

Statement by the Spokesperson on the Election to a Constituent Assembly in Venezuela

The events of the past 24 hours have reinforced the European Union's preoccupation for the fate of democracy in Venezuela.

The European Union deeply regrets the violence and unrest during yesterday's election. It expresses condolences and its sympathy to the families and friends of all those killed. All sides must refrain from violence. The European Union condemns the excessive and disproportionate use of force by security forces. The Government of Venezuela has a responsibility to ensure respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and the right to peacefully demonstrate.

Venezuela has democratically elected and legitimate institutions whose role is to work together and to find a negotiated solution to the current crisis. A Constituent Assembly, elected under doubtful and often violent circumstances cannot be part of the solution. It has increased division and will further de-legitimise Venezuela's democratically elected institutions.

The President and the government have a special responsibility to restore the spirit of the constitution and to re-establish the trust lost by their attempt to set up divisive parallel institutions.

The fate of democracy in Venezuela is a legitimate concern to all countries in the region, and to Venezuela's partners across the world. In support of ongoing regional mediation efforts, the European Union will continue to seek urgent relief for the people of Venezuela and promote a political solution to the crisis.