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Remarks

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the meeting of the International Contact Group

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San Jose, 7 May 2019

Check against delivery!

Thank you.

Let me start by thanking the Foreign Minister [of Costa Rica], my good friend Manuel [Ventura Robles], and the authorities of Costa Rica for an excellent hospitality and a very useful way of hosting us all that has contributed to a very productive meeting. I am now going to read, as is established practice, the English version of the statement of the International Contact Group:

[Statement](#)

Q&A

Q: You have had two meetings in [Montevideo](#) and [Quito](#). What is the difference of this meeting from the previous ones?

Today's meeting takes place exactly three months after our [first meeting in Montevideo](#). What we have decided today is to step up the work of the International Contact Group, as we have together assessed that the Group has developed in these three months of work the unique capacity to have access to all relevant interlocutors both inside Venezuela, in the region and on the global scene. We have managed to open, maybe for the first time, the initial steps, the initial space for the humanitarian assistance to the country. These first steps now need to be consolidated. This is why the first practical result of our meeting today is our decision to set up a group of the International Contact Group in Caracas on the humanitarian work to monitor the developments, the follow-up of the engagement and the commitments that have been taken in these recent months, thanks to the fact that we have sent several missions at technical level to Caracas on the humanitarian work, but also on the political developments.

The first concrete outcome is that we have decided to have a constant presence in Caracas as a Group, to accompany the humanitarian assistance in the country in the most effective manner, as all our interlocutors in Venezuela but also in the UN system and NGOs tell us that our work in this respect has been vital - but is still not enough. We need to continue. The second news of today's meeting is the fact that we have discussed with the Ministers what we have referred to in the document as «Concrete options for a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis». It is a set of ideas that we are not going to make public, but that we are ready to present and discuss with the different interlocutors in Caracas, through a mission at a political level in the coming weeks, if there is interest to go in that direction. As we discussed yesterday with the President of Costa Rica [Carlos Alvarado Quesada], it is time to move to concrete ideas that could unblock the situation and this Group has produced these concrete ideas quite in details. We are now ready to engage in the presentation and discussions of these concrete ideas that would also require a certain level of confidentiality, so you would understand that we would not share any details.

Third new element of today's meeting is that we have decided to intensify our work with other interlocutors and partners in the region and the international community. You have seen that a few days ago in Lima - also thanks to the good coordination and the good work with Costa Rica and the Canciller [Ventura Robles] personally, Costa Rica being the only country member of both the International Contact Group and the Lima Group - the Lima Group has extended an invitation to the International Contact Group to have a meeting at ministerial level. We have decided today to accept this invitation so we will have contacts with the Lima Group in the coming hours to define a date and a place for this meeting to take place. We have also decided in parallel to further develop our contacts and coordination with other relevant interlocutors for a democratic and peaceful solution to this crisis, such as CARICOM [Caribbean Community] but also the permanent members of the UN Security Council such as the United States, Russia or China, beyond the two permanent members that are already members of our Group - France and the UK - and other players, countries of the region - I specifically think of Cuba, Mexico or the Holy See that was present today with us with their representative - that can be of help in case the Venezuelan parties would be ready to engage in a process.

I think that this has maybe been the most productive meeting of the International Contact

Group. Each time we meet, we see a situation in the country that deteriorates and even more importantly, the need to urgently help, support or facilitate the Venezuelans themselves to find their own way out of the crisis.

Q: [Inaudible] How do you justify these events in Venezuela? I would like to know the details of this High Level Group. Have they been to Caracas? Who could be the interlocutors?

The International Contact Group was established with clear [terms of reference](#) that have been made public from the very first day and that clearly state that after 90 days of work the Group itself – the members of the Group – would assess the results achieved and review the Group's work. And our common assessment today is that some achievements have been reached, especially in the humanitarian field - initial steps, not sufficient. But this is why we see even more so the need to consolidate and expand these first results. All of our interlocutors are encouraging us to continue the work in this field, but also on the political track. I believe that it is clearly too early to say that there are signs inside Venezuela of willingness to go in the direction of early, fair and transparent presidential elections, but I believe – and I think we share the assessment with all the members of the Group and also with our interlocutors, for instance, that joined us today - that especially in these last days it is self-evident inside the country that the only way forward and the only way to unblock the stalemate in which the country clearly is, is to find a democratic, peaceful, political way forward that can be inclusive and that can respect the will of the Venezuelan people. This is why, as I said, we have decided together to continue our work with the Group and to offer as a contribution to this perspective of a peaceful, democratic, Venezuelan solution some concrete ideas and options - as a contribution - that then will be up to the Venezuelan parties and interlocutors and different sectors of society to discuss and decide upon. It is a contribution that we offer knowing very well that the solution will have to come from inside Venezuela, but we feel the responsibility to contribute if we can.

Q: How does the Group see the time frame, because this is a situation that has been developing for some time? And on contacts: you mentioned Cuba and Russia. Do you foresee any contact with the United States?

First of all, on the time framework: as soon as possible. We all agreed on the urgency of intensifying our work, exactly because the first priority is to avoid negative developments. And I want to stress here the need to preserve, protect the constitutional role of the democratically elected National Assembly and of all its members - the parliamentary immunity of all its members - and the need to avoid any move, any step, in these hours, in these days, that could make a political solution more difficult in the coming weeks. So we share the urgency of first and foremost avoiding negative developments on the ground to be even further expanded. And to avoid a violent cycle or development. We have always been very clear from the beginning on the fact that we believe that there should be no military attempt, neither from within or from the outside of the country, to resolve the crisis through military means or through the use of force in whatever form. The sooner the better, because it is true: there is no

winner, but there are many losers in the situation. And these are all the Venezuelan citizens - over 1 million of which are also European citizens - and the rest of the region that is dramatically de-stabilised by a crisis that has a potential to impact even more the stability in the region in the coming weeks. There is a sense of urgency. And we believe that the next days and weeks are crucial to explore the possibility of engaging the different relevant interlocutors inside Venezuela into these concrete ideas on how the crisis can be unlocked politically, democratically and peacefully.

The second part of the question on the contacts: we have contacts not only with the different parties within Venezuela, but we also have contacts with all the different regional and international interlocutors, nobody excluded. Some of them are already ongoing. You mentioned Cuba - the Foreign Minister [Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla] was visiting Costa Rica last week, I had a [phone call](#) with him last Saturday. Not only Venezuela, but Venezuela was also part of our discussions with the Chinese Foreign Minister [Wang Yi] [when he last visited Brussels a few weeks ago](#). We have had contacts with both Moscow and Washington in these recent days, not only to inform about our work, but also to try and explore convergences. Because the approach that the Group is taking is, again, that the process needs to start, but also to be fully Venezuelan. But the international community has the responsibility to create the conditions and accompany as much as possible this process, if possible. We have discussed today the need and the decision to intensify contacts and coordination with the Lima Group upon their invitation that we value enormously, but also with CARICOM [Caribbean Community] countries, with the US, with Russia, with China, with Cuba, with Mexico, with the Holy See, with others that can help creating a conducive environment for the Venezuelans to engage in a democratic and peaceful outcome of this crisis.

Q: The High Level Group that would be sent to Venezuela would sit down with both parties? Some countries have taken other measures, like economic sanctions, but how do you see those measures? What can you do in this regard?

We will explore in the coming hours, as the Foreign Minister has mentioned, the possibility of having a mission at political level. As I mentioned and as you can read in the statement, we offer an availability: we are ready to send a mission at political level. Let me stress that we have already sent several missions to Caracas in these last three months - if I am not wrong, two on humanitarian issues and two, if not three on the political track. So this is not a "first" in itself. But we are ready to upgrade the level of our political engagement, giving a political nature to the next mission, if there is the readiness and the desire to hear our ideas and our proposals and discuss them in direct contacts at the political level. We will explore this possibility in the coming hours. As I said, it is not a request, it is a readiness to engage further if required, if considered useful by different interlocutors in Caracas, on a set of ideas and concrete options that we have worked on and that we can offer to the different interlocutors as "food for thought" to consider further. It is not a peace plan we are coming up with, it is a set of options that we have identified as issues that might help moving forward and that we are ready to present and discuss if there is interest to do so. It is an offer.

And on the issue of the pressure: here I cannot speak on behalf of the International Contact Group that, by definition, is composed by different countries and entities having different approaches to this. And this is also the richness of our Contact Group that has a certain diversity in sight, but a convergence on the purpose of the work that we are doing. But I can speak for the European Union: we have introduced last year some restrictive measures on some individuals in Caracas that have been responsible for some impediments and violations of democracy and human rights in the country. I want to stress that these are not sanctions against Venezuela and the Venezuelan people, but these are targeted measures against some individuals that the European Union has taken on a very sound legal basis and that we are always ready to scale up or to take away, in case we see that developments go in the right direction. This is an instrument the European Union uses when considered useful by our Member States by unanimity and that we have used last year exactly after the last presidential elections that we have not recognised. I do not exclude that the Member States of the European Union could take further decisions in one sense or another on this. But I cannot speak on behalf of the International Contact Group on this.

Q: Why did Bolivia not sign the statement?

This is not something new to this meeting of the Contact group. Also in the previous two meetings Bolivia was actively participating in the work of the Contact Group, both during the ministerial meetings and in between. As I mentioned we have sent several missions to Venezuela in these three months and we have been working very closely together on both preparing the humanitarian and the political track. Bolivia has always been and continues to be an active and positively contributing member of the Group. But since the very first meeting we had in [Montevideo](#), the Bolivian delegation expressed the will not to sign the final declaration without impeding the rest of the members of the Group to adopt it and without leaving the Group, but staying engaged in a way that the Bolivian delegation considers more productive for its own role inside the Group. We are very respectful of that. We are also very grateful for the constructive approach that the Bolivian colleagues have always shown in these three months and we continue to work together very closely.

Link to the video:

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