



**PALABRAS DEL EMBAJADOR  
GUILLERMO FERNANDEZ DE SOTO  
REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE COLOMBIA**

**Intervención en el Consejo de Seguridad  
Situación en Venezuela**

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*Verificar contra el discurso pronunciado*

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Mr. President,

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this session on Venezuela, a sister country facing a colossal crisis.

My country has a historic tradition of respect for democracy and international law. It has been a strong advocate for multilateralism and dialogue to resolve differences.

Colombia, as well as more than fifty countries and multilateral organizations, has disavowed for over a year the illegitimate Maduro regime and recognizes interim President Juan Guaidó. As a part of the Lima Group and along with other countries, it supports his efforts to restore democracy in Venezuela.

Mr. President,

The relationship of Colombia with Venezuela is a strategic issue. The tight bonds forged by proximity have guided our international policy. Both nations share a long history and an extensive border that has been described as “the most alive border in America”.

Over the past two decades, Colombia has implemented a policy aimed at integrating and supporting social and economic development of border regions and their communities.

However, these efforts stand in stark contrast to Venezuela’s permanent support for terrorism and it’s collusion with transnational organized crime, thereby affecting Colombia’s national security and the stability of the region.

# COLOMBIA



Both Chavez and Maduro turned systematic conspiracy theories against their regime, purported attacks (all failed ones), or attacks against Venezuela's sovereignty (all of them under control), into the core tenet of their propaganda.

It is the regime's hostile policy against Colombian institutions that goes against the rules of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Mr. President,

Venezuela has been driven into a multidimensional crisis. It has gone from being one of the most prosperous nations in Latin America to a situation of profound deterioration.

Today, it is widely considered a failed state. Between 2014 and 2019 Venezuela lost two thirds of its wealth; hyperinflation stood close to 10.000% last year; its oil production went from three million barrels a day in 1999 to 622 thousand barrels a day in April 2020; and half of its population is in a situation of multidimensional poverty.

Who could believe that the country with one of the largest oil, gas and minerals reserves in the world would end up in scarcity, lacking food and medicines, with a shortage of electricity and water supply, and insufficiency of gasoline for domestic consumption?

Mr. President,

The human rights situation in Venezuela is unprecedented. Since 2003, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has reported on the "clear weakness in the fundamental pillars for the existence of the rule of law".

Furthermore, since 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has noted patterns of violations that affect absolutely all human rights.

The High Commissioner has also documented the increasing repression of political dissidents and the subjection of detained persons, including children, to various forms of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, and punishments such as beatings, electric shocks, suffocation and threats of sexual assault.

Mr. President,

# COLOMBIA



More than five million Venezuelan citizens have had to abandon their homeland due to poverty and repression. As a result of this unprecedented exodus, more than 1.8 million Venezuelans have established their residence in Colombia.

Confronted with this challenge, ranked as the second largest displacement crisis in the world, Colombia has acted with unfailing fraternity and solidarity, investing significant financial and institutional resources, which continue to be committed despite the emergency caused by the COVID pandemic.

Acting in response to a humanitarian call by the Venezuelan National Assembly and interim President Juan Guaidó, on February 23rd, 2019 an effort was made to provide Venezuelan citizens with food and medicines that were urgently needed. My country along with Brazil, Curaçao, Chile, Paraguay, the United States and Puerto Rico allocated humanitarian supplies at the bordering city of Cucuta with the intention of delivering them to volunteers who would carry them to Venezuelan territory.

The Maduro regime responded with violence and the paramilitary armed groups known as the “colectivos” frustrated the delivery of the provisions. Tensions at the border led to the expulsion of all Colombian diplomatic and consular personnel from Venezuelan territory and diplomatic ties were broken.

Mr. President,

The Lima Group has repeatedly appealed for a democratic transition in Venezuela that will allow for the restoration of the rule of law and the reconstruction of the economy. In making this call, however, the Lima Group members have always stressed such process must take place peacefully, under the terms of the Venezuelan Constitution.

The European Union has also promoted initiatives such as the International Contact Group aimed at facilitating a path towards the recovery of democratic institutions in Venezuela. Norway and Sweden have also undertaken efforts to find solutions to the crisis through dialogue. Unfortunately, the regime has proven its unwillingness to abandon its position of oppression against the people of Venezuela.

Corruption and other criminal activities provide enormous proceeds to Maduro and his collaborators. Losing their capacity to control these activities would surely affect their lucrative business, even if this means maintaining Venezuelan citizens deprived of goods and services essential to their survival.

# COLOMBIA



According to Transparency International's Perception Index, Venezuela is the most corrupt country in Latin America and the fifth most corrupt in the world.

Recently, the United States Attorney General charged Maduro and 14 other current and former officials of the regime with formal criminal charges for narco-terrorism and corruption, among others. These charges also include former FARC leaders Ivan Marquez and Jesus Santrich.

Mr. President,

The Government of Colombia acts in strict observance of international law in the aim of seeing Venezuela's democracy restored, and has not carried out any covert or hidden action.

On the contrary, it has deployed all diplomatic efforts within its reach and has spoken in various forums on the abuses committed by the regime against the Venezuelan people.

In May 2017, President Iván Duque, as senator at the time, filed a complaint before the International Criminal Court against Nicolás Maduro for the commission of crimes against humanity.

In May 2018, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States also submitted a report before the ICC Prosecutor's Office in which he demonstrated there is no access to a fair justice system in Venezuela.

In September 2018, the Heads of State of Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru put forward a new a communication to the ICC, formally requesting the opening of an investigation into the commission of crimes against humanity under the Nicolás Maduro regime. France later supported this communication.

Likewise, the member states of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) agreed to activate the Organ for Consultation of the Instrument. In September 2019, they adopted a Resolution, considering that "the set of criminal activities, associated with the humanitarian crisis generated by the deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, represents a threat to the maintenance of the peace and security of the continent".

Mr. President,

# COLOMBIA



The illegitimate regime of Maduro irresponsibly accuses Colombia of tolerating the commission of crimes that may affect Venezuela. But nothing is farther from reality.

Some examples of the actions of the Colombian authorities in the matter of law enforcement and prosecution of criminal structures can be found in the document that I delivered today to the President of the Security Council.

Several of the criminals that the regime of Venezuela mentions in its recent complaints, have been imprisoned since last year.

Regarding the seizure of weapons in events that occurred on March 23rd, 2020, the allegations are once again false. From the moment the seizure occurred, Colombian judicial authorities issued an arrest warrant against the person in possession of the weapons and a criminal notice was issued and an investigation is underway.

Mr. Clíver Alcalá, who claimed responsibility for acquiring said weapons, is the subject of open investigation by the Colombian Attorney General's Office; he voluntarily surrendered to the US authorities, in order to collaborate with the criminal proceedings against him in this country.

The events of the so-called 'Operation Gedeon' are also under judicial investigation.

Regarding the false accusations purporting to involve the Colombian authorities in actions of use of force against International Law, it is imperative to reiterate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Communiqué dated May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, that strongly rejects those claims.

Colombia has never been an aggressor country. On the contrary, it has devoted its efforts to strengthening its institutions, consolidating its institutional capacities to ensure stability and security, and raising the quality of life of its citizens. We have pursued a persistent battle against crime and have made significant economic and social progress since the beginning of this century.

Mr. President,

Allow me to express clearly, our strong rejection of any allegations purporting to link my government to actions against International Law.

# COLOMBIA



The restoration of democracy in Venezuela is a shared purpose and a moral imperative. The Security Council can be certain that Colombia does not pose a threat to international peace and security.

Thank you.