

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. JOAQUÍN PÉREZ AYESTARÁN,
AMBASSADOR, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE 308th MEETING OF THE “COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS
WITH THE HOST COUNTRY”**

New York, 22 March 2023

Mr. President,

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honor to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. At the outset, allow us to convey our appreciation to you for having taken into account the recommendation we made at the 304th meeting of this Committee, relating to the need for making more inclusive and transparent the dynamics for the consultations and negotiations of both the report of this Committee and the draft resolution that is annually presented to the General Assembly on this very same matter. We trust that this practice will be both continued and further enhanced in the years to come.

Mr. President,

3. The Committee on Relations with the Host Country was established with the purpose of, among others, dealing with “issues arising in connection with the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations”, as defined in resolution 2819 (XXVI), adopted by the General Assembly on 15 December 1971.
4. While this Committee has proved to be successful in addressing certain issues, particularly those referred to ensuring the protection and security of the United Nations Headquarters, of the Permanent Missions accredited to it and of their personnel, there are many other issues that still remain unresolved, despite having being on its agenda for many years. We refer, among others, to the issues of visas and their timely issuance or renewals, including the limitations posed by those of a single-entry nature; travel and movement restrictions, including on senior heads of delegations during their official visits to the United Nations Headquarters; banking; and the inviolability of diplomatic properties.



5. For over three years, the General Assembly has been vocal in demanding that, if the issues previously mentioned – all of which are not new and have actually for long been included in a routinary manner in the annual reports of this Committee – are not resolved “in a reasonable and finite period of time, serious consideration should be given to taking steps under Section 21 of the Headquarters Agreement”. The Secretary-General has even been recommended in a very explicit manner to “now give most serious consideration and take any appropriate steps under Section 21 of the Headquarters Agreement”.

Mr. President,

6. The ongoing challenges with regards to the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement, which are not of an isolated, but of a rather recurrent and systematic nature, have resulted in obstacles that continue to deliberately limit the ability of certain Member States, including some from our Group of Friends, to effectively discharge their responsibilities and, thus, fulfill the purposes of the Organization. This is, needless to say, a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly of the principle of sovereign equality of States, taking into account that this situation is **not** affecting the wider membership of the UN, but a rather small group of countries. In this context, we cannot overemphasize that the privilege of hosting the Headquarters of the United Nations shall **not** be misused for taking advantages or advancing political agendas against a particular group of countries.
7. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to redress all unresolved issues before this Committee. Nevertheless, we consider that, after what has been more than a reasonable period of time, and in absence of concrete, practical and tangible solutions to **all** the outstanding issues before this Committee, the activation of the arbitration procedure provided under Section 21 of the Host Country Agreement seems to be the only way forward to ensure both its integrity and that we can all, in line with the provisions of Section 27 of that very same Agreement, fully and efficiently discharge our responsibilities, without any discrimination or limitation, while effectively fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations.
8. Proceeding in a different manner would only embolden the continued violation of the Host Country Agreement by the Host Country and the abuse of its role as Host Country of the United Nations, including through the continuance of selective practices that are clearly based on differences with certain countries at the bilateral level.

Mr. President,

9. Let us be clear. Our request is simple: we demand from the Host Country not only its respect to the diplomatic customs, norms of international law and the principles enshrined in the founding Charter of the United Nations, but a fair and equal treatment for each and every Member State of our Organization, irrespective of the bilateral differences that may exist, and that it also fully complies with and abides by its legally binding international obligations, including those derived from the Host Country Agreement.
10. For our part, we remain committed to sparing no effort to preserve, promote and defend the prevalence and validity of the Charter of the United Nations, as we continue advocating for a comprehensive and real solution to all these pending issues, and in which this Committee has a key role to play.
11. We conclude by reiterating that time has come to proceed, without further delays, and in the interest of the United Nations and all that it embraces, with the activation of relevant steps under Section 21 of the Headquarters Agreement, in line with the mandate that the General Assembly has already entrusted on the Secretary-General by virtue of resolutions 74/195, 75/146, 76/122 and 77/144. This course of action, we insist, will ensure not only the integrity of the Host Country Agreement, in both its letter and spirit, but also that we can all fulfill the promise of the UN Charter, without exclusions or limitations deliberately imposed.

I thank you, Mr. President.