact on international peace and security.

Finally, as we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, South Africa once more calls for the peaceful resolution of the Venezuelan political crisis. We appeal for concerted global efforts to assist in initiatives by any country that help Venezuelans to overcome their differences and converge in a series of consultative dialogues internally until a peaceful political settlement is reached for the sake of its people, its neighbourhood and all of us.

Annex XI

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations

Venezuela is in the midst of a tense political standoff and socioeconomic collapse, which risks being highly exacerbated by the devastating impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the population.

We regret to note that the polarization in Venezuela has continued to deepen and to abort attempts of reaching a negotiated solution between the main political actors. We are concerned also to note that the current stand-off and the absence of any space for serious negotiations between the parties is potentially undermining the stability of the region, where tension is looming as well.

This is the third time in less than a month that the situation in Venezuela is on our agenda, but we regret to note that the Council, despite the good intentions of its members, is not speaking with the same voice on this issue. The divisions in the Council will not help us walk Venezuela to stability.

Tunisia remains convinced that a negotiated political solution through the efforts of Venezuelans and their political leaders is the only way forward. This is even more important in the context of the COVID-19-pandemic. We stand ready to support any initiative of the Security Council in this regard, as well as any good offices of the Secretary-General, should they be requested.

We call on all the main actors to put aside mistrust and animosities and to work on durable solutions that would strengthen democratic governance and meet the aspirations of all Venezuelans to peace and welfare.

Annex XII**Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, James Roscoe**

I join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

Today we have been convened to speak about what is essentially an independent operation by a rogue group of mercenaries in speedboats, not a threat to international peace and security. The United Kingdom rejects the ridiculous notion peddled by the Russian Federation that this incident was a United States and Colombia-supported attempt to assassinate Maduro and impose a substitute Government, as the Maduro regime has alleged in its letter to the Security Council.

This discussion does, however, give the Council a useful precedent for scrutinizing such adventurism by others into sovereign territory in the future, and I, for one, welcome the Russian delegation's condemnation of the violation of national sovereignty by mercenaries. We hope this means that they will themselves be changing the approach they take in Libya and elsewhere, as the Council heard earlier this week (see S/2020/421). Indeed, we were glad to hear many Council members defend territorial integrity and sovereignty, and we hope to hear similar sentiments, especially those put so vehemently by the Russian delegation, when we discuss the illegal annexation of Crimea tomorrow.

For our part, we have seen no evidence that the United States or Colombia were involved in that operation. To the contrary, both Governments have taken steps to address the involvement of individuals from their countries. We welcome the United States Government's announcement that it has begun investigations into the activities of Silvercorp, its owner Jordan Goudreau and the failed operation, and we welcome the Colombian authorities' launch of investigations into the incident. The opposition to any form of military intervention in Venezuela is a principle with which the United Kingdom firmly agrees.

But, as we have said many times on this subject, the only positive way forward for Venezuela is through a negotiated, democratic and peaceful solution stemming from free and fair presidential elections in accordance with international norms. Such negotiations must be approached with genuine will on both sides to constructively engage.

So far, we have seen the spirit of engagement on the side of interim President Juan Guaidó, who has engaged in several dialogue initiatives, but not from the side of the Maduro regime. That was seen recently when they rejected the United States' democratic transition framework without considering its potential. Instead, in an attempt to divert attention from the humanitarian catastrophe the Maduro regime has brought upon its own people by drawing the world's attention to a small group of mercenaries who, it seems, were far from being put in a position to inflict serious harm on Maduro or his regime. So it is this behaviour, rather than failed adventurism, that worries us and on which should be focused.

The Maduro regime has also used the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis to divert the international community's attention, focusing, for example, on the thousands of Venezuelans who have returned to their country in recent weeks. As Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo told us, economic pressure on migrant communities grows. Rather than focusing on the 5 million who have left Venezuela, with more than 1.8 million of them alone given a welcome in Colombia, Maduro does everything in his power to draw attention away from the humanitarian crisis and the human rights violations he is perpetrating against his own people. The regime

continues to repress the opposition, stifle media freedom and harass journalists and human rights defenders, and it is now failing to guarantee basic rights to those detained as part of this operation. We therefore call on the Maduro regime to treat these detainees and others in accordance with international human rights standards, including with respect to their access to family, and their rights to a fair trial and to choose their own defence. And we further call on the regime to allow unhindered humanitarian access, as called for by Mr. Lowcock, for all Venezuelans in need and to depoliticize humanitarian aid.

This is a crucial time for the Venezuelan people, and the challenges they have already faced are being exacerbated by COVID-19. Finally, we call on the Maduro to constructively engage in dialogue as soon as possible so that the Venezuelan people can move forward in freedom and democracy. This is what they need and this is what they deserve.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing today. It is most unfortunate that some Council members have insisted on wasting her time today.

The letter from the illegitimate Maduro regime that prompted today's meeting is, as such letters always are, a long-winded compilation of fantastical accusations and demonstrable falsehoods. Unfortunately, for the second time in less than a month, our Russian colleagues have indulged their client regime's habit of blaming others for its appalling choices.

But I am here today to tell the Council that the United States has no plans to cooperate with such attempts to avoid responsibility. Since 2018, this corrupt, criminal and illegitimate regime has overseen some 7,000 — I am going to say that again — 7,000 extrajudicial killings. It has used food as a political weapon. It engages in torture and human trafficking, and its strategy for combatting the coronavirus disease involves detaining medical professionals and independent journalists who attempt to inform the public of the risks posed by the virus. There is no question that these are the regime's choices, freely made.

Of course, it would be inconvenient indeed for the regime to acknowledge its decisions to murder, starve and traffic the Venezuelan people. So, instead, it attempts to distract and misdirect, as it is doing now with claims of a supposed coup attempt, with the aim of providing cover for even more extrajudicial killings and murders.

President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have already made clear that the United States was not involved in Operation Gideon. I will repeat that again — the United States has not entered Venezuela and categorically rejects any claims to the contrary. The United States was not involved in the alleged armed incursion of 3 and 4 May.

In fact, the only nations that appear to be violating Venezuela's sovereignty are Russia and Cuba, which, without approval from the National Assembly, routinely send military officers and mercenaries into the country. I must admit, it is perplexing to see these self-appointed champions of the Venezuelan people doing everything in their power to prevent ordinary Venezuelans from even expressing their political desires, let alone acting on them.

We encourage the Council to look closely into the role of the Maduro regime in creating this supposed crisis, and especially into interference by the vast Cuban intelligence apparatus in Venezuela. Furthermore, we reiterate President Juan Guaidó's call for unbiased investigations into the round-ups, extrajudicial killings and torture that have resulted from Maduro's repression.

As the United States investigates the alleged operation, more details are coming to light. We cannot yet share all that we have learned, but we can say this. It is obvious that the alleged operation was discovered long before. It was even publicly noted almost a week before, as there was a public address by the regime laying out its plans and highlighting that any efforts had been fully penetrated by the regime.

As these investigations move forward, our focus must remain on the Venezuelan people, on the return of genuine democracy to the country, on the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, and on the specific and undeniable abuses committed by the illegitimate Maduro regime.

In the end, today's meeting is about whether we are willing, collectively and individually, to acknowledge plain truths. For our part, the Trump Administration

will not avert its eyes from the evil the regime has visited on the Venezuelan people. Thankfully, the same can be said for many Council members here today, but not for all of them. And I can only hope that a time will come when all members see fit to disavow such wilful blindness.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Dang Dinh Quy**

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. I welcome the Permanent Representatives of Venezuela and Colombia to our meeting today.

I received the letter from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela, and today I have followed closely the briefing of Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and the statements of previous speakers. I feel deeply concerned over recent reports of armed incursions into Venezuela. Viet Nam strongly opposes the use of force or threat of use of force against the sovereignty and independence of any State or interference of any form in its internal affairs, which violate the Charter of the United Nations and run counter to international law. In this regard, we would like to stress the following points.

First, we call on parties related to the situation in Venezuela to exercise self-restraint and refrain from the threat or use of force or actions that may escalate tension and destabilize the situation in Venezuela. It is the Council's responsibility to uphold the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and abide by internationally agreed norms in the conduct of international relations among States.

Secondly, we support the constitutional Government and relevant parties in Venezuela in engaging in dialogue, with a view to achieving a long-term solution by peaceful means. The way forward for Venezuela should be led and decided by Venezuelans, in line with its Constitution and its people's aspirations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Thirdly, as the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic has further exacerbated the situation in Venezuela, the most important task now is to combat the pandemic and provide humanitarian assistance for Venezuelans to overcome current difficulties. In this connection, we would like to welcome further United Nations-led efforts to help the people of Venezuela, in accordance with the principles of humanitarian assistance and the needs of Venezuelans. We also strongly support the appeal by the Secretary-General to waive sanctions that may undermine the capacity of States to respond to the pandemic.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Guillermo Fernandez de Soto Valderrama**

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this meeting on Venezuela, a sister country facing a colossal crisis. My country has a historic tradition of respect for democracy and international law. It has been a strong advocate for multilateralism and dialogue to resolve differences.

Colombia, together with more than 50 countries and multilateral organizations, has disavowed the illegitimate Maduro regime for over a year, and instead recognizes interim President Juan Guaidó. As a part of the Lima Group and along with other countries, it supports his efforts to restore democracy in Venezuela.

Colombia's relationship with Venezuela is a strategic issue. The tight bonds forged by proximity have guided our international policy. Both nations share a long history and an extensive border that has been described as the most alive border in America. Over the past two decades, Colombia has implemented a policy aimed at integrating and supporting the social and economic development of the border regions and their communities.

However, such efforts stand in stark contrast to Venezuela's ongoing support for terrorism and its collusion with transnational organized crime, thereby adversely affecting Colombia's national security and the stability of the region.

Both Chávez and Maduro turned purported attacks — all failed ones — and attacks against Venezuela's sovereignty — all of them under control — and systematic conspiracy theories against their regime into the core tenets of their propaganda. The regime's hostile policy against Colombian institutions runs counter to the rules of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Venezuela has been driven to a multidimensional crisis. It has gone from being one of the most prosperous nations in Latin America to a situation of profound deterioration. Today it is widely considered a failed State. Between 2014 and 2019, Venezuela lost two thirds of its wealth, and last year hyperinflation stood close to 10,000 per cent. In addition, its oil production went from 3 million barrels a day in 1999 to 622,000 barrels a day in April 2020, and half of its population lives in multidimensional poverty.

Who could believe that a country with one of the largest oil, gas and minerals reserves in the world would end up experiencing scarcity, a lack food and medicines, a shortage of electricity and water supplies and insufficient gasoline for domestic consumption?

The human rights situation in Venezuela is unprecedented. Since 2003, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has reported on the clear weakness in the fundamental pillars for the existence of the rule of law. Furthermore, since 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has noted patterns of violations of all human rights. The High Commissioner has also documented the increasing repression of political dissidents and the subjection of detained persons, including children, to various forms of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as punishments such as beatings, electric shocks, suffocation and threats of sexual assault.

More than 5 million Venezuelan citizens have had to abandon their homeland due to poverty and repression. As a result of this unprecedented exodus, more than 1.8 million Venezuelans have established their residence in Colombia.

Confronted with the challenge of the second-largest displacement crisis in the world, Colombia has acted with unfailing fraternity and solidarity, investing significant financial and institutional resources on an ongoing basis despite the emergency caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Responding to a humanitarian call by the Venezuelan National Assembly and interim President Juan Guaidó, on 23 February 2019 an effort was made to provide Venezuelan citizens with urgently needed food and medicine. Together with Brazil, Curaçao, Chile, Paraguay, the United States and Puerto Rico, my country gathered humanitarian supplies at the border city of Cúcuta with the intention of delivering them to volunteers who would carry them to Venezuelan territory.

The Maduro regime responded with violence, and the paramilitary armed groups known as “colectivos” thwarted the delivery of the provisions. Tensions at the border led to the expulsion of all Colombian diplomatic and consular personnel from Venezuelan territory, and diplomatic ties were broken.

The Lima Group has repeatedly called for a democratic transition in Venezuela that will allow for the rule of law to be restored and the economy to be rebuilt. In making that call, however, the Lima Group members have always stressed that such a process must take place peacefully and in accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution.

The European Union has also promoted initiatives aimed at facilitating the recovery of democratic institutions in Venezuela, such as the International Contact Group. Norway and Sweden have also undertaken efforts to find solutions to the crisis through dialogue. Unfortunately, the regime has proven its unwillingness to abandon its position of oppression against the people of Venezuela.

Corruption and other criminal activities provide enormous proceeds to Maduro and his collaborators, who are unwilling to abandon those activities and give up their lucrative business, even if that means continuing to deprive Venezuelan citizens of goods and services essential to their survival. According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, Venezuela is the most corrupt country in Latin America and the fifth most corrupt in the world.

Recently, the United States Attorney General charged Maduro and 14 other current and former officials of the regime, including Iván Márquez and Jesús Santrich, former leaders of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo, with formal criminal charges for narco-terrorism and corruption, among others.

The Government of Colombia has acted in strict observance of international law with the aim of seeing Venezuela’s democracy restored, and has not carried out any covert or hidden actions. On the contrary, it has deployed all diplomatic efforts within its reach and has spoken in various forums on the abuses committed by the regime against the Venezuelan people.

In May 2017, President Iván Duque, a senator at the time, filed a complaint before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Nicolás Maduro for the commission of crimes against humanity.

In May 2018, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States also submitted a report to the ICC Prosecutor’s Office, in which he shows that there is no access to a fair justice system in Venezuela.

In September 2018, the Heads of State of Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru filed a petition with the ICC, formally requesting the opening of

an investigation into the commission of crimes against humanity under the Nicolás Maduro regime. France later supported that petition.

Likewise, the member States of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance agreed to activate the Organ of Consultation of the Treaty. In September 2019, they adopted a resolution that indicated that

“all of these criminal activities, associated with the humanitarian crisis generated by the deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, represents a threat to the maintenance of the peace and security of the continent”.

Maduro’s illegitimate regime irresponsibly accuses Colombia of tolerating the commission of crimes that may affect Venezuela. But nothing could be further from the truth. Some examples of actions taken by Colombian authorities to promote law enforcement and criminal prosecution can be found in the document that I delivered today to the President of the Security Council. Several of the criminals that the Venezuelan regime mentions in its recent complaints have been imprisoned in the past year.

The allegations are also false with regard to the seizure of weapons on 23 March. At the time of the arms seizure, Colombian judicial authorities issued a warrant for the arrest of the person in possession of said weapons, issued a criminal notice and began an investigation.

Mr. Clíver Alcalá, who claimed responsibility for acquiring said weapons, is the subject of open investigation by the Colombian Attorney General’s Office. He voluntarily surrendered to the United States authorities in order to collaborate with the criminal proceedings against him in this country.

The events of the so-called Operation Gideon are also under judicial investigation.

Regarding the false accusations purporting to implicate the Colombian authorities in the use of force contrary to international law, we reiterate the 7 May communiqué from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which strongly rejects those claims.

Colombia has never been an aggressor country. On the contrary, it has devoted its efforts to strengthening its institutions, consolidating its institutional capacities to ensure stability and security, and raising the quality of life of its citizens. We have waged an ongoing war against crime and have made significant economic and social progress since the beginning of the century. Allow me to express clearly our emphatic rejection of any allegations purporting to link my Government to actions that run counter to international law.

The restoration of democracy in Venezuela is a shared purpose and a moral imperative. The Security Council can be certain that Colombia does not pose a threat to international peace and security.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations, Samuel Moncada**

I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting to discuss the latest developments in Venezuela, especially the terrorist and mercenary attacks that took place on 3 May, as well as the looming threat of an armed attack, in an imminent breach of the peace in my country and of the entire region, should the aggression continue.

When signing the Charter of the United Nations, all States Members committed “to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace”.

Today that provision is being violated, with impunity and in full contempt of the Charter.

In a letter to the Security Council dated 13 May, we demonstrated to the world the acts of armed aggression against my country, which, as per public and irrefutable evidence shared at that time, proved that the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Colombia facilitated its planning, training and financing and are, to this day, protecting groups of mercenaries and terrorists who executed an armed attack with the objective of perpetrating indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians, targeting the killing of selected high-level officials of my Government and even the assassination of President Nicolás Maduro.

This is a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and multiple resolutions of the Security Council, which are legally binding on all Member States. The Governments of Colombia and the United States of America violated their relevant obligations under international law, particularly as enshrined in at least the following four resolutions.

The Security Council, in paragraph 2 of resolution 239 (1967), condemns any State that permits or tolerates “the recruitment of mercenaries, and the provision of facilities to them, with the objective of overthrowing the Governments of States Members of the United Nations”.

The Security Council, in paragraph 4 of resolution 1269 (1999), called upon States to “prevent and suppress in their territories through all lawful means the preparation and financing of any acts of terrorism”.

The Security Council, in resolution 1373 (2001), decided that all States shall both refrain from providing any form of support to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts, including by suppressing their recruitment and the supply of weapons to terrorists, and deny safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts.

The Security Council, in paragraph 2 of resolution 1456 (2003), called upon States to “assist each other, to the maximum extent possible, in the prevention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of acts of terrorism, wherever they occur”, while stressing, in paragraph 3, that States “must bring to justice those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts or provide safe heavens, in accordance with international law, in particular on the basis of the principle to extradite or prosecute”.

As of today, the Governments of the United States of America and Colombia continue to refuse any sort of contact with relevant Venezuelan authorities in order

to establish the facts and avoid impunity by ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice. As a result, those Governments are violating their obligations under existing bilateral treaties on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. Even more, as of today, the United States Government continues to provide safe haven to the leaders of the armed incursion against Venezuela.

Today I must report that the operations to capture the individuals involved in this armed aggression are still ongoing, as we are aware of the existence of other groups of mercenaries and terrorists who were trying to carry out their criminal plans in other regions of our country. As a matter of fact, an attack against our national water system took place on 14 May, which, apart from constituting itself a clear violation of resolution 2341 (2017), on the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks, confirms the veracity of the public statements by the criminals, who still remain at large, regarding the preparation of further acts of aggression and the training of yet more groups of mercenaries and terrorists. At the same time, further evidence continues to come to light clearly pointing to both Washington and Bogota as the main plotters behind the aggression.

Furthermore, there are at least three additional developments that I must also denounce today, as they are part of the continued systematic campaign of aggression against my country.

First, on 13 May, the United States Government included Venezuela in an unlawful unilateral list, falsely condemning my country as being among those that do not cooperate fully with counter-terrorism efforts. There could be nothing more cynical than such an accusation, coming just days after the perpetration of an armed attack with mercenaries and terrorists, with the full support of United States Government officials and the direct participation of United States citizens and companies. In addition, the following day, on 14 May, a senior Trump Administration official told Reuters News Agency that consideration was being given to designating several Venezuelan security agencies as “terrorist organizations”. This is a manifest threat to the peace and security of my country, as the United States Government is aiming at fabricating a narrative in which, according to its supremacist notion claiming its national laws to be universal, it may take “decisive defensive action” and proceed with the assassination of top officials from Venezuela’s security agencies, and, by using its propaganda machine, then twist the crime and present it as a counter-terrorism operation. It is a sad fact of our times that the United States Government expects to openly get away with murder by normalizing the unlawful killing of top national officials around the world through the sheer use of brute force.

Secondly, as we have denounced in previous letters to the Security Council, the United States Government has openly admitted to exerting pressure on companies to refrain from supplying gasoline to Venezuela, resulting in the current shortages throughout the country. In that context, allow me to ask the following question: what would happen if, in the midst of the coronavirus disease pandemic, New York City were deliberately left without gasoline? That would undoubtedly constitute a crime against humanity, which is precisely what the Government of President Donald Trump is currently perpetrating against 30 million Venezuelans.

Today coercion is coupled with a fresh peril: the threat of the use of military force against five Iranian tankers carrying fuel that are en route to Venezuela, in violation, among other things, of the freedoms of trade and navigation. If that threat materializes, it would constitute actual armed aggression against a civilian Iranian vessel and against the Venezuelan people as a whole. In that context, I wish to stress that a naval blockade is an act of war under international law, particularly if not authorized by the Security Council on the basis of Article 41 of the Charter or applied pursuant to the right of self-defence. Therefore, the current threats being

made by the United States Administration are nothing more than a military act of aggression against civilian vessels carrying vital goods for our people and coming from a country that has engaged in legal trade with my own.

In the midst of a pandemic, forbidding those vessels from reaching our ports would thus constitute an act of extermination amounting to a crime against humanity. Perversely, the United States Government insists on portraying itself as our saviour, claiming to be the major donor of humanitarian assistance to Venezuela, and now even dares to accuse our Government of obstructing the provision of United States assistance, when the truth is that everyone willing to support our country has been able to do so through the relevant United Nations agencies.

Thirdly, on 13 May international media revealed the existence of a “Venezuela reconstruction unit” within the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, through which discussions were held between United Kingdom officials, Venezuelan opposition figures and those who plotted the recent armed incursion on the promotion of and the need to provide guarantees of preferred status to British businesses in my country once the act of aggression had successfully been carried out. This new evidence that has now come to light, together with the pillaging of more than \$1.7 billion in Venezuelan gold by the Bank of England, demonstrates once again how the British Government is an opportunistic accomplice in the colonial looting of Venezuelan wealth. In addition, British warships remain off our territorial waters, with a hostile and confrontational attitude, together with Dutch, French and United States warships, conveniently disguised as anti-drug-trafficking operations but in fact aimed at illegally establishing a naval blockade against our nation. The combination of military provocations with information operations is a replay of the old trick of plausible deniability used in covert assaults.

In that context, it is noteworthy that just hours ago international media revealed that a powerful Colombian drug-trafficking organization known as “Los Pachena”, which controls that country’s La Guajira region and which supported the mercenaries and terrorists that participated in the armed attack of 3 May against my country, is in possession of precise operational information on the surveillance routes and the locations of Colombian and United States warships in the Caribbean. That official, top-secret information is being used by the cartel to avoid operations allegedly being carried out for counter-narcotic purposes. This proves that the real purpose of warships in my region is not to fight drug trafficking but to attack Venezuela. This is yet more evidence of the coordination that exists between the intelligence agencies of those countries and narco-paramilitary groups. It is a classic example of the “all options are on the table” strategy in the clandestine war against Venezuela, under the pretext of an alleged war on drugs.

Behind it all is the very same mind that applied that very same combination in Nicaragua during the 1980s, that is, the use of drug lords, covert operations and mercenaries in a dirty war. Cruelly, one of the individuals who was responsible for this more than 35 years ago is now repeating his crimes today in Venezuela — literally the very same individual. I am referring to Elliott Abrams, one of the darkest characters in our region’s history.

On 14 December 1974, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 3314 (XXIX), which in its article 1 defines aggression as

“the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations”

and includes as such acts both “the blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State” and “the sending by or on behalf of a State of

armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State”, as set out in its article 3, paragraphs (c) and (g), respectively. That text fits perfectly the description of the most recent events in Venezuela.

Consequently, while urging the Security Council to fulfil the duties and responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations in relation to the maintenance of international peace and security, we request that it once and for all not only determine the threat that the warmongering policies of the Governments of Colombia and the United States of America represent to the peace of both Venezuela and the region, but also to both recognize the acts of aggression that have been committed against my country and demand that the perpetrators immediately bring to an end their criminal practices, including the use or threat of use of force and the commission of further armed attacks, inter alia, through the use of mercenaries and terrorists.

The United States Government and its allies are creating a lawless space in international relations where they can ignore their obligations under international law and impose tyrannical, whimsical and colonial practices on the rest of the world. Thus, in their minds, the supremacy of their national interest justifies the most abhorrent crimes, as is the case with protecting the “good terrorists and mercenaries” who attacked Venezuela if they serve the expansion of United States power. The Security Council must enforce the notion of legality in international relations under the principle, as set out in article 5, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX), that

“no consideration of whatever nature, whether political, economic, military or otherwise, may serve as a justification for aggression”.

That is the only way to further peace and security among nations.

Today, in the midst of a deadly pandemic that is affecting all of humankind and which requires the full attention of our national Government to protect the lives of our people, we are facing an imminent armed attack that, because of its genocidal effects, amounts to a crime against humanity. Given the seriousness of the situation and its potential escalation, inaction from the Security Council at the current juncture will only embolden those Governments to continue with their warmongering and criminal plans, as has been the case thus far, considering the fact that the Colombian and United States Governments have doubled down on their aggression against Venezuela, in breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, thereby demonstrating their unrepentant and recidivist nature.

Allow me to conclude by stressing that our country does not represent a threat to anyone and expects everyone to learn this lesson: Venezuela is not for sale; it will never be anyone’s colony; and our people, with serenity and determination, will fulfil their duty to be free.