



ADDRESS BY FOREIGN MINISTER JORGE ARREAZA MONTSERRAT AT THE 36TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman, high authorities:

I address this Human Rights Council, on behalf of the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its Constitutional President, Nicolas Maduro Moros. Today September 11th, a regrettable date on our continent. In 1973, in Chile, South America, a coup and terrorist military action eradicate a beautiful democratic experience and unleashed a regime of terror that ruled without mercy for 17 years, committing multiple violations of human rights, which today still await justice. It was proven that the United States of America was behind Allende's coup and death.

Likewise, in 2001, the atrocious terrorist attacks in New York not only caused death and pain for the American people, but became a pretext to provoke cruel wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – wars which are still ongoing –. In Iraq, for example, an unleashed war, without United Nations approval, resulted in bombing of civilians, devastating destruction of cultural heritage, infrastructure and services, and a million of deaths and who knows how many injured and crippled people. Later, the United States administration confessed not having found a trace of mass destruction weapons, an argument used for justifying the invasion. They neither found links between the overthrown Iraqi Government and the September 11th attacks in New York.

We refer to such events, since terrorism, in any of its manifestations, either coming from States that arrogate themselves the right to intervene the whole world at its will or from violent anarchist groups, poses a serious threat to worldwide peace and stability. The colonial plundering and these manifestations, sometimes linked to terrorism, have led to massive migrations and bloody domestic wars in countries in which modern imperialism sought to control in order to secure its natural resources; societies that today have no guarantee of their Human Rights, neither in their countries nor during the migration processes.

We are here before this Council in defense of the Venezuelan truth, also of the principles that guide these collective efforts to build institutions truly committed to the people and not at the service of the domination agendas of the world's powers.

Mr. Chair,

In 1993, the Member States of the United Nations Organization adopted the "Vienna Declaration and Program of Action," expressing consensus on key human rights issues among nations with different cultural backgrounds and at different levels of development. The Vienna Declaration clearly set forth the major principles that should govern the Universal Periodic Review:

The establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2005 offered the opportunity to ratify and to deepen the principles arising from the World Conference on Human Rights. According to its founding charter, this important body of the United Nations emerged recognizing the importance of: *"ensuring universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, and the elimination of double standards and politicization"* in that consideration.

Unfortunately, Mr. President and distinguished Permanent Representatives, recent history is full of cases where the political, selective and biased use of human rights is the strategy of those who seek to impose one single vision of the world, in clear violation of the norms and principles universally accepted in this field.

The strategy used against my country by some centers of power is a clear example of the use of human rights as a political weapon for domination. Day after day, unfounded accusations have been made regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela.

In November 2015, President Nicolas Maduro, in this very meeting room, warned of the pressing need to improve the United Nations system, in particular the Human Rights Council, in order to prevent organizations from becoming political weapons against governments and processes of independence and sovereignty. Today, this warning still prevails. This important organization needs to be protected from the threatening ambitions of a bureaucracy desperately seeking to ignore and replace the sovereign will of the States represented in this meeting.

Venezuela is deeply committed to cooperate with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms in order to achieve its consolidation as a body that is effective, unbiased and faithful to the true principles forming the basis for human rights. This body must intend to contribute to the promotion and protection of all human rights.

Therefore, our country has been permanently reporting and denouncing before this Council and other bodies of the United Nations system the selective, biased and politicized performance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights against Venezuela. The latest actions taken by this office confirm our denunciations. The Office of the High Commissioner must fulfil its functions in strict compliance with the mandate established by the General Assembly, responding to Member States requests within the boundaries of its functions. Its work must be fulfilled in an objective and unbiased manner. The latest failed reports against Venezuela lack methodological rigor, and are unfounded, induced and aimed to undermine the sovereignty, peace and stability of our People.

This morning, the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned several alleged reports against Venezuela.

With all due respect, but with the firmness and morality that our brave people gives us due to its history of struggles for freedom, we demand that Mr. High Commissioner for Human Rights cease the aggressions he has been committing against Venezuela through reports that do not count on the support of all the Member States and are riddled with lies, unfounded data, distorted arguments and offenses against our country. This leads us sometimes to wonder whether or not the Office of the High Commissioner indeed acts under the rules of this Council and the General Assembly. Occasionally, it seems to respond to non-confessed interests.

If there is any country that should be questioned for human rights violations and evaluated by this body, this is precisely the United States, a country that has committed human rights violations, such as illegal wars, economic blockades, coercive measures, despicable walls to separate peoples, illegal prisons like Guantanamo, secret CIA prisons used for kidnapping and torturing worldwide citizens, among many others.

Mr. Chair,

Between April and July 2017, Venezuela was once again the scene of an escalation of political violence encouraged by sectors opposed to the Government of President Nicolas Maduro. During those three months, Venezuelans were subjected to different forms of violence, as part of a strategy repeatedly used to try to settle the political differences of our democratic system by unconstitutional means.

During that time, anti-Government groups resorted systematically to the use of firearms, barricades and deadly traps, as well as homemade weapons and explosives, creating a pattern for causing damage to civilians and security officers, in violation of the principles on peaceful demonstration enshrined in international treaties and our Constitution.

As a result of these actions, 121 human lives were regrettably lost, according to the Prosecutor General's Office under the previous management. Most of these deaths are directly attributable to the violent actions taken by anti-Government groups.

More than 829 security officers were injured, including 73 injured by firearms. There were 913 attacks on hospitals, schools, food-distribution centers and human rights institutions. In fact, a non-governmental organization with consultative status was attacked on several occasions by these violent groups. Sixteen cases were presented for disproportionate use of public force, and all the officials responsible were brought to Venezuelan justice.

During that period, violent groups carried out two unprecedented types of practices in the recent history of our country: The first type, believe it or not in this Council, consists of burning people alive for reasons of political opinion, even because of their appearance.

The second type of these highly questionable practices was the use of children and

adolescents for the manufacturing of incendiary bombs, the guarding of barricades and attacking security officers. This practice led to a series of pronouncements of UNICEF in Venezuela, which we would like to thank on this occasion. It is the truth of Venezuela what has been deliberately ignored by the social media, some States and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr. Chair,

In the last few years, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been subjected to a multiform aggression against its economy, which includes illegal mining activities, the oil international prices manipulation, a strong attack against its currency, the pricing system sabotage, the economic and financial blockade, among other measures which aim at stopping the economic development process in our country. These have been part of the plan. The imperial obsession for destroying Venezuelan peace, democracy and institutions is behind all these actions, aspiring to control the largest oil reserves of the planet, our gas, gold, diamonds, coltan, thorium, our water reserves and the most important biological diversities.

In this context, on August 11th this year, the United States President himself, Donald Trump, threatened to use its military force to intervene Venezuela. Furthermore, on August 25th, the imperial Government imposed unilateral and coercive measures against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, grossly formalizing the mechanisms of economic aggression which have been developing against Venezuela since 2013.


These measures, which harm our financial instruments and oil industry, also undermine our people's human rights, just as the illegal blockade against the sisterly Republic of Cuba – extended for an additional year this past Friday – has violated the human rights of the people of Marti for more than 55 years.

The Council has acknowledged that these unilateral and coercive measures are contrary to international law, the United Nations Charter and the rules and principles governing the peaceful relations between States.

Therefore, today, in this plenary, we denounce before the Council the illegitimate and illegal sanctions unilaterally imposed against Venezuela to attack the human rights model of the Bolivarian Revolution and cause difficulties and sufferings to the Venezuelan people.

Mr. Chair,

In spite of the imperial aggressions, Venezuela has continued to develop its human rights protection model. Venezuela remains one of the least unequal countries in the American continent. Seventy-three percent of our budget is allocated to social investment. The Venezuelan Human Development Index went from medium to high in less than 15 years, currently located at 0.76. For this year 2017, nine out of ten persons entitled to a social security pension enjoy such right.



In the last 5 years, more than 1,737,166 homes have been built and provided. Since last year 100% of our compatriots have free and quality coverage in primary health care. Nothing and nobody will be able to stop us.

The National Human Rights Plan announced by President Nicolas Maduro before this Council in November 2015 and approved in February 2016 continues to be fully implemented. Here you are; it was presented before this Council. Such plan was the result of an extensive and inclusive process of public consultation. This is a historical measure since Venezuela had never developed a Plan of this nature.

Mr. Chair,

Venezuela today has a solid model of participatory and protagonist democracy, where the people defines and governs the destinies of our nation. In the last 18 years, 22 electoral processes have been carried out in Venezuela, making the exercise of the right to vote a frequent practice for our people.

The most recent election process was held on July 30th to elect the members of the National Constituent Assembly. In October of this year, the Venezuelan people shall exercise their right to vote again and choose State governors. Yesterday, Mr. Chair, the Venezuelan opposition peacefully developed its primary elections to settle its candidates for governorships. There were some altercations between Venezuelan opposition parties in Zulia State.

Thanks to the dialogue and the National Constituent Assembly, the Venezuelan opposition seems to be resuming the path of legality and democracy. Promptly, we will also witness the early outcomes of the dialogue process, thanks to the mediation of friends of our nation and to the President Nicolas Maduro's will.

The election of the National Constituent Assembly has brought back peace to our country, after more than four months of violent acts led by opposition extreme groups. This Constituent Assembly, in accordance with the Constitution and the national and international legal doctrine, is the ultimate expression of the sovereign power of the people and is entitled of transforming the State, creating a new legal system and drafting a new Constitution.

It is important to mention that in Venezuela, the last death and protest were registered on July 30th – the National Constituent Assembly elections day –. Since then, although the social media does not mention it and the High Commissioner does not report it, our country is in absolute peace.

In the performance of its duty, the National Constituent Assembly created the Commission for Truth, Justice, Peace and Public Tranquility. This Commission shall be responsible for investigating violent events due to political reasons occurred in Venezuela since 1999 to July 2017.



Mr. Chair,

Venezuela, as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, shall keep moving forward in the protection and promotion of Human Rights worldwide, including the right to development. We welcome the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development made by this Council and we reiterate all the support of the 120 NAM member States to his mandate. From the NAM, we shall also continue to reject the unilateral and coercive measures, the enactment of extraterritorial laws that hamper the enjoyment of human rights and violate the sovereignty of States.

Venezuela and the NAM reiterate their support to the Palestinian cause, the inalienable right of this historic people in the struggle for its determination to be a free and independent State, based on the frameworks established by the UN in 1967. Stop accepting continuous violations of the Palestinian people's human rights with impunity.

Mr. Chair,

Venezuela reaffirms its full willingness to cooperate with the United Nations system as well as with this Human Rights Council. As part of this willingness, I would like to announce that our country has decided to extend the invitation to three special procedures of this Council to visit Venezuela over the coming months.

Similarly, we must be honest. Venezuela is requesting technical cooperation from the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to implement the 193 accepted recommendations within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review, recognizing the importance of this mechanism of constructive dialogue and exchange of information on good practices between States.

As our President Nicolas Maduro stated in this same plenary: *"This shall not be the first time that we overcome lies with the powerful force of the truth of our Homeland"*.

Our Commander Hugo Chavez always reminded us the Liberator Simon Bolivar when he announced in 1819: *"The most perfect system of Government is that which produces the greatest happiness possible, the greatest social security, and the greatest amount of political stability"*.

For the Bolivarian Venezuela, for the Bolivarian diplomacy of peace, in Bolivar's words, the main objective is to build an international system aiming at ensuring the greatest happiness possible to peoples worldwide, the greatest amount of social security, independence and political and economic stability. In other words, a world where the full enjoyment of Human Rights is respected and guaranteed, within the framework of the values and principles of the International law.

On behalf of President Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian people of Venezuela, we are grateful to you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity.

