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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: International Contact Group on Venezuela
- Terms of Reference

Delegations will find attached the Terms of Reference of an International Contact Group on Venezuela as approved by the Council on 30 January 2019.

International Contact Group on Venezuela

Terms of Reference

1. Objective:

Given the urgency of the situation in Venezuela, the objective of the International Contact Group is to, within a limited timeframe, **promote a common understanding and a more concerted approach among key international actors** on the situation in Venezuela aiming at a peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis.

The group will help to build trust and create the necessary conditions for a credible process to emerge, in line with the relevant provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution, enabling Venezuelans to determine their own future, through the **holding of new elections** with all guarantees for a free and fair electoral process, supervised by international independent observers. The objective is not to be a mediator but to support a political dynamic that the group can then further accompany and consolidate.

2. Mandate:

The Group of Contact shall ensure **regular, discreet and structured contacts** in order to:

In a first phase:

- Build a common understanding among its members on the situation in the country, of the parameters for a peaceful way out of the crisis and of possible ways to help the country achieve a peaceful and democratic solution through fresh credible elections.
- Liaise with other international and regional stakeholders in this regard.

Second phase:

- Reach out to relevant national actors to better understand their expectations and demands regarding the necessary enabling conditions for a credible process to emerge with a view to the immediate holding of free and fair elections;
- Identify the way forward, required steps and confidence building measures for all relevant national actors to engage seriously in such a process.
- Promote the enactment of the minimum conditions/confidence building measures, such as:
 - Release of political prisoners and lifting of the ban on opposition politicians and political parties to run for public office,
 - Recognition and respect of the National Assembly’s constitutional role, its prerogatives and those of its members,
 - Facilitation of external assistance to address the pressing needs of population,
 - Establishment of a balanced composition of the National Electoral Council,
 - Elimination of the obstacles to the equal participation of opposition political parties in elections and lift of the disqualification of opposition leaders,
 - Encouragement and help to the opposition to overcome its internal divisions and engage in a peaceful democratic solution.

Third phase:

- **Once enabling conditions are in place (including those mentioned above)** and if developments allow, the Group could assist to:
 - Give political backing to a credible political transition process;
 - Offer recommendations and make available assistance in areas of need.

3. Membership:

The Group shall have a balanced membership with countries and international governmental organizations that are committed to a peaceful and political solution to the Venezuelan crisis. Its size shall be manageable and conducive to results (10 to 12 members).

A representative and balanced participation of countries in the region is essential.

The EU and EUMS with important stakes in the situation in Venezuela should also be members.

The Group should also interact closer with a wider circle of **countries** that are not members, but should be kept closely informed, including countries/organizations that have authority and leverage/influence on the parties in Venezuela. The Group may decide to invite some of these countries/organizations to participate in its meetings as observers.

4. Working modalities:

Discretion and confidentiality shall be main rules of the Group's work. Such principles shall be clearly accepted both by members and possible observers in the ICG and by the various Venezuelan stakeholders. The Group could appoint one of its members (ideally its chairperson) as the only member authorised to communicate with the broader public when necessary.

- The Group shall **meet at different levels (ministerial and technical level)**. The decision about the Group's operational rules and its division of responsibilities shall be jointly agreed by the Group at Ministerial level.
- The **first meeting** of the Group shall take place at **Ministerial level, in Latin America**.
- The venue and date of the following discussion shall be agreed at each Ministerial level meeting. Ministerial meetings shall be convened and chaired by the agreed hosting member.
- **Meetings at senior officials level** shall prepare and follow-up on conclusions of Ministerial discussions. Each member shall be encouraged to appoint an **envoy/senior official** to facilitate contacts, communication and ensure follow-up of meetings.

- The **permanent secretariat of the Group** shall be ensured by the EU/EEAS.
- **Outreach to national actors:** the Group may identify one or different members (among the respective envoys/ministers) for carrying out contacts with national actors and/or decide to carry out joint outreach.
- **Liaison with other regional and international stakeholders (wider circle)**, as well as other tasks, may be carried out by one or more members of the Group if so agreed in the framework of the ICG.

5. Review/Termination

The political appropriateness and results achieved by the Contact Group will be reviewed after 90 days of its creation. The work of the Group will be terminated in the absence of sufficient progress.
