

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Venezuela

The massive, popular demonstrations which have taken place in Venezuela over the last days have been met with indiscriminate violence from the authorities, leading to the tragic death of numerous people and many more injured and arrested.

The European Union firmly condemns these actions and offers its deep condolences to the families of the deceased.

The EU reiterates that the presidential elections last May in Venezuela were neither free, fair, nor credible, lacking democratic legitimacy. The country urgently needs a government that truly represents the will of the Venezuelan people.

The EU reiterates its full support to the National Assembly, which is the democratic legitimate body of Venezuela, and whose powers need to be restored and respected, including the prerogatives and safety of its members. We reaffirm our deep belief that a peaceful and inclusive democratic solution is the only sustainable way out of the current political impasse and the severe social crisis it has provoked.

The EU strongly calls for the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections in accordance with internationally democratic standards and the Venezuelan constitutional order. In the absence of an announcement on the organisation of fresh elections with the necessary guarantees over the next days, the EU will take further actions, including on the issue of recognition of the country's leadership in line with article 233 of the Venezuelan constitution.

The EU stands with the Venezuelan people in this critical hour, and will continue follow events closely, including at the next Foreign Ministers meeting next Thursday. The EU stands ready to act in support of an immediate and credible process of engagement, including through the immediate establishment of an International Contact Group. Contacts and coordination with regional and international partners are ongoing, and will be intensified in the coming hours.

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Weekly schedule of President Donald Tusk

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Remarks by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the joint press point with Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand

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Good to see you, Madam Prime Minister.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We had a very fruitful meeting this morning in a friendly, positive, constructive, future-oriented way and we were discussing the general level, the general quality of our relations – between New Zealand and the European Union. Our relations are excellent. We are like-minded and share the same views when it comes to international questions.

We were discussing – that is the reason why I asked Phil Hogan, our Commissioner for Agriculture to join this press conference – our future trade relations. I am of the opinion, shared if I can say so, by the Prime Minister, that we should do everything possible to conclude a trade agreement between New Zealand and the European Union in the course of this year. I would like to conclude this deal before the end of the mandate of my Commission. I am convinced, given the good spirit which did impact our discussions of today, that this is possible.

New Zealand is far on the map, but close to our hearts. I would like to tell the New Zealanders that this is something I am not saying every time. But I do think – having never been to New Zealand – that we have to put into place a win-win game which is, by the way, not a game but a strategy. There is nothing between New Zealand and the European Union which could pose problems, although the issues we have to discuss are very difficult and demanding.

Our trade relations are developing in the best way possible. We have the same ideas on the reform of the WTO. And we were discussing climate change. Not only in the margin, but this is a common goal of the European Union and of New Zealand, of myself and of the Prime Minister. So, this was a happy moment.

Ship inspection organisations – member states approve agreement with Parliament on amendment related to Brexit preparedness

The EU is adapting its legislation to ensure **legal certainty for ship operators when the United Kingdom leaves the EU**. Today, member states' ambassadors meeting in the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee approved amended rules on the assessment of ship inspection organisations, whose task it is to ensure the safety of ships and prevent marine pollution. The presidency reached a provisional agreement with the European Parliament on 21 January.

EU flag states can delegate surveys and certification of their ships to classification societies recognised by the EU. Each of these classification societies has a 'sponsor' member state, meaning the country which initially submitted the request for recognition of the organisation.

Under the current rules, the Commission assesses recognised classification societies at least every two years, and the 'sponsor' country must participate in the assessment.

The UK is the initial sponsor of two organisations recognised by the EU. Following Brexit, it will no longer be in a position to participate in the assessments for those two organisations.

The amended rules will replace the requirement that only the initial sponsor country is to participate in the assessment, with a provision allowing for the participation of any EU country which has authorised one of the recognised organisations. This will allow organisations for which the UK has acted as sponsor to continue to carry out inspections on behalf of member states.

Next steps

The agreed text will now undergo legal and linguistic finalisation. It must then be formally adopted, first by the Parliament and then by the Council. Following adoption, the regulation will be published in the EU's Official Journal. It will become applicable the day after EU law ceases to apply to the UK.

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