



GROUP OF FRIENDS
IN DEFENSE OF THE
CHARTER OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. WILLIAM CASTILLO, VICE-MINISTER FOR ANTI-BLOCKADE POLICIES OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON AGENDA ITEM 72, ENTITLED “STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE”, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PLENARY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 08 December 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.

Mr. President,

2. The Group of Friends considers particularly important the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance provided by the United Nations, including special economic assistance, taking into account its nature as the multilateral entity *par excellence*, and as an ethical and humanist commitment, as enshrined in the ideal that inspired the founding of our Organization back in 1945. It is because of its scope and the nature of its institutional status that all the Agencies, Funds, Programs and bodies dependent on the United Nations are called upon and obliged, for the sake of their credibility and reliability among all the actors on the international scene, and particularly States, to ensure their full adherence to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereign equality of States and national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of the States and the self-determination of the peoples.
3. Human activity based on a model of exploitation of nature and concentration of wealth has led, in recent decades, and especially in recent years, to an intensification of the destructive power of previously rare natural phenomena: far-reaching droughts and floods, cold and heat waves of great magnitude, broken biological cycles and the destruction of entire ecosystems, with the very risk that global temperatures will rise to such an extent that life is no longer sustainable. The consequences of this dramatic reality have led to millions dying as a result of these tragedies, to homelessness, to the destruction of entire cities, and to the



starvation and suffering of millions, often without the States having the capacity to respond, causing rising needs and reliance on humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

4. On the other hand, and also as a consequence of human activity and the excessive ambition of some centers of hegemonic power, for decades humanitarian emergencies have been instigated by political reasons, the search for natural resources that they do not possess in their territories; induced armed conflicts, turned into business; artificial generation of social polarization for political and economic purposes and interventionism for destabilization purposes. This breeding ground for the exacerbation of poverty and hunger, unplanned human mobility crises, with a high impact on national economies and, in sum, humanitarian emergencies resulting from a vicious cycle that, far from ending, seems to be growing and whose victims are potentially the most vulnerable populations.
5. In this context, and speaking of man-made humanitarian catastrophes, particular mention ought to be made to the current situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, where the world is witnessing in anguish and anger deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against the Palestinian people, including in Gaza, which has claimed the lives of thousands of people, including women, children and the elderly, as well as of UN and other humanitarian personnel. We call not only for an immediate ceasefire or for the increase of much-needed humanitarian assistance, but also, and most importantly, for ensuring that aid be permitted to reach all those in need, in an unimpeded and swift manner and at scale, and for protection of the humanitarian personnel to enable aid to be delivered to desperate civilians. International law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, must be upheld, not set aside and violated systematically in cases of humanitarian emergencies.
6. A third major cause of humanitarian emergencies, also of human origin, is the illegal and immoral application of unilateral coercive measures against specific countries for political reasons, which prevent the national institutions of targeted States from being fully capable of accessing international markets for food, medicines, finance, technology of all kinds, including communication and education, and ultimately with an economic impact whose victims are the populations, especially children, women, the elderly, people with disabilities and other communities, including in times of emergencies, to the detriment of national development plans, including the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as foreseen in the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

7. The Group wishes to ratify the need and importance that all humanitarian activities carried out by the United Nations System and any other entity or nation be governed by the principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Operational Independence, as established in General Assembly resolution 46/182. In addition, there shall also prevail transparency, permanent dialogue and consent of the the receiving States, which is the only way to guarantee the reliability and sustainability of all assistance.
8. In this context, while the Group recognizes the work carried out in all regions of the world by the United Nations and its specialized humanitarian agencies, it urges all its entities to continue to exercise utmost vigilance in the face of the potential, and often proven, risk that external actors, including countries and economic groups, may seek to politically instrumentalize their work, which would be detrimental to their original mission and mandate, and affect the work of humanitarian assistance in situations where it is required.
9. The Group wishes to emphasize that notions such as the “Responsibility to Protect” and “Humanitarian Intervention”, which have not been developed or agreed upon at the international level, are not a guarantee for preventing or addressing humanitarian emergencies, but can become causes of such crises, while undermining the rule of law and the role of diplomacy and cooperation in international conflicts, with dire consequences for national and regional political stability and correlating burdens on the humanitarian community.
10. To conclude, the Group of Friends recognizes the efforts made over the years by the United Nations and its agencies in the humanitarian field, with the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other agencies of the system, and appreciates the importance of increasing all efforts aimed at strengthening its coordination, the protection of its personnel in the field and all initiatives to increase dialogue and cooperation with the States in each phase of the political and operational processes of humanitarian management, as the best guarantee of the complete fulfilment of its mandate.

I thank you, Mr. President.