

s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 February 2019 4:01 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** Estimates Brief Feb 2019 - The situation in Venezuela.DOCX [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** Estimates Brief Feb 2019 - The situation in Venezuela.DOCX

**For-Official-Use-Only**

Hi s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
Please find attached our penultimate version of the SE brief for ELD FAS Cathy Raper.

s47C

Thanks so much for your help over the last few days.

Cheers,  
s47F(1) + s47E(c)



s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Monday, 18 February 2019 1:19 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) Milton, Ben  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** Venezuela - latest version of ELD's Estimates Hot Topics brief [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** SB19-000100.docx

UNCLASSIFIED

Ben, s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Attached is the final ELD hot topics brief on Venezuela. s47C

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Director | International Law: Advising & Treaties  
International Law Branch | Legal Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
T s22(1)(a)(ii) | M s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 18 February 2019 12:16 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** SB19-000100.docx [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Final. Thanks ☺

Additional Estimates: 21 February 2019

## V1: Venezuela

**Handling Note:** FAS ELD to lead on current situation and bilateral issues. CLO to lead on broader recognition issues.

### Strategic Message

- Australia remains deeply concerned about the devastating political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, especially its disproportionate impact on women and children and significant impact across the region.
- Australia has joined the international community in supporting the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó (h-wan gway-doh), in assuming the position of interim president until free and fair elections are held.
- We will continue to use our seat on the Human Rights Council to support the rights of the Venezuelan people and urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights.

### What is the current situation in Venezuela?

- There are competing claims on Venezuela's presidency
  - on 10 January 2019, Nicolás Maduro, started a second six-year term as president, amid claims the last presidential election [*May 2018*] was fraudulent and the outcome illegitimate
  - on 23 January 2019, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president until such a time as elections can be held.
- The economy is continuing to freefall <sup>s47C</sup>
  - the International Monetary Fund estimates hyperinflation will reach 10 million per cent in 2019
  - in 2018, GDP shrunk for the fifth consecutive year (by 15 per cent), bringing the cumulative contraction to 44.3 per cent with respect to annual GDP in 2013.
- The humanitarian situation is worsening and severe food and medical shortages have contributed to more than 3 million people fleeing the country [*UNHCR September 2018*], placing an increasing burden on the resources of regional neighbours
  - women and children are affected disproportionately, rates of maternal and child mortality and communicable diseases (e.g. Measles and Malaria) have escalated sharply
  - Nicolás Maduro has denied the scale of the humanitarian crisis and has directed the military to block international aid from entering the country.



Additional Estimates: 21 February 2019

### What is Australia's position on the crisis in Venezuela?

- . On 28 January, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to free and fair elections in Venezuela
  - and called for a transition to democracy as soon as possible.
- . Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency in January 2019
  - s47E(d)
- . Australia has been a strong voice in support of the people of Venezuela, advocating for their human rights, humanitarian needs and the restoration of democracy and rule of law
  - numerous statements in Human Rights Council Sessions, prior to and since taking a seat on the Council [*HRC35 June 2017, HRC36 September 2017, HRC37 March 2018, HRC38 July 2018 and HRC39 September 2018*]
  - in May 2018, Australia joined a statement by the Chair of the G20, Argentina, with Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the United States, stating the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy
  - Australia will continue to use its HRC seat and diplomatic channels to urge parties to work towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy and the rule of law, and upholding of human rights of Venezuelans.

### On what grounds did the Australian Government make a decision to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?

- . Australia has been tracking the political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela as it deteriorates, especially over the last three years
  - and supported the Lima Group, comprising 12 countries from the region, and other regional initiatives in efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.
- . s47C

- . Australia joined other countries, including the Lima Group, in denouncing the fraudulent presidential elections in May 2018 and the illegitimacy of Maduro commencing his second term on 10 January 2019.

Additional Estimates: 21 February 2019

- . s47E(d)
- . Australia joined 34 other countries in supporting Guaidó as the interim president in the transition to democracy.

**Has the Australian Government's position on recognizing foreign governments changed?**

- . There has been no change in Australia's policy on recognition of foreign governments.
- . The Australian Government does not extend or withhold formal recognition to new governments taking power in other countries.
- . Australian authorities conduct relations with new regimes to the extent and in the manner which may be required by the circumstances in each case
  - this can include making statements in support of particular arrangements or developments.

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**Background**

DFAT provided advice to the Foreign Minister on 24 January proposing Australia join the growing support, both from the people of Venezuela and the international community, for the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president until free and fair elections could be held.

On 28 January, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate

Additional Estimates: 21 February 2019

move to democratic elections in Venezuela. The statement urged all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people. A number of media outlets reported the statement on 25-26 January.

On 29 January, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs issued a statement supporting the Government's position in supporting Juan Guaidó.

### Political crisis

Venezuela has ceased to be a democracy. s47C

Presidential elections were held on 20 May 2018. Observer agencies, opposition leaders and community organisations reported the Venezuelan Government's process was fraudulent and failed to comply with a broad range of conditions in the country's constitution. Due to the many process irregularities, most opposition parties boycotted the elections and only 46 per cent of eligible voters turned out. Maduro claimed victory, with 68 per cent of the vote.

On 10 January 2019, Maduro was inaugurated for a second six-year term as President. His opponents within Venezuela and many countries from the region and elsewhere protested the inauguration, based on the lack of legitimacy of the May 2018 electoral process.

On 23 January, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela until such a time as elections can be held. Guaidó's declaration came amid mass protests in Caracas against the Maduro regime.

For the international community, there has been strong impetus to speak out as Venezuela's economic and humanitarian crisis deepens and the country's neighbours buckle under the strain of millions of migrants and refugees. By 7 February 2019, 42 countries have made statements supporting one of the alternative leaders of Venezuela, with 35 supporting Guaidó. In backing Guaidó's claim to Venezuela's interim presidency, this majority has spoken out in defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. s47C

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on 4 February 2019 he had been in contact with supporters of the rival leaders and decided the United Nations will not take a side. He told reporters he took the decision "to give credibility to our continued offer of good offices to the parties to be able at their request to help find a political solution".

Additional Estimates: 21 February 2019

## Countries that have presented a public position on the Venezuela crisis (at 12 February 2019)

Countries supporting Juan Guaidó	(34) Austria, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States
Countries supporting Nicolás Maduro	(8) Bolivia, China, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria, Turkey

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Division:	ELD
PDR No:	SB18-000188
Prepared by: s47F(1) + s47E(c)	Cleared by Division Head: Cathy Raper
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)	Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Date: 12 February 2019	Date: 12 February 2019
Consultation: LGD, MPD	Date: 17 January 2019

s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 February 2019 7:50 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) Barraclough, Steven; s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Estimates: Venezuela Hot Topics brief [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** Hot Topic - Venezuela.docx  
  
**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

s47F(1) + s47E(c) this afternoon we were asked to prepare a Hot Topics brief on Venezuela.

s47E(d)

Cheers,  
s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
Director | Latin America and the Caribbean  
Europe and Latin America Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
office: s22(1)(a)(ii) | mobile: s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au> On Behalf Of Senate Estimates  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 February 2019 2:02 PM  
**To:** McInnes, Dougal <Dougal.McInnes@dfat.gov.au>; Barraclough, Steven <Steven.Barraclough@dfat.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Lochrin, Adrian <Adrian.Lochrin@dfat.gov.au>; Raper, Cathy <Cathy.Raper@dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Senate Estimates: Heads Up: Possible new Hot Topics Briefs [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

Good Afternoon Dougal and Steven

We have been advised by the FMO that it will request Senate Estimates briefing on Venezuela s22(1)(a)(ii)  
s47C

s47C

Kind regards

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Manager, Parliamentary Engagement Unit  
Parliamentary and Media Branch  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Phone: s22(1)(a)(ii)



s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 February 2019 4:42 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** Hot Topic - Venezuela.docx [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** Hot Topic - Venezuela.docx

**For-Official-Use-Only**

Thanks for your assistance s47F(1) + s47E(c) attached for your edits/clearance. Cheers, s47F(1) + s47E(c)





s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 15 February 2019 5:13 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Venezuela text - 2nd standard response for HRB's review [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

**UNCLASSIFIED**

Hi s47F(1) + s47E(c)

We have a number of pieces of correspondence to send departmental replies to following the Minister's statement on Venezuela. Grateful for views on whether you are comfortable with the attached language? s22(1)(a)(ii)

Many thanks

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Policy Officer

Latin America and Caribbean Section

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Latin America and Eastern Europe Branch  
Europe and Latin America Division

E | s22(1)(a)(ii)  
T | s22(1)(a)(ii)

[@dfat.gov.au](mailto:dfat.gov.au)



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

13 February 2019

s47F(1)

Dear s47F(1)

Thank you for your s47F(1) regarding current events in Venezuela. I am replying on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Australia remains deeply concerned about the devastating humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, especially its disproportionate impact on women and children and impact across the region. Nearly all of Venezuela's citizens have been affected in some way by the crisis, including hyperinflation, shortages of food, medicine and basic supplies, closure of health and education services, and deterioration of basic infrastructure, including power and water.

Australia has been tracking the situation in Venezuela for some time and has supported the Lima Group, comprising 12 countries from the region, other regional initiatives and other countries in efforts to find a peaceful solution. We have been a strong voice in the United Nations Human Rights Council in support of the people of Venezuela, advocating for their rights and humanitarian needs, and urging Maduro government to restore democracy and rule of law. Australia joined other countries in denouncing the fraudulent presidential elections in May 2018. On January 28 2019, Australia joined more than 35 countries in supporting Juan Guaidó as the interim president, until free and fair elections are held.

Australia will continue to use its seat on the HRC and diplomatic channels to urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Director  
Latin America and Caribbean Section  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 20 February 2019 12:24 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Estimates brief- The situation in Venezuela [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** Estimates Brief Feb 2019 - The situation in Venezuela.DOCX

**For-Official-Use-Only**

s47F(1) + s47E(c) for James and Ben's packs.

s47F(1) + s47E(c) for info.

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s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Director | International Law: Advising & Treaties  
International Law Branch | Legal Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
T s22(1)(a)(ii) | M s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 20 February 2019 12:02 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Senate Estimates brief- The situation in Venezuela [REDACTED]

**For-Official-Use-Only**

Colleagues – please find attached the final of version of the Venezuela SE brief for FAS ELD, for your reference.

Thanks very much for your assistance with content and clearance.

Cheers,  
s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
Director | Latin America and the Caribbean  
Europe and Latin America Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
office: s22(1)(a)(ii) mobile: s22(1)(a)(ii)

## 5. THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA

**Handling Note:** FAS ELD to lead on situation and bilateral issues. Chief Legal Officer will lead on recognition issues. FAS HPD will lead on humanitarian assistance. Hot Topics brief content is in italics.

### Strategic Message – from Hot Topics brief

- Australia remains deeply concerned about the devastating political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, especially its disproportionate impact on women and children and significant impact across the region.
- Australia has joined the international community in supporting the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president until free and fair elections are held.
- We will continue to use our seat on the Human Rights Council to support the rights of the Venezuelan people and urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights.

### *Pronunciation:*

Nicolás Maduro	niko-lass ma-doo-row
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Juan Guaidó	h-wan gway-doh
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### *Hot Topic: What is the current situation in Venezuela?*

- *There are competing claims on Venezuela's presidency*
  - *on 10 January 2019, Nicolás Maduro, started a second six-year term as president amid claims the presidential election [20 May 2018] was fraudulent and the outcome illegitimate*
    - : some major opposition parties were banned from participating in the election and others boycotted, claims of vote buying and electoral malpractice resulted in only 46 per cent voter turnout
    - : Maduro's presidential claim retains the backing of the majority of the Venezuelan military and allies [8 countries], including Russia and China.
  - *on 23 January 2019, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president until such a time as elections can be held*
    - : Australia joined **46** countries in supporting Juan Guaidó in assuming the interim presidency until free and fair elections are held. We call for a transition to democracy as soon as possible. **s22(1)(a)(ii)**

s22(1)(a)(ii)

- . *The economy is continuing to freefall*<sup>s47C</sup>
  - *the International Monetary Fund estimates hyperinflation will reach 10 million per cent in 2019*
    - : inflation hit an estimated 1.3 million per cent at the end of 2018, with prices for basic goods doubling every 19 days [Bloomberg]; the IMF predicts inflation will reach 10 million per cent in 2019
  - *in 2018, GDP shrunk for the fifth consecutive year (by 15 per cent), bringing the cumulative contraction to 44.3 per cent with respect to annual GDP in 2013*
    - : since 2014, GDP has contracted more than 60 per cent; coming from a high of 36 per cent annual growth in 2004 [IMF]
    - : 95 per cent of Venezuela's export earnings come from oil sales. Reductions to the international oil price and <sup>s47C</sup> mismanagement of the state-owned oil company [PDVSA] have <sup>s47C</sup> oil production capacity, which is now at its lowest level in almost 70 years [1 million barrels per day].
- . *The humanitarian situation is worsening, severe food and medical shortages have contributed to more than 3.3 million people fleeing the country in recent years [UNHCR Dec. 2018], placing an increasing burden on the resources of regional neighbours*
  - around 5,000 Venezuelans are fleeing their homeland daily and up to another 2 million may flee during 2019 [UNHCR Dec. 2018]
  - *women and children are affected disproportionately, rates of maternal and child mortality and communicable diseases [e.g. Measles, Malaria and Diphtheria] have escalated sharply*
  - many Venezuelans are going hungry, a universities survey reported that 74 per cent of people lost an average of 8.7kg in weight due to food shortages
  - *Nicolás Maduro has denied the scale of the humanitarian crisis and has directed the military to block international aid from entering the country.*

**Hot Topic: What is Australia's position in relation to this situation?**

- . *On 28 January, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to free and fair elections in Venezuela*
  - *and called for a transition to democracy as soon as possible.*
- . *Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January 2019 [the Lima Group formed 8 August 2017 in response to the Venezuelan crisis, members are: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru;*



Guyana and Saint Lucia joined in February 2018; Barbados, United States, Grenada, Jamaica and Uruguay are observers]

— s47E(d)

- . *Australia has been a strong voice in support of the people of Venezuela, advocating for their human rights, humanitarian needs and the restoration of democracy and rule of law*
  - *numerous statements in Human Rights Council Sessions, prior to and since taking a seat on the Council [HRC35 June 2017, HRC36 September 2017, HRC37 March 2018, HRC38 July 2018 and HRC39 September 2018]*
  - *in May 2018, Australia joined a statement by the Chair of the G20, Argentina, with Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the United States, stating the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy*
  - *Australia will continue to use its HRC seat and diplomatic channels to urge parties to work towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy and the rule of law, and upholding of human rights of Venezuelans.*

**Hot Topic: On what grounds did the Australian Government make a decision to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?**

- . *Australia has been tracking the political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela as it deteriorates, especially over the last three years*
  - *and supported the Lima Group, comprising 14 countries from the region, and other regional initiatives in efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.*

s47C

- *in response, the Maduro-regime has politicised humanitarian assistance (by rejecting or blocking entry to support) and stating the country's political and economic crisis is the result of sanctions imposed by other countries.*
- . *Australia joined other countries, including the Lima Group, in denouncing the fraudulent presidential elections in May 2018 and the illegitimacy of Maduro commencing his second term on 10 January 2019.*

s47E(d)

- *during recent political protests, many Venezuelans have carried signs saying 'Es ahora o nunca' [it's now or never][es-ah-orah-o-noon-kah].*



- . *Australia joined **46** other countries in supporting Guaidó as the interim president in the transition to democracy.*

**Did the Australian Government seek legal advice in its decision to support Juan Guaidó?**

- . No, the decision to make a statement in support of Juan Guaidó was a policy decision.
- . The decision took into account the dire situation of the Venezuelan people, the deep economic crisis, escalating human rights abuses by the Maduro-regime and increasing migration stress across the region.

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## Background

On 28 January, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela. The statement urged all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to

democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people. A number of media outlets reported the statement on 25-26 January.

On 29 January, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs issued a statement supporting the Government's position in supporting Juan Guaidó.

### Political crisis

Venezuela has ceased to be a democracy. s47C

Presidential elections were held on 20 May 2018. Observer agencies, opposition leaders and community organisations reported the Venezuelan Government's process was fraudulent and failed to comply with a broad range of conditions in the country's constitution. Due to the many process irregularities, most opposition parties boycotted the elections and only 46 per cent of eligible voters turned out. Maduro claimed victory, with 68 per cent of the vote.

On 10 January 2019, Maduro was inaugurated for a second six-year term as President. His opponents within Venezuela and many countries from the region and elsewhere protested the inauguration, based on the lack of legitimacy of the May 2018 electoral process.

On 23 January, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela until such a time as elections can be held. Guaidó's declaration came amid mass protests in Caracas against the Maduro regime.

For the international community, there has been strong impetus to speak out as Venezuela's economic and humanitarian crisis deepens and the country's neighbours buckle under the strain of millions of migrants and refugees. By 7 February 2019, 42 countries have made statements supporting one of the alternative leaders of Venezuela, with 35 supporting Guaidó. In backing Guaidó's claim to Venezuela's interim presidency, this majority has spoken out in defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law s47C

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on 4 February 2019 he had been in contact with supporters of the rival leaders and decided the United Nations will not take a side. He told reporters he took the decision "to give credibility to our continued offer of good offices to the parties to be able at their request to help find a political solution".

### Countries that have presented a public position on the Venezuela crisis (at 20 February 2019)

Countries supporting Juan Guaidó	(46) <span style="background-color: yellow;">Albania</span> , Austria, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, <span style="background-color: yellow;">Bulgaria</span> , Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France,
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	Germany, Georgia, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Malta, North Macedonia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, St Lucia, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States
Countries supporting Nicolás Maduro	(9) Bolivia, China, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, DPRK, Russia, Syria, Turkey

### Lima Group

The Lima Group formed on 8 August 2017 in response to the Venezuelan crisis. Members are: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. Guyana and Saint Lucia joined in February 2018.

Barbados, United States, Grenada, Jamaica and Uruguay are observers.

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Senate Estimates – February 2019



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## Timeline of events in Venezuela and Australian responses

March 2013	President Hugo Chavez dies. His preferred successor, Vice President Nicolás Maduro, wins April 2013 Presidential election.
December 2015	The opposition wins control of the National Assembly for the first time in 16 years, on the back of discontent over the economic situation.
September 2016	Hundreds of thousands of protestors in Caracas call for the removal of Maduro, accusing him of responsibility for the economic crisis.
March 2017	Venezuela's Supreme Court announces it will take over the functions of the National Assembly. It retracts the decision after international uproar but anti-government protests leave more than 100 dead.
7 June 2017	<b>At HRC 35, Australia's statement to the High Commissioner's Oral Update included our concern at the deterioration of human rights in Venezuela.</b>
July 2017	The election of the controversial Constituent Assembly takes place in the face of an opposition boycott and international condemnation.
August 2017	Chief prosecutor Luisa Ortega goes into exile, claiming she was sacked because the government wanted to stop her investigations into alleged corruption and human rights abuses.
12 September 2017	<b>At HRC 36, Australia's statement to the High Commissioner's Oral Update included our concern over the deteriorating situation for advocates for human rights in Venezuela. We urged countries to recognise international obligations, and release those detained for peacefully exercising their rights.</b>
February 2018	Mediation talks between the government and the opposition collapse due to disagreement over the timing of the election. Maduro announces an election will be held before July, the main opposition parties pledge to boycott.
8 March 2018	<b>At HRC 37, Australia's statement to the Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned in the strongest terms ongoing human rights violations in Venezuela, including excessive use of force by state security services, arbitrary detention of political opponents and the targeting of protestors.</b>

20 May 2018	The election is held and Maduro wins another term amid low voter turnout and allegations of electoral fraud. Most opposition boycotted.
21 May 2018	Australia joined a statement made by the chair of the G20, Argentina, (with Canada, Chile, Mexico, US) stating the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy.
27 June 2018	At HRC 38, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 outlined that we were deeply troubled by the escalating crisis in Venezuela and the breakdown of democratic institutions. We condemned the widespread violation of human rights, including allegations of torture and crackdowns on political dissent. We restated that we did not recognise the outcome of the illegitimate May elections.
2 July 2018	At HRC 38, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 8 outlined that we joined others, including the Lima Group, in not recognising the legitimacy of the Presidential election in Venezuela, a process marked by political exclusion, intimidation and voting irregularities.
August 2018	Two explosive-laden drones were detonated near President Maduro during a live televised speech. Maduro accuses Colombia and elements within the US of a right-wing plot to assassinate him.
August 2018	In an attempt to tackle rampant hyperinflation, Venezuela slashes five zeros from its currency and tying it to a state-backed cryptocurrency.
18 September 2018	At HRC39, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 registered concern for the millions of people fleeing Venezuela, and that recent economic decisions and violent repression in Venezuela would exacerbate the already precarious humanitarian situation.
27 September 2018	At HRC 39, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 10 referenced Venezuela as an example where an unwillingness to address a situation early had risked escalation to a full-blown crisis. We said we could not know what early action might have achieved, but that we could be sure of our failures of omission. We stated that effects on the region and neighbouring countries had been severe.
27 September 2018	At HRC 39, Australia co-sponsored a resolution 'Promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela' in



	response to the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation documented in the High Commissioner's June 2018 report.
9 January 2019	HOM Bogota released two tweets, cleared through media and the FMO. The tweets outlined Australia's concern at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its effects across the Latin American region. Also declared our support for the Lima Group's calls for Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January, and to transfer executive power to the National Assembly, and allow new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible.
10 January 2019	Maduro goes ahead with his inauguration for a second six-year term.  The new President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, labels Maduro a 'usurper'.
23 January 2019	Guaidó self-declares as interim president at the opposition's largest rally since 2017.  The United States and the Lima Group make statements in support of Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president. Over the next 24 hours, other countries make public statements of support for Maduro or Guaido.
24 January 2019	<b>DFAT receives a media enquiry asking if "Australia had plans to recognise Guaido". DFAT provided the following response to the FMO:</b>  <i>The Australian Government is closely monitoring the ongoing political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and recent actions by the United States and the Lima Group of countries.</i>  <i>Australia joined a statement on 21 May 2018 (with Argentina, Canada, Chile, Mexico, United States) stating the 20 May 2018 Venezuelan Presidential election lacked legitimacy.</i>  <i>We call on the Maduro-regime to initiate negotiations with key actors, including leader of the National Assembly Juan Guaido, towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.</i>
24 January	<b>DFAT worked with posts to collate and assess country views on the political crisis.</b> Our assessment was Australia should follow the Lima Group's lead, as we have on previous occasions, and formally

	<p>recognise Guaidó as interim president. We saw little downside risk to Australia's reputation or interests in supporting the Lima Group.</p> <p>International consensus rapidly fell in line with this position, and Venezuelan social media and its free press described it as a 'defining moment' (Now or never).</p> <p>DFAT provided this advice to the FMO.</p>
24 January 2019	<p>During a press conference, Minister Payne said Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency and called for new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible. She said Australia is concerned by the deteriorating political, economic and security and humanitarian situation in Venezuela.</p>
26 January 2019	<p>On 26 January 2019, the United Nations Security Council held an emergency session to consider the situation in Venezuela. The United States (US) called the session (9 in favour; 4 against; 2 abstentions) and in his statement, Secretary of State Pompeo said Guaidó was the rightful President and other countries should stand with the 'forces of freedom'.</p> <p>Most European Union (EU) countries called for urgent free and fair elections and said they would support Guaidó as interim president if new elections were not announced within eight days. At the conclusion of that period (4 February), UK, France, Germany and Spain, together with over half of the 28 EU member states declared support for Guaidó (Italy vetoed a joint EU statement).</p> <p>Most, if not all, countries from the Americas took the floor, including Lima Group countries who called for a credible and inclusive political process to resolve the crisis and avert further conflict.</p>
28 January 2019	<p>Minister Payne issued a statement in support of the President of the National Assembly, Mr Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela.</p>
28 January 2019	<p>The United States imposes new sanctions on the state oil company, PDVSA, to prevent it collecting proceeds on crude oil exports to US refineries.</p>
28 January	<p>DFAT received a media inquiry asking "has the policy [on recognition of government's] changed" and "when did this occur and what Cabinet</p>



	<p><b>processes were followed?”</b> DFAT provided the following response to the FMO:</p> <p><i>There has been no change in Australia’s policy on recognition of foreign governments.</i></p> <p><i>Australia’s policy is that we do not extend or withhold formal recognition to new governments taking power in other countries.</i></p> <p><i>Australian authorities conduct relations with new regimes to the extent and in the manner which may be required by the circumstances in each case. This can include making statements in support of particular arrangements or developments.</i></p>
7 February 2019	Maduro’s regime blocks the border to stop international humanitarian assistance from entering the country by road.
19 February 2019	Dual claims on Venezuela’s presidency persist without resolution.



Division: ELD – ELB	
PDR No: PDR number / N/a if not relevant	
Prepared by: s47F(1) + s47E(c)	Cleared by Branch/Division Head: Steven Barraclough
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)	Mob: Type mobile. Ext: Type extension.
Date: 14 November 2019	Date: Click or tap to enter clearance date.
Consultation: HPD, MPD	Date: Click or tap to enter consultation date.
Name:	Mob: Ext: Type extension.
Cleared by CFO / FAS CMD:	Date: Click or tap to enter CFO/FAS CMD clearance date.



**Title:** Venezuela: Venezuela Crisis: One country two Presidents and a divided international community  
**MRN:** s47E(d) 24/01/2019 02:00:48 PM  
**To:** Canberra  
**Cc:** RR : Ankara, Beijing, Latin America Posts, UN New York, Washington  
**From:** Bogota  
**From File:**  
**EDRMS**  
**Files:**  
**References:**  
**Response:** Routine, Information Only

## Summary

President of the Venezuelan National Assembly Juan Guaido reaffirms declaration that he is Venezuela's interim President. The international community including Lima Group countries and the US overwhelmingly back Guaido in his struggle against the illegitimate Maduro regime. Britain and the European Union, provide a nuanced response and Mexico stays neutral. Traditional supporters Russia and Bolivia back Maduro wholeheartedly. Maduro responds by breaking diplomatic relations with the US and gives diplomats 72 hours to leave Venezuela.

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On 23 January, amid significant nationwide protests the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaido vowed to uphold his declaration and enactment of Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution to take the mantle of interim President of Venezuela, until such a time as new elections can be held.

2. Guaido's public reaffirmation initiated a cascade of statements of support for Guaido as interim President. US President Trump's statement was quickly followed by Canada, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, France, Honduras, the Organisation of American States, the Lima Group (except Mexico) and the Inter-American Development Bank.

s33(b)

7. In response, Maduro has broken diplomatic relations with the United States and ordered diplomats to leave within 72 hours.

s33(b)

9.s47C

Venezuelans home.

. Maduro said he would be sending aircraft to bring any

s47C

s47E(d)

s47C

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii)





## 7. Venezuela – timeline of Australian action

*If raised: On what grounds did the Australian Government make a decision to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state and did Ms Payne seek policy and legal advice in advance?*

- Australia has consistently made statements on Venezuela for almost two years as the political, security, economic and humanitarian situation has deteriorated
  - even before we assumed our seat on the HRC, we voice concerns over deteriorating human rights in Venezuela at HRC35 (7 June 2017) and HRC36 (September 2017)
  - through our HRC term we have continued to voice these concerns, including at HRC37 (March 2018), HRC38 (July 2018) and HRC39 (September 2018).

- s47C

- s47E(d)

- s47C

*If raised: What is Australia's approach to recognition of foreign governments?*

- Australia does not extend or withhold formal recognition to new governments taking power in other countries.
- Australian authorities conduct relations with new regimes to the extent and in the manner which may be required by the circumstances in each case
  - this can include making statements in support of particular arrangements or developments.

## Timeline of events in Venezuela including Australian action

March 2013	President Hugo Chavez dies. His preferred successor, Vice President Nicolás Maduro, wins April 2013 Presidential election.
December 2015	The opposition wins control of the National Assembly for the first time in 16 years, on the back of discontent over the economic situation.
September 2016	Hundreds of thousands of protestors in Caracas call for the removal of Maduro, accusing him of responsibility for the economic crisis.
March 2017	Venezuela's Supreme Court announces it will take over the functions of the National Assembly. It retracts the decision after international uproar but anti-government protests leave more than 100 dead.
7 June 2017	<b>At HRC 35, Australia's statement to the High Commissioner's Oral Update included our concern at the deterioration of human rights in Venezuela.</b>
July 2017	The election of the controversial Constituent Assembly takes place in the face of an opposition boycott and international condemnation.
August 2017	Chief prosecutor Luisa Ortega goes into exile, claiming she was sacked because the government wanted to stop her investigations into alleged corruption and human rights abuses.
12 September 2017	<b>At HRC 36, Australia's statement to the High Commissioner's Oral Update included our concern over the deteriorating situation for advocates for human rights in Venezuela. We urged countries to recognise international obligations, and release those detained for peacefully exercising their rights.</b>
February 2018	Mediation talks between the government and the opposition collapse due to disagreement over the timing of the election. Maduro announces an election will be held before July, the main opposition parties pledge to boycott.
8 March 2018	<b>At HRC 37, Australia's statement to the Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned in the strongest terms ongoing human rights violations in Venezuela, including excessive use of force by state security services, arbitrary detention of political opponents and the targeting of protestors.</b>
20 May 2018	The election is held and Maduro wins another term amid low voter turnout and allegations of electoral fraud. Most opposition boycotted.

21 May 2018	Australia joined a statement made by the chair of the G20, Argentina, (with Canada, Chile, Mexico, US) stating the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy.
27 June 2018	At HRC 38, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 outlined that we were deeply troubled by the escalating crisis in Venezuela and the breakdown of democratic institutions. We condemned the widespread violation of human rights, including allegations of torture and crackdowns on political dissent. We restated that we did not recognise the outcome of the illegitimate May elections.
2 July 2018	At HRC 38, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 8 outlined that we joined others, including the Lima Group, in not recognising the legitimacy of the Presidential election in Venezuela, a process marked by political exclusion, intimidation and voting irregularities.
August 2018	Two explosive-laden drones were detonated near President Maduro during a live televised speech. Maduro accuses Colombia and elements within the US of a right-wing plot to assassinate him.
August 2018	In an attempt to tackle rampant hyperinflation, Venezuela slashes five zeros from its currency and tying it to a state-backed cryptocurrency.
18 September 2018	At HRC39, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 registered concern for the millions of people fleeing Venezuela, and that recent economic decisions and violent repression in Venezuela would exacerbate the already precarious humanitarian situation.
27 September 2018	At HRC 39, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 10 referenced Venezuela as an example where an unwillingness to address a situation early had risked escalation to a full-blown crisis. We said we could not know what early action might have achieved, but that we could be sure of our failures of omission. We stated that effects on the region and neighbouring countries had been severe.
27 September 2018	At HRC 39, Australia co-sponsored a resolution 'Promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela' in response to the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation documented in the High Commissioner's June 2018 report.
9 January 2019	HOM Bogota released two tweets outlining Australia's concern at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its effects across the Latin American region. Also declaring our support for the Lima Group's calls for Maduro to refrain from

	assuming the presidency on 10 January, and to transfer executive power to the National Assembly, and allow new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible.
10 January 2019	Mr Maduro goes ahead with his inauguration for a second six-year term. The new President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, labels Maduro a 'usurper'.
23 January 2019	Mr Guaidó self-declares as interim president at the opposition's largest rally since 2017. The United States and the Lima Group immediately support Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president.
24 January 2019	<b>Minister Payne issued a statement in support of the President of the National Assembly, Mr Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela.</b>
28 January 2019	The US imposes new sanctions on the state oil company, PDVSA, to prevent it collecting proceeds on crude oil exports to US refineries.
7 February 2019	Maduro's regime blocks the border to stop international humanitarian assistance from entering the country by road.
12 February 2019	Dual claims on Venezuela's presidency persist without resolution.

## Background

On 24 January, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela. The statement urged all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people. A number of media outlets reported the statement on 25-26 January.

On 29 January, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs issued a statement supporting the Government's position in supporting Juan Guaidó.

## Political crisis

Venezuela has ceased to be a democracy. s47C

Presidential elections were held on 20 May 2018. Observer agencies, opposition leaders and community organisations reported the Venezuelan Government's process was fraudulent and failed to comply with a broad range of conditions in the country's constitution. Due to the many process irregularities, most opposition parties boycotted the elections and only 46 per cent of eligible voters turned out. Maduro claimed victory, with 68 per cent of the vote.

On 10 January 2019, Maduro was inaugurated for a second six-year term as President. His opponents within Venezuela and many countries from the region and elsewhere protested the inauguration, based on the lack of legitimacy of the May 2018 electoral process.

On 23 January, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela until such a time as elections can be held. Guaidó's declaration came amid mass protests in Caracas against the Maduro regime.

For the international community, there has been strong impetus to speak out as Venezuela's economic and humanitarian crisis deepens and the country's neighbours buckle under the strain of millions of migrants and refugees. By 7 February 2019, 42 countries have made statements supporting one of the alternative leaders of Venezuela, with 35 supporting Guaidó. In backing Guaidó's claim to Venezuela's interim presidency, this majority has spoken out in defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. s47C

s47C

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on 4 February 2019 he had been in contact with supporters of the rival leaders and decided the United Nations will not take a side. He told reporters he took the decision "to give credibility to our continued offer of good offices to the parties to be able at their request to help find a political solution".

#### Countries that have presented a public position on the Venezuela crisis (at 7 February 2019)

Countries supporting Juan Guaidó	(34) Austria, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States
Countries supporting Nicolás Maduro	(8) Bolivia, China, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria, Turkey

#### Economic and humanitarian crises

In 2018, Venezuela's inflation rate hit 1,000,000 per cent, pushing 87 per cent of the country below the poverty line and causing the minimum wage to plunge to USD6 per month. Imports fell by 72 percent between 2012 and 2016, and continue to plummet. The IMF estimate in 2018, government debt expressed as a proportion of GDP was 162.0 percent. To pay its most urgent bills, the government is selling off assets at massive discounts.

At least 3 million Venezuelans have fled the economic and political collapse of their country. Severe shortages in food, medicine and basic goods have resulted in widespread hunger, malnutrition and increased infant mortality rates. An estimated 3.7 million people are malnourished. Most essential medicines are unobtainable.

The Maduro regime has refused to acknowledge the country's humanitarian crisis and has rejected international offers of assistance. In a live address on state television on 4 February 2019, Maduro said he refuses ultimatums from any country and rejects US-backed effort to send food and medicine into his country, saying Venezuela is not "a nation of beggars".

Division:	ELD - ELB
PDR No:	N/a

<b>Prepared by:</b> s47F(1) + s47E(c)	<b>Cleared by Branch/Division Head:</b> Steven Barraclough
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)	Mob: Type mobile.      Ext: Type extension.
Date: Click or tap to enter a date.	Date: Click or tap to enter clearance date.
<b>Consultation:</b> Enter Div/Branch/Section.	Date: Click or tap to enter consultation date.
Name: Type in Officer's name.	Mob: Type mobile.      Ext: Type extension.
<b>Cleared by CFO / FAS CMD:</b>	Date: Click or tap to enter CFO/FAS CMD clearance date.



- Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the significant impact it is having across the Latin America region.
- Australia supports the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president until elections are held.
  - Australia calls for a transition to democracy in Venezuela as soon as possible.
- Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January, relayed through our non-resident Ambassador to Venezuela.
- We now urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.

s22(1)(a)(ii)

- s22(1)(a)(ii)

## **Background**

### **Minister's Media Release**

On 28 January 2019, Minister Payne issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela. The statement urges all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people. The statement was reported by a number of media outlets on 25-26 January.

At a press conference on 24 January 2019, Minister Payne said Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency and called for new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible.

### **United Nations Security Council emergency session**

On 26 January, the Council held an emergency session to consider the situation in Venezuela. The United States called the session (9 in favour; 4 against; 2 abstentions) and in his statement, Secretary of State Pompeo said Guaidó was the rightful President and other countries should stand with the 'forces of freedom'.

*Most **European Union** (EU) countries called for urgent free and fair elections and said they would support Guaidó as interim president if new elections were not announced within eight days. At the conclusion of that period (4 February), UK, France, Germany and Spain, together with over half of the 28 EU member states declared support for Guaidó (Italy vetoed a joint EU statement).*

Most, if not all, countries from the Americas took the floor, including Lima Group countries who called for a credible and inclusive political process to resolve the crisis and avert further conflict.

Venezuela called Guaidó's presidential self-proclamation illegal, rejected United States and European Union attempts to interfere and impose deadlines on Venezuelan domestic affairs and blamed Venezuela's economic turmoil on unilateral sanctions. Russia accused the United States of plotting a coup and inciting a 'bloodbath'. Bolivia and Cuba supported Venezuela's position. China argued the situation did not represent a threat to international peace and security and it did not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

The United Nations briefers recalled that the UN Secretary-General had offered his good offices to help resolve the crisis and urged a political solution that would allow Venezuelans to enjoy peace, prosperity and all their human rights. The argument by China and others that Venezuela's situation was purely an internal matter was called out by a number of speakers, including France and Canada, who noted the millions who had fled Venezuela, mainly to neighbouring countries.

### **Opposition leader Juan Guaidó declares himself interim president**

On 23 January, Juan Guaidó, leader of Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela until such a time as elections can be held.

Guaidó's declaration came amid mass protests in Caracas against the Maduro regime.

On 23 January, the President of the **United States** released a statement recognising Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela. He said the National Assembly was the only legitimate branch of government duly elected by the Venezuelan people and it had invoked the country's constitution to declare Nicolas Maduro illegitimate, and the office of the presidency therefore vacant. President Trump said the people of Venezuela have courageously spoken out against Maduro and his regime and demanded freedom and the rule of law. President Trump said he would use the full weight of United States economic and diplomatic power to press for the restoration of Venezuelan democracy. He encouraged other Western Hemisphere governments to recognise National Assembly President Guaidó as the Interim President of Venezuela.

In response, the Maduro regime broke diplomatic relations with the United States and gave its diplomats 72 hours to leave Venezuela. *United States Secretary of State Pompeo said because the US didn't recognise the Maduro regime as the government of Venezuela, it didn't consider Maduro had the authority to break diplomatic relations. Pompeo said the United States would conduct diplomatic relations through the government of interim president Guaidó and would comply with Guaidó's request that diplomatic missions in Venezuela remain. Maduro diffused the potential showdown with the United States by suspending his demand for diplomats to leave.*

On 23 January, the **Lima Group** [Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa, Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru – but not Mexico in this case], noting constitutional norms and the illegitimacy of the Maduro regime, recognised and expressed their full support for Juan Guaidó. It called for new elections as soon as possible with the participation of all political actors and in accordance with international guarantees and standards.

In a statement on 23 January, the **European Union** called for the start of an immediate political process leading to free and credible elections, in conformity with the Constitutional order. It said that it fully supported the national assembly as the democratically elected institution whose powers need to be restored and respected. The **United Kingdom** tweeted support for the EU statement and Foreign Secretary Hunt made a statement on 24 January in support of Guaidó.

On 24 January, **Mexico** said it was maintaining its current position, which recognises Maduro as Venezuela's president, and, like **Uruguay**, called for a negotiated solution leading to free elections. **Ecuador** has recognised Juan Guaidó as the interim president.

On 23-24 January, **Russia, Turkey, Iran, Bolivia, Nicaragua** and **Cuba** expressed support for the Maduro regime. **China** stated its support for Venezuela's sovereignty.

Other countries and international organisations, including the **Organization of American States (OAS)**, made statements questioning the legitimacy of Maduro's second term.

Among CARICOM members, **The Bahamas, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica** and **St Lucia** supported the OAS resolution to not recognise the legitimacy of Maduro's new term. **Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines** and **Suriname** voted against the resolution. **Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, St Kitts and Nevis** and **Trinidad and Tobago** abstained. <sup>s47C</sup>

## January 2019 inauguration

On 10 January 2019, Nicolas Maduro was inaugurated <sup>s47C</sup> as President of Venezuela for a second six-year term. Australia did not send a representative.

On 9 January 2019, ahead of the inauguration, **HOM Bogota** released two tweets outlining Australia's concern and our support for the Lima Group:

'Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its effects across the Latin American region'.

'Australia supports the Lima Group in calling for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January. He should temporarily transfer executive power to the National Assembly, and allow new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible @NicolasMaduro #GrupoDeLima'.

On 10 January 2019, the **United States'** Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, condemned Maduro's illegitimate usurpation of power following the unfair and unfree elections of May 2018. On 8 January, the United States imposed further sanctions on seven individuals and 23 entities for corrupt practices that saw them steal more than USD2.4 billion.

On 10 January 2019, the **Lima Group** released a declaration in response to the beginning of the illegitimate presidential term of Nicolas Madura. The statement reiterated the lack of legitimacy of the Venezuelan electoral process in May 2018.

## May 2018 Elections

The political, security and economic situation in Venezuela deteriorated sharply after 2016. On 20 May 2018, presidential elections were held. *Some major opposition parties and candidates were banned from participating and many others boycotted the process, leading to voter turnout of only 46 per cent.*

Venezuela's <sup>s47C</sup> electoral authority announced that with 92 percent of votes counted, Maduro had received 68 per cent of votes (5.8 million votes). His main opponent, Henri Falcon, received 21 per cent (1.8 million) while the third highest candidate, evangelical minister Javier Bertucci, received just over 10 per cent of votes.

In addition to claims of electoral violations, the date of the election was brought forward (from December 2018 to May 2018) to take advantage of infighting among the opposition. The government removed the requirement for fingerprint verification, which had previously to prevented people from voting twice. The government also set up so-called "red spot" booths at polling stations to record citizens' voting activity, particularly those dependent on government benefits.

<sup>s22(1)(a)(ii)</sup>

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** Mckenna, Marie-Charlotte  
**Sent:** Friday, 1 February 2019 4:35 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

s47F(1) + s47E(c) fine by us

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 1 February 2019 11:08 AM  
**To:** Mckenna, Marie-Charlotte <Marie-Charlotte.McKenna@dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Marie-Charlotte – s47C

Thank you.

Cheers, s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 1 February 2019 9:33 AM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Good morning s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Thank you for providing a cleared response. s22(1)(a)(ii)

Kind regard

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Departmental Liaison Officer

Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Suite M1.49 Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600

T: s22(1)(a)(ii) | M: s22(1)(a)(ii) | W: [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 31 January 2019 6:21 PM

**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>; s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

s47F(1) + s47E(c) cleared standard response follows. Cheers, s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Dear [x]

*Thank you for your [correspondence] regarding recent events in Venezuela. [I am replying on behalf of ...]*

*Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the significant impact it is having on the people of Venezuela and countries across the region.*

*On 28 January 2019, Foreign Minister Payne issued a statement supporting the President of Venezuela's National Assembly in assuming the position of interim president until free and fair elections are held. This position supports the Lima Group's call for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January. Australia calls for a transition to democracy in Venezuela as soon as possible.*

*Australia will continue to use its seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council and diplomatic channels to urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.*

*I trust this information is of assistance.*

*Yours sincerely*

[xx]

**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 31 January 2019 4:03 PM

**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Good afternoon s47F(1) + s47E(c) that would be great. Thank you.

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

Departmental Liaison Officer

Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Suite M1.49 Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600

T: s22(1)(a)(ii) | M: s22(1)(a)(ii) | W: [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)



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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 31 January 2019 3:55 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi s47F(1) + s47E(c) we've drafted some standards words that are just being cleared through relevant areas. s47E(d)

Cheers,  
s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 31 January 2019 9:52 AM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) s22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Latin America - Venezuela: standard words for min corr [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Good morning s47F(1) + s47E(c)

We've had a request from the Trade Ministers office to provide standard words for correspondence received on Venezuela. Appreciate your assistance in drafting some standard words that we can share with other Ministerial offices, if requested, to respond to constituent enquiries

s47C

Kind regards

s47F(1) + s47E(c)

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Departmental Liaison Officer  
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s47E(d)

## VENEZUELA – DOMESTIC POLITICS AND AUSTRALIAN POSITION

### *If raised: What is Australia's position regarding Venezuela*

- Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the significant impact it is having across the Latin America region.
- Australia supports the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president until elections are held
- Australia calls for a transition to democracy in Venezuela as soon as possible.

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii)

## Background

On 28 January 2019, you (Minister Payne) issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president until elections are held. This position accords with most Latin American and Western countries. Mr Guaidó had self-declared as interim president on 23 January in the midst of large protests against the Maduro regime.

Thirty-four countries support Guaidó, including those of the Lima Group (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru – but not Mexico), United States, United Kingdom and the European Union. Maduro supporters include Bolivia, China, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria, and Turkey. The UN Secretary-General refused to support either claimant and offered good offices to help resolve the crisis.

On 10 January 2019, Nicolas Maduro was illegitimately inaugurated as President of Venezuela for a second term. The Lima Group reiterated the lack of legitimacy of the Venezuelan electoral process in May 2018. The United States' Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, condemned Maduro's illegitimate usurpation of power following the unfair and unfree elections of May 2018. The United States imposed further sanctions for corruption and theft of over USD2.4 billion in Venezuelan assets. Australia's HOM in Bogota released two tweets on 9 January 2019 outlining Australia's concern and our support for the Lima Group.

The majority of opposition parties boycotted the 20 May 2018 presidential elections in Venezuela and voter turnout was only 46 per cent. In addition to claims of electoral violations, the date of the election was brought forward (from December 2018 to May 2018) to take advantage of infighting among the opposition. On 21 May 2018, Australia joined a statement by the Chair of the G20, Argentina, with Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the United States, stating

the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy.

Severe shortages in food, medicine and basic goods have resulted in widespread hunger, malnutrition and infant mortality rates. An estimated 3.7 million people are malnourished. According the UNHCR (November 2018) 3 million Venezuelans have emigrated in recent years, some 2.4 million towards neighbouring Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Maduro regime refuses to admit a humanitarian crisis exists and has rejected international offers of humanitarian assistance. On 7 February 2019, the regime blocked the Venezuelan border so international aid could not be delivered to those in need.



Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## MEDIA TALKING POINTS

Subject: **Venezuela: Australia recognises and supports interim president Guaidó**

Date/Version: V1

Originating Division: ELD

Version Date: 24/01/2018

Expiry: 10/02/2019

### Talking Points

- Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the significant *impact* it is having across the Latin America region.
- *Australia supports the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president until elections are held.*
  - *Australia calls for a transition to democracy in Venezuela as soon as possible.*
- *Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January, relayed through our non-resident Ambassador to Venezuela.*
- *We now urge all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.*

s22(1)(a)(ii)

*If raised: What is Australia approach to recognition of foreign governments?*

- *Australia does not extend or withhold formal recognition to new governments taking power in other countries.*
- *Australian authorities conduct relations with new regimes to the extent and in the manner which may be required by the circumstances in each case*
  - *this can include making statements in support of particular arrangements or developments.*

### Background

#### Minister's Media Release

*On 24 January, Minister Payne issued a statement on Venezuela in support of the President of*

*the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela. The statement urges all parties to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people. The statement was reported by a number of media outlets on 25-26 January.*

*At a press conference on 24/1/2019, Minister Payne said Australia supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency and called for new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible.*

*United Nations Security Council emergency session*

*On 26 January, the Council held an emergency session to consider the situation in Venezuela. The United States called the session (9 in favour; 4 against; 2 abstentions) and in his statement, Secretary of State Pompeo said Guaidó was the rightful President and other countries should stand with the 'forces of freedom'. EU countries called for urgent free and fair elections and said they would recognise Guaidó as constitutional interim President if new elections were not announced within 8 days. Most, if not all, countries from the Americas took the floor, including Lima Group countries who called for a credible and inclusive political process to resolve the crisis and avert further conflict.*

*Venezuela called Guaidó's presidential self-proclamation illegal, rejected United States and European Union attempts to interfere and impose deadlines on Venezuelan domestic affairs and blamed Venezuela's economic turmoil on unilateral sanctions. Russia accused the United States of plotting a coup and inciting a 'bloodbath'. Bolivia and Cuba supported Venezuela's position. China argued the situation did not represent a threat to international peace and security and it did not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.*

*The United Nations briefers recalled that the UN Secretary-General had offered his good offices to help resolve the crisis and urged a political solution that would allow Venezuelans to enjoy peace, prosperity and all their human rights. The argument by China and others that Venezuela's situation was purely an internal matter was called out by a number of speakers, including France and Canada, who noted the millions who had fled Venezuela, mainly to neighbouring countries.*

### Opposition leader Juan Guaidó declares himself interim president

On 23 January, Juan Guaidó, leader of Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela until such a time as elections can be held. Guaidó's declaration came amid mass protests in Caracas against the Maduro regime.

On 23 January, the President of the **United States** released a statement recognising Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela. He said the National Assembly was the only legitimate branch of government duly elected by the Venezuelan people and it had invoked the country's constitution to declare Nicolas Maduro illegitimate, and the office of the presidency therefore vacant. President Trump said the people of Venezuela have courageously spoken out against Maduro and his regime and demanded freedom and the rule of law. President Trump said he would use the full weight of United States economic and diplomatic power to press for the restoration of Venezuelan democracy. He encouraged other Western Hemisphere governments to recognise National Assembly President Guaidó as the Interim President of Venezuela.

In response, the Maduro regime broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Maduro has given diplomats 72 hours to leave Venezuela. US Secretary of State Pompeo said the United States would comply with Guaidó's request that diplomatic missions in Venezuela remain. He said the United States will conduct diplomatic relations with Venezuela through the government of interim president Guaidó.

On 23 January, the **Lima Group** [Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa, Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru – but not Mexico in this case], noting constitutional norms and the illegitimacy of the Maduro regime, recognised and expressed their full support for Juan Guaidó. It called for new elections as soon as possible with the participation of all political actors and in accordance with international guarantees and standards.

In a statement on 23 January, the **European Union** called for the start of an immediate political process leading to free and credible elections, in conformity with the Constitutional order. It said that it fully supported the national assembly as the democratically elected institution whose powers need to be restored and respected. *The **United Kingdom** tweeted support for the EU statement and Foreign Secretary Hunt made a statement on 24 January in support of Guaidó.*

On 24 January, **Mexico** said it was maintaining its current position, which recognises Maduro

as Venezuela's president, and, like **Uruguay**, called for a negotiated solution leading to free elections. **Ecuador** has recognised Juan Guaidó as the interim president.

On 23-24 January, **Russia, Turkey, Iran, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba** expressed support for the Maduro regime. **China** stated its support for Venezuela's sovereignty.

Other countries and international organisations, including the **Organization of American States (OAS)**, made statements questioning the legitimacy of Maduro's second term.

Among CARICOM members, **The Bahamas, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and St Lucia** supported the OAS resolution to not recognise the legitimacy of Maduro's new term.

**Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname** voted against the resolution.

**Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, St Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago** abstained. s47C

#### January 2019 inauguration

On 10 January 2019, Nicolas Maduro was inaugurated (illegitimately) as President of Venezuela for a second six-year term. Australia did not send a representative.

On 9 January 2019, ahead of the inauguration, **HOM Bogota** released two tweets outlining Australia's concern and our support for the Lima Group:

'Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its effects across the Latin American region'.

'Australia supports the Lima Group in calling for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January. He should temporarily transfer executive power to the National Assembly, and allow new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible @NicolasMaduro #GrupoDeLima'.

On 10 January 2019, the **United States'** Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, condemned Maduro's illegitimate usurpation of power following the unfair and unfree elections of May 2018. On 8 January, the United States imposed further sanctions on seven individuals and 23 entities for corrupt practices that saw them steal more than USD2.4 billion.

On 10 January 2019, the **Lima Group** released a declaration in response to the beginning of the illegitimate presidential term of Nicolas Madura. The statement reiterated the lack of legitimacy of the Venezuelan electoral process in May 2018.

#### May 2018 Elections

The political, security and economic situation in Venezuela deteriorated sharply after 2016. On 20 May 2018, presidential elections were held. The majority of opposition parties boycotted the process, leading to voter turnout of only 46 percent (the opposition claims



turnout was around 30 per cent).

Venezuela's (pro-Government) electoral authority announced that with 92 percent of votes counted, Maduro had received 68 per cent of votes (5.8 million votes). His main opponent, Henri Falcon, received 21 per cent (1.8 million) while the third highest candidate, evangelical minister Javier Bertucci, received just over 10 percent of votes.

In addition to claims of electoral violations, the date of the election was brought forward (from December 2018 to May 2018) to take advantage of infighting among the opposition. The government removed the requirement for fingerprint verification, which had previously to prevented people from voting twice. The government also set up so-called "red spot" booths at polling stations to record citizens' voting activity, particularly those dependent on government benefits.

s22(1)(a)(ii)

## Handling Notes

## Media Interest

Significant media interest, both national and international.

## Approval

Author	
Cleared by	<i>Steven Barracclough, Assistant Secretary, ELB,</i> <sup>s22(1)(a)(ii)</sup>
Consultation	<i>Home Affairs, LGD</i>











s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 February 2019 10:23 AM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Cc:** Barraclough, Steven  
**Subject:** RE: Senate Motion - Advice Requested [REDACTED]

**PROTECTED**

s47F(1) +  
Hi s47E(c)

It looks consistent except for the highlighted phrase. The statement says we support Guaidó assuming the position of interim-president until elections are held. s47C

A central point in the Minister's statement is that Venezuela's leadership must move quickly to restore democracy by calling free and fair elections. This is how a legitimate leader will be identified.

Cheers,  
s47F(1) + s47E(c)

s47C



s47C

## **Timeline of Australian response to the situation in Venezuela**

**27 January 2019** **Minister Payne** tweeted '*Australia recognises and supports the President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president*'.

**24 January 2019** **Minister Payne** issued a statement in support of the President of the National Assembly, Mr Juan Guaidó, becoming interim president to facilitate the immediate move to democratic elections in Venezuela.

**9 January 2019** **HOM Bogota** released two tweets <sup>s47E(d)</sup> outlining Australia's concern at the '*deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its effects across the Latin American region*'. Also declaring our support for the Lima Group's calls for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January, and to transfer executive power to the National Assembly, and allow new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible'.

**27 September 2018** **HRC39**, Australia co-sponsored a resolution '*Promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*' in response to the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in Venezuela documented in the High Commissioner's June 2018 report.

**27 September 2018** **HRC39**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 10 referenced Venezuela as an example where '*a collective unwillingness to address a situation early risks escalation to a full-blown crisis. While we cannot know what early action on Venezuela might have achieved, we can be sure of our failures of omission. Effects on the region and neighbouring countries in particular have been severe*'.

**18 September 2018** **HRC39**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 registered our concern for the millions of people fleeing Venezuela, and that '*recent economic decisions and ongoing violent repression in Venezuela will exacerbate the already precarious humanitarian situation*'.

**27 June 2018** **HRC38**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 4 outline we were '*deeply troubled by the escalating crisis in Venezuela and the breakdown of democratic institutions*'. We condemned the '*widespread violation of human rights, including allegations of torture and crackdowns on political dissent*'. We restated that we did not recognise the outcome of the illegitimate May elections.

**2 July 2018**      **HRC38**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on Item 8 again outlined that *'we joined others, including the Lima Group, in not recognising the legitimacy of the Presidential election in Venezuela, a process marked by political exclusion, intimidation and voting irregularities'*.

**21 May 2018**      **Australia joined a statement made by the chair of the G20, Argentina**, (with Canada, Chile, Mexico, US) stating the 20 May 2018 election in Venezuela lacked legitimacy.

**8 March 2018**      **HRC37**, Australia's statement to the Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned *'in the strongest terms ongoing human rights violations in Venezuela, including excessive use of force by state security services, arbitrary detention of political opponents and the targeting of protestors'*.

**12 September 2017**      **HRC36**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on the High Commissioner's Oral Update announced our concern about the deteriorating situation for people who are peacefully advocating for human rights, including in Venezuela.

**7 June 2017**      **HRC35**, Australia's statement to the General Debate on the High Commissioner's Oral Update made clear our *'concerns about the deterioration of human rights in Venezuela'*.

s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 24 January 2019 11:41 AM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** FW: Venezuela [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Revised TP.

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 24 January 2019 11:35 AM  
**To:** Barracrough, Steven <Steven.Barracrough@dfat.gov.au>; Magee, Kevin <Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Venezuela [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hi Steve – revised response, for your comment:

Australia recognises and supports the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, in assuming the position of interim president, in accordance with the Venezuelan constitution and until elections are held. Australia calls for a transition to democracy in Venezuela as soon as possible.

We urge the [all parties](#) to work constructively towards a peaceful resolution of the situation, including a return to democracy, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights of the Venezuelan people.

s47C

s22(1)(a)(ii) - duplicate

s22(1)(a)(ii) - duplicate

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s22(1)(a)(ii)







s22(1)(a)(ii)

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**From:** s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 24 January 2019 4:36 PM  
**To:** s47F(1) + s47E(c) Barraclough, Steven; s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Cc:** Magee, Kevin; s47F(1) + s47E(c)  
**Subject:** Media  
RE: Venezuela s22(1)(a)(ii) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thanks s47F(1) + s47E(c)

See the below excerpt from the press conference earlier today:

[Inaudible] What is Australia's position on that power struggle. Who does Australia recognise as the legitimate President?

**FOREIGN MINISTER:**

Well I can advise that we supported the Lima Group's early call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency. We did that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. We called for new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible and that was formally advised to Venezuela through our non-resident Ambassador. We are very concerned at what is a clearly deteriorating political, economic and security and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and it is having significant effects across the Latin American region. And I understand other countries including the United States have considered supporting the President of the National Assembly. We will consider those matters.

[ends]

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii) - duplicate

