



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Speech by

H.E. Ambassador Marc PECSTEEN, Permanent Representative  
of Belgium to the United Nations

**Venezuela Debate at the Security Council**

New York, 10/4/2019

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the briefers for the information provided.

In order to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, we are calling upon all the members of this Council to work together to **promote a peaceful solution** to the crisis. We appeal for violence to be avoided at any cost.

In this context, I would like to convey **three messages**: (1) the importance of unimpeded humanitarian access in accordance with humanitarian principles; (2) the need to launch a peaceful political process without delay which opens the path to free and transparent presidential elections; and (3) a call to protect Venezuelan citizens from all forms of violence.

1. Firstly, it is evident that the situation in Venezuela constitutes a **humanitarian crisis**. According to recent estimates, nearly a quarter of Venezuelans urgently need humanitarian assistance. Among the most affected populations are those suffering from chronic health conditions, pregnant women, young children and indigenous populations. We must do everything in our power to relieve the suffering of these vulnerable groups.

Belgium calls on all actors to authorise and facilitate **unimpeded, timely and secure access** for humanitarian supplies and personnel in the country. We again stress the need to adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in providing this humanitarian aid, and we emphasise the importance of this assistance being based on needs, separate from any political agenda. I would also like to congratulate the efforts of the United Nations and all humanitarian and medical personnel in Venezuela, as well as other partners, including the European Union.

2. Secondly, the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate in the absence of a political solution. Belgium reiterates its call for the swift launch of a **peaceful political process** to pave the way for free and transparent presidential elections, leading to reconciliation in Venezuela.

As I have already stated on several occasions, the presidential elections of last May were not free, fair or credible, thus depriving Nicolás Maduro's government of its democratic legitimacy. We support Juan Guaidó in his mission to hold free, fair and democratic presidential elections. The EU and countries from the region have created a Contact Group whose primary aim is to create the necessary conditions for holding presidential elections in the near future. I call on all actors to fully engage with this initiative.

In this respect, Belgium is concerned by information revealing an increase in foreign military aid for Maduro's regime, the goal of which is far from clear. Belgium is advocating a peaceful solution to the situation in Venezuela, and the presence of foreign security forces does not contribute to this goal but rather detracts from it.

3. My third point, Mr President, is a call to **protect Venezuelan citizens** from all forms of violence. The people of Venezuela have the right to express themselves without fear of political prosecution. Any intimidation of media and civil society representatives is unacceptable.

Belgium urgently calls for full compliance with the Constitution and for the immunity of all members of the National Assembly, including its president. Their civil rights, their liberty and their physical integrity must be respected at all times. They must be able to perform their duties free from any intimidation.

I would like to conclude by thanking the **countries from the region** for the support offered to refugees and migrants from Venezuela, in particular Colombia, which is represented here by its Minister.

Thank you, Mr President.