15. The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

During the period under review, the Security Council did not hold any meetings or adopt any decisions in connection with the item entitled “The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”. Nevertheless, Council members held one open videoconference in connection with this item on 20 May 2020. More information on the videoconference is provided in the table below.\(^{429}\)

During the open videoconference, Council members were briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on the political and humanitarian situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.\(^{430}\) At the outset of the videoconference, the Under-Secretary-General recalled the letter dated 13 May 2020 addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Council in which the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela alleged that on 3 and 4 May 2020 armed groups of mercenaries and terrorists, organized, trained, financed and protected by the Governments of the Republic of Colombia and the United States of America, had illegally entered the Venezuelan territory with the involvement of an extremist sector of the Venezuelan opposition.\(^{431}\) Colombia, the United States, as well as the Venezuelan opposition, had rejected the allegations of their involvement. The Under-Secretary-General recalled the statement of the Secretary-General on 4 May 2020 that the United Nations stood against any escalation of the situation, and that the only way to resolve it was through political dialogue and full respect for human rights.

The Under-Secretary-General updated Council members on what she described as a deepening protracted crisis in the country, noting the suspension of discussions between lawmakers from the Government and the opposition on the modalities for the holding of presidential and legislative elections. The Under-Secretary-General also expressed concern regarding the politicization of humanitarian aid, the operational constraints imposed by fuel shortages, and reports of human rights violations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

\(^{429}\) For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.
\(^{430}\) See S/2020/435.
\(^{431}\) See S/2020/399.
Moreover, the Under-Secretary-General stated that the economic sanctions imposed on the country were exacerbating an already critical situation. In this regard, she recalled the appeal of the Secretary-General for the waiving of sanctions that could undermine the capacity of countries to respond to the pandemic and the call of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for humanitarian exemptions to such measures to be given broad and practical effect. She also recalled the support expressed by the Secretary-General for a negotiated solution to the crisis and his offer of good offices, concluding that an agreement that strengthened democratic governance, with full respect for human rights, was more urgent than ever.432

In connection with the information presented in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela, participants expressed diverging views. While the representatives of the United Kingdom, United States and Colombia rejected the allegations in the letter regarding the involvement of the Governments of the United States and Colombia, the representative of the Russian Federation described the allegations contained in the letter as a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela urged the Council to recognize the acts of aggression and demand that the perpetrators immediately bring to an end the use of force and the commission of further attacks. Several Council members also shared their views regarding the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States433 and the prohibition on the use of force.434 The representative of the Russian Federation presented a draft Council press statement prepared by his delegation which, inter alia, rejected the use or threat of use of force, reaffirmed relevant resolutions on the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and on the use of mercenaries. The draft press statement further called for the current situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to be resolved through a dialogue by Venezuelans, without interference, and through peaceful and political means.435

433 Ibid., Belgium, Dominican Republic, Indonesia and South Africa.
434 Ibid., Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Viet Nam. For more information on the principle of the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state under Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations, see part III, sect. II.
435 Ibid.

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Most Council members expressed the view that only a peaceful political dialogue would resolve the crisis in the country.\textsuperscript{436} Several Council members further called for a peaceful democratic transition in the country,\textsuperscript{437} as well as the conduct of transparent, free and fair presidential and legislative elections.\textsuperscript{438} Council members expressed concern regarding the humanitarian situation, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with several of them also condemning the politicization of humanitarian assistance.\textsuperscript{439} Some Council members expressed concern regarding the increase in human rights violations.\textsuperscript{440} Several Council members deplored the humanitarian and socioeconomic impact of sanctions measures imposed on the country,\textsuperscript{441} while the representatives of France and Germany maintained that the sanctions measures imposed by the European Union did not impede international humanitarian assistance.\textsuperscript{442} The representative of Indonesia expressed regret at the lack of unity in the Council to move forward to address the situation in the country, including its already dire humanitarian challenges.\textsuperscript{443}

**Videoconferences: The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Videoconference date</th>
<th>Videoconference record</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 May 2020</td>
<td>S/2020/435</td>
<td>Letter dated 22 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.  
\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., Dominican Republic, Estonia, and Germany.  
\textsuperscript{438} Ibid., Belgium, Dominican Republic, France and Germany.  
\textsuperscript{439} Ibid., Belgium, France and Germany.  
\textsuperscript{440} Ibid., Estonia, France and Germany.  
\textsuperscript{441} Ibid., Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Viet Nam.  
\textsuperscript{442} Ibid., France and Germany.  
\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.