



ID/Panel Discussion – ID High Commissioner Human Rights on the Situation in Venezuela 55th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

BENELUX-statement, to be delivered by Luxembourg [March 19] – Geneva, Switzerland

Thank you, Mr. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Belgium, the Netherlands and my own country, Luxembourg.

We thank the High Commissioner and the OHCHR Office in Venezuela for their important work and the timely update on the worrying situation in Venezuela.

We remain deeply concerned by reports of increased pressure on civil society, the media, and arbitrary arrests of ordinary citizens and activists. The Barbados Agreement of last October offered hope to the Venezuelan people and was welcomed by the international community. We call upon all actors to fulfil the agreement and respect the right to participate in public affairs. *In* the context of the upcoming Presidential elections, we deplore the systematic crackdown on political opponents and members of the opposition.

We are deeply worried about the situation of prisoners in Venezuela. We call on the authorities to respect fundamental rights of detainees, such as access to medical care, legal assistance and contact with family members. In this regard, we want to specifically highlight the cases of Carlos Salazar and Igbert Marín.

Furthermore, we call for the immediate release of Rocio San Miguel, members of her family and of Javier Tarazona, as well as other persons arbitrarily detained. It is especially disturbing that the Venezuelan authorities suspended the OHCHR presence in the country in this context and we call for the immediate re-establishment of the office.

Mr. High Commissioner, can you elaborate on the state of civic and political space ahead of the elections this year, as well as the impact of the renewed discussion on the adoption of the proposed NGO law?