

Remarks by Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza at the conclusion of the 48th OAS General Assembly

Thank you, Mr. President. Let me recognize how well you have handled this Assembly.

It is imperative for me to take a few minutes and I entreat the Foreign Ministers and delegations to be patient because this is the central issue of this 48th Assembly; it is indisputably so.

We said it yesterday at the beginning: this meeting was convened without a central issue specifically to approve a resolution about Venezuela. It is a bit worrisome, given that last night a few delegates met with Vice President Mike Pence, where he gave orders and instructions, and if I were to put myself in your place, I would regret not being able to call him today and say “mission accomplished.” No, you cannot. You have the same 19 votes that you had earlier in the year in February.

Please not that this resolution, we can call it the Pence Resolution, is a fraud in form and content. I will explain the content, but as to the form, the Ambassador of Dominican already explained that it was impossible for the general commission to apply the respective bylaws. They could not listen to the recordings to ratify the procedure, they were in too great a haste, and look at the hour and a half that we were waiting—when they asked for a half hour recess—and at the end they have the same 19 votes.

In terms of the content, in the first place, on this resolution I would like to thank my colleagues, delegates and the governments that had the courage, bravery and dignity not to support it despite the many pressures.

Awhile ago we heard a senator from the United States, Mr. Marco Rubio, I believe that is his name, who addressed one of the most dignified countries of this Assemble, perhaps the most vulnerable of this organization and of our continent, in an attempt at extortion, warning them that if they did not approve the resolution against Venezuela there would be consequences. Note how dangerous that is.

I would like to give you an example. With you are the OAS Charter, the Inter-American Democratic Charter and this resolution. If we could make an analogy to the hierarchy of laws according to Kelsen, then at the multilateral level the OAS Charter should be at the top, following that is the Inter-American Democratic Charter and lastly is this resolution that is based on the two charters.

You have put this resolution on top of the constitutive instrument and the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Why do I say this? Because, for example, here in this resolution, you mutilated a great part of the Charter, which is both in the preamble of the Inter-American Democratic Charter as well as in Article 2 Part B of the OAS Charter, which declares that things should be done “with due respect for the principle of nonintervention.”

They left the words “promote and consolidate representative democracy” and they took out “with due respect for the principle of nonintervention.” And I understand it. If I were in your shoes, if

you had placed the entire phrase, respecting the OS Charter, then this resolution could not be approved because its very words would directly invalidate it.

I saw my fellow Foreign Minister Ampuero applaud enthusiastically when this resolution was approved with those same 19 votes, and I remembered a speech by President Piñera. I think it was in late 1998, during the time when Sebastián Piñera was giving a speech in defense of Chile's sovereignty. He said Chile was not a colony, Chile is independent, Chile must be respected, no empire or European country could defile Chile's dignity. But he was saying this in defense of the dictator Augusto Pinochet, in solidarity with him. Perhaps Foreign Minister Ampuera also applauded that.

Let me move on in order to be brief. You cannot intervene in the strictly internal affairs of a State, because that is what the constitutive instruments say. We need to bear in mind something else: in theory this resolution gives the United States carte blanche to continue attacking Venezuela.

This morning the Ambassador of the United States questioned the impact of the sanctions. May 2016: Commerzbank in Germany closes the accounts of various Venezuelan institutions, public banks and Pdvsa. July 2016; U.S. bank Citibank unilaterally ceases servicing Venezuelan accounts. August 2016: Novo Banco bank of Portugal informs the country that it is impossible to carry out operations in dollars with Venezuelan banks and institutions. July 2017: Balaguer Bank, an agent in the payment of Pdvsa bonds informs that its correspondent bank, BNC Bank in the United States, refuse to receive funds from Venezuela. July 2017: Citibank refuses to receive Venezuelan funds for the importation of 300,000 doses of insulin, which were going to cover the demand for 450,000 registered patients. I can continue through the rest of 2017.

On August 24, 2017, Donald Trump signed the executive order upon which the resolution approved today is based.

Under pressure from OFAC, of the U.S. Treasury Department, EuroClear, the firm in charge of a significant portion of Venezuela's sovereign bonds, freezes \$1.2 billion.

October 2017: Venezuela approves funds for vaccines and medicine through the PAHO strategic revolving fund. The U.S. blockade makes it impossible to carry out these transactions, leading to a four month delay.

Venezuela makes a payment for the acquisition of anti-malarial medicines primaquine and chloroquine from BSN Medical laboratories in Colombia in November 2017, only to later be informed that they cannot honor the commitment.

November 2017: transnational pharmaceuticals Bayer and Pfizer refuse to issue export certificates for cancer drugs, making it impossible for Venezuela to buy them.

I could continue, colleagues, but I think what I have just read is sufficient.

The United States has said that all options are on the table, as the representative from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reminded us. All options include the military option—President Trump said that. Those who approved this resolution are also supporting the possibility of a military intervention in Venezuela; it shall be on your consciences.

This is the moment to become aware of the need for unity.

It is public knowledge that last night Vice President Mike Pence, speaking from this country, extorted other countries. At times it seemed like he was engaged in lobbying, that form of legalized corruption that exists in the United States where everything is paid for: decisions, laws, meetings with ministers, etc. But instead of offering cooperation, he extorted those countries. It is unfortunate that these things occur.

It is also important to note that there are States sitting here today that have recognized Venezuela's elections. As I said yesterday, the only ones responsible for recognizing them are the Venezuelan people. But now there are States who must disavow the elections because they approved a resolution. Is this not an assault on the sovereignty of these States?

International law establishes that the only valid coercive measures are those established by the UN Security Council. Your resolution, sirs, is simply an aggregation of unilateral coercive measures, and as such, they are illegal and are in no way a collective action. After repudiating our elections an electoral court has been erected with the desire to convene new elections. The truth is that at this body there is no court of any kind.

In Venezuela, we have our constitution and it is the only law that matters to the Venezuelan people, besides from international law, which we fully respect.

On the issue of health, here is the number of people vaccinated. Foreign Minister Holguín has already left, but she said it was a lie, that there was no vaccination program in Venezuela. Well this year we have applied 5,318,914 vaccines to 2,289,721 people. These figures are from a few days ago. This, sirs, has been done for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, polio, pentavalents, anti-malarials, trivalentes, etc.

This has been down with the support of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and next week its executive director, Carissa Etienne, will visit Venezuela to take part in the vaccination program. Here you purport to be above the PAHO, you attempt to supplant the PAHO.

On the issue of humanitarian aid: yesterday we spoke of it, lift the sanctions, unblock funds for Venezuela, no? Instead what you are doing is more: more sanctions, more sanctions and more sanctions.

If the United States promised humanitarian aid for Venezuela, one would ask oneself: what about Puerto Rico? What happened in Puerto Rico? We read a report from Harvard, published in the Washington Post, you can find it online, which says that the death toll wasn't 64 people, but rather it was between 800 and 8 thousand.

If they won't even help Puerto Rico, a commonwealth, how are they going to help other countries? My God! Let's be clear!

This morning the (U.S.) ambassador said that Venezuela is a narco-state, a drug trafficking state. By all that is holy, this is the country that consumes the most drugs in the world!

Mr. Ambassador, how do these drugs get here? Do you not have drones, satellites, customs technology, coast guards, all sorts of resources? How do those millions and millions of kilos and tons of drugs that are produced in other countries enter into the United States?

Why is it that when the DEA is in other countries, the amount of drug trafficking increases? Why does it decrease when the DEA leave? These are questions that must be asked.

But in any case, which is the narco-state? Is it Venezuela or the United States? We have to ask these questions, dear colleagues.

In short, as you know, Venezuela has already left this organization. Venezuela has withdrawn voluntarily, dear friend from Uruguay.

This flag here, which I am holding with all due respect, which we love, we love our people, and Venezuela is withdrawing from this organization precisely because it does nothing to help the peoples of Our America. Instead, as has been shown here today, what it does is create the conditions for interventionism and interference, to violate international law. And they even include among the options a military one against the peoples of our beloved Abya Yala, Our America.

As such, on behalf of the Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and on behalf of the Venezuelan people, Venezuela rejects, not just emphatically but absolutely, the decisions made here today by those 19 countries. And I guarantee that with our people we will face our difficulties. Among Venezuelans we will resolve our problems without having your interference and interventionism impact our country.

Venezuela is free and sovereign! Long live the Greater Latin American Homeland! Long live the Venezuelan nation!

Thank you.

Good afternoon.