

Venezuela: EU adopts conclusions and targeted sanctions

On 13 November, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions on Venezuela, and agreed on targeted sanctions in view of its concerns at the situation in the country.

"Council conclusions on Venezuela

1. The European Union (EU) recalls its Council conclusions of July 2016 and May 2017 and reaffirms that constructive dialogue and negotiation are the only sustainable way to address the current crisis and to respond to the pressing needs of the people of Venezuela. Therefore it stands ready to support a credible negotiation involving all relevant actors that can lead to shared solutions to the multiple challenges in the country.
2. Recently, the 15 October Gubernatorial elections took place amidst reported numerous irregularities and the results were not recognised by a large part of the opposition. The EU calls for full transparency on the results of these elections through a comprehensive and independent audit. In order to regain the people's trust in elections, it is important to ensure credible electoral processes and a more balanced composition of the National Electoral Council. The EU also expresses its concern about the lack of respect for the constitutionally established mechanisms in the appointment and functioning of the new Governors, including the disqualification of the Governor-elect of Zulia State.
3. These developments have accentuated the political polarisation in the country. The setting-up of an all-powerful Constituent Assembly further eroded the democratic and independent institutions. The EU reiterates that it cannot recognise the Constituent Assembly or its acts because of serious concerns about its legitimacy and representativeness. The EU recalls the importance of the respect for the prerogatives of the National Assembly and its Members and the independence of the judiciary. Reports, including by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms are an additional reason for alarm, as are the increasing urgent needs of the population that are affecting their rights, such as the right to food and the right to health.
4. In this context, in addition to its political and diplomatic efforts in support of a peaceful negotiated way out of the political crisis, the Council has today decided by unanimity to adopt restrictive measures, underscoring its concerns with the situation in the country. These consist of an embargo on arms and on related material that might be used for internal repression, as well as a legal framework for a travel ban and assets freeze.
5. These measures will be used in a gradual and flexible manner and can be expanded, by targeting those involved in the non-respect of democratic principles or the rule of law and the violation of human rights. The measures can be reversed depending on the evolution of the situation in the country, in particular the holding of credible and meaningful negotiations, the respect for democratic institutions, the adoption of a full electoral calendar and the liberation of all political prisoners. These measures were designed not to harm the Venezuelan population whose plight the EU wishes to alleviate.
6. The primary responsibility for ending the crisis in Venezuela lies in the country. The EU calls upon the government to urgently restore democratic legitimacy, including through free and fair elections, and on the opposition to continue engaging in a united manner towards a negotiated solution to the current tensions, in the interest of the country. The EU reiterates its full support to regional and international efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis."

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