



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE



16 May 2018

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For action by

18 May 2018

Venezuela Policy

BRIEFING General Purpose

PURPOSE To update you on the situation in Venezuela and consider New Zealand's response to the political and humanitarian crisis.

Recommended referrals

Nil

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE	MOBILE PHONE
Richard Kay	Acting Divisional Manager	Americas Division	s9(2)(a)	s9(2)(a)
Daniel Thompson	Policy Officer	Americas Division	s9(2)(a)	

Minister's Office comments

Venezuela Policy

Key points

- Since Nicolás Maduro's election as President in 2013, Venezuela has progressively fallen into an economic, political, and humanitarian crisis. Over one million of its citizens have fled the country in the last year alone. The majority are in Colombia, with others seeking refuge elsewhere in the region.

- Last year Maduro s6(a) by creating a supra-national 'Constituent Assembly', in the face of widespread international condemnation and domestic protest. s6(a)

Venezuelan Presidential elections are scheduled on 20 May

s6(a)

- s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Consequently, the situation is relevant to our wider interests in Latin America as well as our aspiration that human rights and civil freedoms be protected.

- To date, we have expressed our concern about the deteriorating situation s6(a) at the UN Human Rights Council. s6(a)

We are planning to make a one-off contribution of US\$100,000 (NZ\$145,000) from MFAT baseline to the UN to support Venezuelans who have taken refuge in Colombia and Brazil.

- Given the context of the election, we propose that you make a statement announcing the funding and calling for free and fair elections. We have provided a draft statement annexed to this submission.

Ben King
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Venezuela Policy

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Note** that the political and humanitarian situation in Venezuela is of concern for New Zealand's interests in Latin America and for our values. Yes / No
- 2 **Note** that we will make a one-off contribution of US\$100,000 (NZ\$145,000) from MFAT baseline to support Venezuelans who have sought refuge in Colombia and Brazil. Yes / No
- 3 **Agree** to make a public statement that expresses concern for the humanitarian situation and announces New Zealand's contribution. Yes / No
- 4 **Agree** that the statement also voices concern regarding the political crisis and calls for free and fair elections. Yes / No
- 5 **Note** that officials will continue to monitor the situation in Venezuela and consider options for future diplomatic engagement in bilateral, regional, and multilateral settings, s9(2)(a)(i) Yes / No

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Venezuela Policy

Report

1. Since being elected in 2013, the Maduro Government's [s6(a)] has led to hyper-inflation and massive economic contraction. The downturn has caused severe shortages of basic food and medicines and a worsening humanitarian crisis. It also prompted protests, which government security forces responded to with force, leaving hundreds dead. Over a million Venezuelans have sought refuge in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil during the last twelve months alone. Around four million Venezuelans, more than 10% of the population, have fled the country since 2014, though estimates vary due to porous borders and limited border processing capacity.

2. [s6(a)]

In July last year, President Maduro created a supra-national 'Constituent Assembly', in the face of widespread international condemnation and domestic protests. [s6(a)]

Since then, the ruling party has triumphed in gubernatorial and municipal elections, despite numerous reports of electoral irregularities. President Maduro has scheduled presidential elections on 20 May. The main opposition parties plan to boycott the vote [s6(a)]

Attempting to stem the economic crisis, Venezuela has refinanced much its debt [s6(a)] The economic situation, however, remains precarious.

International Responses

3. Venezuela has dominated political bandwidth across the Americas for the past year, though responses have been polarised. [s6(a)]

much of the effort to resolve the political impasse has been concentrated on the Organisation of American States (OAS). [s6(a)]

4. In August 2017, a group including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru, met in Lima to denounce the illegitimate Constituent Assembly and confront the crisis. Dubbed the "Lima Group", these countries met again at the Summit of the Americas on 13-14 April in Lima. [s6(a)]

the Lima Group (along with the US) strongly expressed concern regarding the ongoing crisis and called for increased humanitarian aid via the United Nations system. Most recently, the group (along with Spain and the US) met on 14 May to reiterate condemnation of the regime and call for the upcoming elections to be suspended. [s6(a)]

5. [s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)]

In practice, however, President Trump has largely continued Obama era policies of imposing financial sanctions. The US has refrained from sanctioning Venezuela's oil exports, which mainly go to the US, but has not ruled out this approach. In April, the US

Venezuela Policy

announced it would provide US\$16 million to support Venezuelans fleeing the country, adding to US\$3 million provided last year. Canada has also been a vocal critic of the Venezuelan regime, imposing sanctions and providing US\$6.1 million in humanitarian assistance to those affected.

6. Outside the Americas, the European Union (Spain and France in particular) has been the most vocal opponent of the Maduro government. In November 2017, the EU imposed limited sanctions on Venezuela. s6(b)(i)

New Zealand's Response to Date and Options for Future Engagement

7. s6(a)

Consequently, the situation is relevant to our wider interests in Latin America as well as our aspiration that human rights and civil freedoms be protected.

8. Our engagement so far has been limited. To date, we have expressed our concern about the deteriorating situation s6(a) at the UN Human Rights Council. We have also voiced support for regional and international efforts to facilitate a peaceful negotiated outcome. We are planning to make a one-off contribution of US\$100,000 (NZ\$145,000) from MFAT baseline to support Venezuelans who have taken refuge on Colombia and Brazil.

9. s9(2)(g)(i)

10. A public statement would add New Zealand's voice to international calls for a return to democracy in Venezuela. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

11. s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

s9(2)(b)(ii)

s6(a)

s9(2)(g)(i)

Venezuela Policy

Annex: Draft press statement in advance of 20 May Presidential Election

New Zealand provides \$145,000 humanitarian support for Venezuela crisis

Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters today announced that \$145,000 will be provided to support humanitarian relief efforts in Colombia and Brazil.

The two countries are coping with an influx of Venezuelans fleeing the crisis in their country. The funding will be directed through the United Nations.

Venezuela plans to hold Presidential elections on 20 May, in which the main opposition leaders will not be allowed to participate. The elections will most likely exacerbate the political crisis in the country.

"New Zealand is extremely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the continuing erosion of democratic norms and institutions" Mr Peters says.

"There is an urgent need to resolve the current political impasse through peaceful dialogue. The Venezuelan people need to decide Venezuela's future. We support calls from the Lima Group, Spain, and the United States for Venezuela to suspend its elections."

The Lima Group includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Guyana, and Saint Lucia.

"It is essential that the Venezuelan government respects democratic norms and institutions and protects the human rights of its citizens. This includes releasing all political prisoners," Mr Peters says.

"New Zealand stands ready to support any regional and international efforts to facilitate a national dialogue in Venezuela that would allow truly free and fair elections to be held. A peaceful negotiated outcome is the only way to resolve the current situation."

Background

The political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is impacting all of Latin America, but especially Colombia and Brazil. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

From: WOOD, Iain (OTT)
Sent: Friday, 11 January 2019 9:03 a.m.
To: MCCOLL, Iain (AMER); THOMPSON, Daniel (AMER)
Cc: DUNCAN, Lucy (BOG); VAN VELDEN, Blake (SGO); SINCLAIR, Mark (MEX); TOWNEND, Andrew (MEX); WAETFORD, Tane (BNA); McCABE, Jannine (BSA); DELANY, Ruth (BRG); OJALA, Anton (BRG); LIUFALANI, Raylene (BNA); BAILLIE, Sarah (MEX); KAY, Richard (AMER); TISDALL, Amy (OTT); LANGLEY, Chris (BSA); DUVAL, Ellen (BOG); HAWKER, Diana (AMER); TISDALL, Amy (OTT)
Subject: Canada: Venezuela

Security Classification:

Iain/Daniel

FYI, the Canadians issued this s6(a) statement on Venezuela today.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/01/canada-rejects-the-maduro-regimes-illegitimate-mandate-in-venezuela.html>

Canada rejects the Maduro regime's illegitimate mandate in Venezuela

From: Global Affairs Canada

s9(2)(b)(ii) - this article is publicly available - please see link above