Statement by the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas

*on the situation in Venezuela*

Friday, 4 August 2017

United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas, calls on States not to interfere in the internal affairs of Venezuela and to refrain from imposing unilateral coercive measures, which only aggravate matters and may even endanger peace in the region.

“Whereas advisory services and technical assistance to countries in difficulty should be encouraged as a constructive approach to resolving differences,” stated Mr. de Zayas, “the threat or imposition of sanctions is destructive of a democratic and equitable international order and incompatible with the duty of States to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of other States.”

Mr. de Zayas further drew attention to the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter and countless UN Resolutions, including the General Assembly’s Declaration on Friendly Relations, Resolution 2625, which stipulates *inter alia* “States shall conduct their international relations in the economic, social, cultural, technical and trade fields in accordance with the principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention.”

It bears repeating that the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document stressed that “democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing,” and pointed out that “while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy.” The on-going campaign of some countries to destabilize a democratically elected government and to delegitimize the electoral process in Venezuela goes counter to the goals of the World Summit to promote both democracy and development and further debilitates the efforts of the Venezuelan people to solve their differences by themselves, through open dialogue among the parties without foreign interference. In particular the threat of or imposition of sanctions against Venezuela and against individual persons in Venezuela counters customary international law on non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and further aggravates the economic problems of the country, many of which are attributable to foreign interventions.

The Independent Expert calls for the adoption of prompt reconciliation measures, including the investigation of deaths occurring during the electoral campaign. Respect for the rule of law and for all human rights enshrined in the ICCPR and ICESCR by all stakeholders are essential to re-establish social peace. Pursuant to article 21 of the ICCPR the right of all persons to *peaceful* assembly must be honoured.

In conclusion, the Independent Expert calls on all stakeholders in Venezuela to dialogue in good faith in preparation of the scheduled presidential elections in 2018. The Expert condemns media disinformation and agitation. Foreign interventions of whatever kind will only aggravate the situation and violate the right of Venezuelans to determine their own future. The differences between the parties can only be resolved through dialogue and consensus-building with full respect of the rule of law, sovereignty and self-determination.