International Contact Group on Venezuela: Ministerial Declaration

1. The International Contact Group (ICG) met on 28 March 2019, in Quito, at ministerial level to discuss the latest developments in Venezuela, the findings of the ICG missions on the two tracks identified in the Montevideo Declaration and to decide on the next steps to take. The ICG reaffirms that the multiple crisis affecting Venezuela can only have a political, peaceful, democratic and Venezuelan-owned solution, excluding the use of force, through the holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections as soon as possible.

2. The ICG reiterates its grave concern with the rapid deterioration of the living conditions of millions of Venezuelans - in particular women, children, elderly and indigenous peoples - due to the lack of food, healthcare and basic services. The Group expresses its commitment to mobilise further assistance, to implement it in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and in full compliance with UNGA resolution 46/182.

3. In this context, the Group commends the progress made by the UN, in particular the establishment of the coordination team for cooperation and assistance, led by the UN and integrating by other specialised national and international organisations. It is now important and urgent that these organisations effectively deliver and significantly scale up assistance swiftly, without constraints, free from any political interference. The work of the UN has the full support of the members of the ICG.

4. The Group recognized the efforts by host countries in the region who have received more than 3 million of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. It welcomes the implementation of the measures announced in the “Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the region” and to call on donors to implement its “Plan of Action”. It also welcomes the mobilisation by the EU of an additional 50 Million Euro in assistance to the most vulnerable people in Venezuela and in the region.

5. The ICG urges all parties to respect the need for impartiality, neutrality and independence of humanitarian aid and humanitarian organisations and calls also on other donors to increase
their assistance along these same principles in order to address the fast rising needs of Venezuelans. The group notes steps taken to facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations and calls for further actions to enable the establishment of additional humanitarian organisations and ensuring the unfettered access to vulnerable groups and areas around the country.

6. The ICG condemns the recent decision by the Comptroller General of Venezuela to “disqualify” Juan Guaidó from holding public office for 15 years. Such a political decision without regard to due process is yet another demonstration of the arbitrary nature of judicial procedures in the country. A restoration of democracy, rule of law and separation of powers is urgent. These actions further undermine efforts to foster a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in Venezuela.

7. The ICG expresses its utmost concern at the magnitude and gravity of the human rights impact of the current crisis as reported by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in her most recent update on Venezuela. The arrest of Roberto Marrero exacerbates an already tense situation. The Group calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. Political leaders, human rights defenders and journalists need to be able to perform their duties free of any intimidation, including by illegal armed groups. The parliamentary immunity of all National Assembly members needs to be respected.

8. The Group underlines the need to restore Venezuela’s full democracy and constitutional order in a peaceful manner, starting with the respect for the constitutional mandate of the democratically elected National Assembly. It stresses its firm rejection of the use of force. The solution to the crisis lies in giving the voice back to the people in democratic elections, in line with international standards.

9. According to the findings and conclusions of the working group on electoral process, the conduct of such electoral process towards new presidential elections should include an agreement amongst all relevant actors on the basis of an agreed roadmap enabling, inter alia:

I. The re-institutionalization of key State institutions, including the National Electoral Council, the Supreme Court of Justice and the institutions of Citizen's Power.

II. The provision of guarantees that all possible candidates and political parties would be allowed to participate.

III. A comprehensive update of the voter register, including young voters and Venezuelans abroad.

IV. Amendment of the legal framework for elections in order to allow the deployment of international election observation missions.

10. The ICG, if requested, is ready to assist in a future electoral process through confidence-building measures such as the deployment of and support to election observation missions, international auditing of the electoral ICT systems and/or a revised voter register, and any other support actions that would be deemed necessary to implement an agreement leading to free, credible and transparent elections.

11. This process could benefit from a right set of political, economic, and social conditions, which would also play a role in the stabilisation of the country. The Group urges the authorities to take concrete steps that allow the country to move in this direction.
12. The ICG expresses its willingness to increase contacts with regional and international partners in order to foster a common understanding and response to the situation in Venezuela. In this context it welcomes the participation of the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime-Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis - in its capacity as Chair of the CARICOM, the Secretary-General of CARICOM, in the outreach session of the meeting.

13. The ICG will continue its work on humanitarian assistance and elections and will undertake follow-up missions for continued discussions with the relevant Venezuelan actors at technical and/or political level. The ICG will reconvene at ministerial level at the beginning of May in Costa Rica.

This statement has been agreed by the following ICG members: the EU, eight of its Member States (France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and three countries from Latin America (Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay).

Press contacts

Press Contacts:
Maja KOCIJANCIC

Maja KOCIJANCIC
Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
+32 (0)2 29 86570
+32 (0)498 984 425
Christina WUNDER

Christina WUNDER
Press Officer for International Cooperation and Development
+32 (0)2 29 92256
+32 (0)460 792 256
Xavier CIFRE QUATRESOLS

Xavier CIFRE QUATRESOLS
EEAS Press Officer
+32 2 297 35 82
+32 460 75 51 56
www.eeas.europa.eu

Source URL: