

Speech: Addressing the manmade humanitarian crisis in Venezuela

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President.

As is clear, the United Kingdom voted in favour of the American text and against the Russian one. I think the fact that the Russian resolution failed, whereas the American text was vetoed, accurately pinpoints the unease that very many members of the United Nations feel about the situation in Venezuela and how untenable it is for it to continue. We were content, Mr President, to vote in favour of the US text because it addressed important issues in Venezuela about which we too are concerned. It emphasised the importance of establishing the necessary conditions for a new and credible electoral process in Venezuela.

Despite the Russian polemic, the US text did not seek a permanent transfer of power to a different leader; it called for free and fair elections and we believe in that also, Mr President. We believe that the Maduro presidency is illegitimate and the National Assembly President Juan Guaido is constitutionally interim president of Venezuela until credible, free and fair elections can be held. And these elections, Mr President are conditions on the part of transition to peace.

Secondly, the resolution acknowledged deep concern about violence and the use of excessive force by the security forces in Venezuela against unarmed, peaceful protesters, including those, Mr President, actively engaged in getting humanitarian assistance into the country to the benefit of ordinary citizens. There's clear evidence that liberty and justice have been systematically dismantled by Maduro's regime.

And finally, Mr President, the text addressed the economic collapse brought about by Maduro's corrupt policies which led to the humanitarian crisis that has so far forced over three and a half million Venezuelans to leave their country for other countries in the region. This has placed huge strain on the social services of their neighbours.

We would like to thank the United States as penholder on this resolution for drafting a text that properly recognises the gravity of the situation in Venezuela. There are limits, Mr President, as to how far a government can inflict damage and suffering on its own people.

Turning to the Russian text, the United Kingdom was compelled to vote against the resolution proposed by the Russian Federation today. We fundamentally disagreed with its content because it pretended that there were threats to use force against the territorial integrity and political independence of Venezuela. There have been no threats to Venezuela's political independence or territorial integrity.

Secondly, the resolution focused on alleged attempts to intervene in

Venezuela's domestic affairs. As we have seen, Mr President, the crisis has spilled far beyond Venezuela's borders and the current situation in Venezuela represents a clear threat to peace and security in the region.

Thirdly, the text included a selective reading of the UN Charter – one that we have heard before. It presents a biased interpretation of the events unfolding in Venezuela and its support of the Maduro regime. A full reading of the UN Charter, Mr President, would show that the Security Council should cooperate to address the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

Finally, Mr President, the text failed to explicitly recognise two crucial aspects of the situation in Venezuela. The humanitarian crisis – I should say the man-made humanitarian crisis – brought about by corrupt economic policies and the need for free, fair and credible elections.

Thank you, Mr President.

Right of Reply by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council on Venezuela

There's a number of lurid claims that were made against my country. I'd like to respond very quickly. Firstly, Mr President, to say that I have sent you a letter – in response to allegations made by the Venezuelan representative – that sets out very clearly British policy towards his country. And it's very much on the lines of the European Union policy which we heard about earlier. I think the second thing Mr President is to say that if theft and plunder of the Venezuelan people is occurring it is because of their own government. It's not because of mine. Thank you.