

Venezuela: Press release on EU dialogue with stakeholders in Caracas

30/09/2020

Following the Ministerial meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on 17 September, in particular the decision of the Group to work for improving electoral conditions in Venezuela, two EEAS officials travelled to Caracas, Venezuela last week. The aim of the visit was to discuss directly the situation in the country and reiterate the EU's position that electoral conditions now in place do not allow for fair, democratic, competitive elections on 6th of December. The mission underlined the EU position for a peaceful, democratic, Venezuelan-owned solution to the country's crisis.

This mission included discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, beginning with President of the National Assembly Juan Guaidó and all opposition forces. Meetings also included regime officials, the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference, civil society and the private sector. Issues related to human rights, political prisoners and fundamental freedoms featured prominently on the agenda.

There was widespread support in Caracas to the work of the mission and EU efforts to find spaces for dialogue, thus reinforcing the EU's role as an interlocutor that can talk to all sides in Venezuela with credibility.

Over the last few months, the High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell has had numerous contacts with different political actors in Venezuela, both from the regime and the opposition. The aim of these contacts was to assess the possibilities that the political actors could agree on the necessary democratic conditions for the holding of legislative elections scheduled to take place on 6 December 2020.

HR/VP Borrell has discussed these efforts to foster dialogue and democratic space extensively with EU Member States and international partners, most recently during the International Contact Group ministerial and the Foreign Affairs Council of 21 September. These discussions come on top of the EU's work with international partners to support international efforts to investigate human rights violations in Venezuela, including with the Lima Group at the UN Human Rights Council.

The EU's policy vis-à-vis Venezuela remains unchanged: the conditions are not currently there for a free, fair and democratic electoral process to take place. The possibility of postponing the legislative elections in order to open a space for dialogue and change those conditions was discussed. Without a postponement and an improvement in the democratic and electoral conditions, the EU cannot consider sending an electoral observation mission.

The political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela will not be solved by a single event. It is the time for bold Venezuelan-owned decisions in support of a peaceful and democratic transition.

Beyond the immediate issue of legislative elections, the long-term objective remains the path to democracy. There is a need for a negotiation between all stakeholders in Venezuela in order to find a democratic, peaceful and sustainable solution to the needs and demands of the Venezuelan people.