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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Council conclusions on Venezuela (25 January 2021)

Delegations will find in Annex the Council conclusions on Venezuela, as adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council at its meeting on 25 January 2021.

Council Conclusions on Venezuela

1. The European Union (EU) recalls its Conclusions of July 2016, of May and November 2017 and of May 2018, and the previous EU statements on Venezuela, in particular the declarations of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on 7 December 2020 and on 6 January 2021.
2. The EU deeply regrets that the legislative elections on 6 December 2020 were a missed opportunity for democracy, held without a national agreement on electoral conditions and failed to comply with the international standards for a democratic process. As a consequence, the EU cannot recognise this electoral process as credible, inclusive or transparent, and thus its outcome cannot be considered as representative of the democratic will of the Venezuelan people. The EU deeply regrets the actions of the Maduro authorities, which have significantly reduced the democratic space in the country and persistently prevented the resolution of the profound political crisis in Venezuela.
3. The EU reiterates its support to all those working towards a democratic future for Venezuela. The EU repeats its calls for the guarantee of all political and civil rights, for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and for the freedom and safety of all political opponents, in particular representatives of the opposition parties elected to the National Assembly of 2015, and especially Juan Guaidó, as well as other representatives of the democratic opposition. The EU considers them to be important actors and privileged interlocutors and encourages the democratic opposition to take a unified stance with a view to an inclusive process of dialogue and negotiation.

4. The only way out of the crisis in Venezuela is to resume political negotiations promptly and to urgently establish a Venezuelan-led dialogue and transition process leading to credible, inclusive and transparent local, legislative and presidential elections. For this negotiation process to be successful, it must be inclusive, involving representatives of the authorities and of the democratic opposition, as well as from civil society organisations. Difficult compromises will be necessary if Venezuela is to carry out a successful transition to democracy and stability. At this challenging juncture, all Venezuelan leaders need to prioritise the interests of the Venezuelan people. The EU stands ready to support such an inclusive process, including through electoral observation missions.
5. Human rights must be respected. There can be no way out of the political crisis in Venezuela if its citizens fear arrest and persecution, including of their families, for exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms. The EU will be particularly vigilant with regard to any acts of repression, particularly against members of the opposition, representatives of independent media and of civil society. The EU underlines its support for the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Independent Fact-finding Mission. Those responsible for extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture must be held accountable and further acts of this nature must be prevented.
6. In view of the deteriorating situation of human rights, rule of law and democracy in Venezuela, the EU stands ready to adopt additional targeted restrictive measures against those undermining democracy or the rule of law and those responsible for serious violations of human rights. These measures are designed not to harm the Venezuelan population and can be reversed.

7. The EU remains deeply concerned about the increasingly desperate humanitarian emergency in Venezuela, aggravated by the impact of COVID-19, which needs to be addressed urgently. This includes full and unhindered access for both humanitarian personnel and supplies and the establishment of the necessary conditions for humanitarian actors, in particular NGOs, to carry out their work without intimidations, fully in accordance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. In view of the severity and magnitude of needs, the EU will continue its support to the Venezuelan population by assisting in strengthening its social fabric and supporting international and local humanitarian and development stakeholders. The EU appreciates the continued resilience and generosity of host communities in the region, and will continue to support socio-economic inclusion of Venezuelans in these communities. While underlining that immediate humanitarian needs must be addressed, the EU considers that the only long-term approach to addressing these needs is through a political solution to the current crisis.
 8. The EU will continue to engage and work with all stakeholders in Venezuela to foster peaceful dialogue and a democratic and sustainable solution to the crises in Venezuela. To that end, the EU will also continue to work in close coordination with its like-minded international partners, notably through the International Contact Group on Venezuela. The EU will also continue to coordinate with the Lima Group and the US Administration and will continue its outreach efforts with other international and regional actors.
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