

Human Rights Council – 41st Session

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on Venezuela

5 July 2019

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the High Commissioner and welcomes her report.

Australia remains deeply troubled by the human rights situation in Venezuela arising from the serious political, economic and humanitarian crisis. Spiralling poverty, increasing crime and displacement have increased risks of exploitation and abuse. Trafficking in persons has increased significantly; Venezuelans are being recruited into forced prostitution, criminality and domestic servitude. We are particularly concerned women and children are being disproportionately affected.

The situation is so grave that four million Venezuelans have fled their country, putting strain on neighbouring countries and destabilising the region. Globally, Venezuelans are now one of the largest displaced populations. We commend the extraordinary response from neighbouring countries, especially Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, in hosting the vast majority of Venezuela's displaced people.

We call for an end to the increasingly violent crackdown on political dissent and opposition. Australia is deeply concerned by reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture of political opponents and their relatives. The regime is systematically undermining and intimidating the democratically elected National Assembly. We demand the release of all political prisoners.

Australia continues its call for the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance to Venezuelans in need. We urge the regime to end the economic and humanitarian calamity over which it has presided and take immediate steps to transition to democracy through free and fair elections.

We ask the High Commissioner to consider further how the UN and member states can step-up their efforts in responding to the crisis.

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