

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

HE Marc PECSTEEN  
Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

**Open VTC on Venezuela at the Security Council**

New York, 20/5/2020

---

Dear Mr. President, dear colleagues,

Thank you to DPPA for the briefing.

The incident described in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela and in the Russian request for today's meeting raises **a lot of questions**. Where is the line between fact and interpretation? Where is the line between reality and assumptions? Who is benefiting most from this situation? How can we access neutral, non-partisan information?

To be clear: Belgium condemns the use of mercenaries in all circumstances and relevant instruments under international law should be applied to those crimes. We **condemn the use or threat of force** and stress the importance of respecting each country's sovereignty. We also emphasize the importance of respecting human rights, including in anti-insurgency operations.

This incident raises many questions but there a few things we know with certainty:

First, we know the population of Venezuela is suffering. We remain very worried about the **human rights situation**, the absence of the rule of law and the lack of democracy in the country. This situation has led to an exodus of historic proportions. We emphasize the need for transparent, free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections and denounce the ongoing intimidation of members of the National Assembly who must be allowed to exercise their parliamentary mandate.

Second, we know that there can only be a **political solution to the ongoing crisis** in Venezuela. The recent events divert attention from the man-made humanitarian crisis which is further being exacerbated by COVID19. We hope the pandemic can also serve as an opportunity to focus minds and work together in confronting this common challenge.

Third, **the politicization of humanitarian aid is unacceptable**. We reiterate the importance of respecting the humanitarian principles and the need for full and unrestricted access. The threat posed by COVID-19 does not exempt governments from their obligations under international law, in particular human rights and refugee law.

Finally, we know the population of Venezuela can rely on the **support of the European Union and its Member States**. On the humanitarian side the EU remains the largest donor in Venezuela. Politically,

the EU-led International Contact Group will continue to support all initiatives in good faith that lead to a peaceful and democratic resolution of the crisis.

Mr. President,

The political deadlock in Venezuela remains profoundly problematic and negatively impacts regional stability. We call on all stakeholders to engage in a credible, representative and serious negotiation process such as the one facilitated by Norway. The only way forward resides in political talks.

Thank you.