



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

**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 309th MEETING OF THE “COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS
WITH THE HOST COUNTRY”**

New York, 26 June 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,

1. Once again, we meet in this Committee to raise concerns over continued deficiencies in the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations. Despite having been part of the agenda of this Committee for many years, the issues of visas and their timely issuance or renewals, including the limitations posed by those of a single-entry nature; the discriminatory secondary screening processes enforced on selected diplomatic agents and their belongings; the issues related to travel and movement restrictions, including on senior heads of delegations during their official visits to the United Nations Headquarters; the issues of banking; and the issues referred to inviolability of diplomatic properties not only still persist, but in certain instances have even been exacerbated.
2. All these unresolved and repeated issue violate not only the spirit and letter of the Host Country Agreement, but also the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, as well as the provisions of Article 105 of the Charter of the United Nations.
3. For over three years now, the General Assembly has been as vocal as ever before in demanding that, if the issues previously mentioned 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”.

4. Some delegations of the Member States to our Group of Friends are significantly, continuously and systematically affected by the issues previously mentioned, which are not of an isolated nature and, in turn, have implications that seek to limit their full participation in the works carried out within the framework of the United Nations, here in New York, while affecting the exercise of functions and responsibilities at the United Nations. Needless to say, they pose obstacles and impediments that continue to deliberately limit the ability of States targeted by the Host Country in effectively discharging their responsibilities and, thus, fulfilling the purposes of the Organization, as foreseen in Section 27 of the Headquarters Agreement. For instance, recent cases have been reported of representatives having been forced to prolong their transit in a given city, due to the tardiness in the issuance of visas to attend official UN calendar meetings.
5. In this context, we regret that, despite the positions we have jointly expressed for over a year now, and despite having even dispatched a joint letter to the Secretary-General almost a year ago conveying our serious concerns on this subject, which to date remains unanswered, no representative from the Secretariat of the United Nations, at any level, has had the interest of approaching our grouping to better understand our issues or to inquire whether there may have been – or not – any improvement to such situations. This is, to say the least, very disappointing, especially taking into consideration that the Secretariat shall be at the service of Member States, and **not** the other way around.

Mr. President,

6. We highlight that the foregoing impediments, whether in the form of measures, arrangements or others, imposed by the Host Country against certain representatives from members of the United Nations, including some from our grouping, continue to negatively impact the full exercise and efficient performance of duties and responsibilities in connection with our works at the United Nations.
7. We insist that this entire situation is a clear and 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 our Organization, but a rather small group of countries, with whom, not by mere coincidence, the Host Country has well-known bilateral differences. We therefore also insist once again 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, and that the bilateral differences that there may exist between the Host Country and other States of our Organization must in **no** way result in selectiveness or interference in the manner in which the Headquarters Agreement is applied.

8. Having said that, and while we indeed recognize and appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to redress **all** unresolved issues before this Committee, we continue to 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 fully and efficiently discharge our responsibilities, without any discrimination or limitation, while effectively fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations.
9. 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.
10. And, in this context, we ought to be clear: this is an issue with multiple tracks and supposed progress on addressing it cannot be measured by alleged improvements in only one (01) of those tracks. The question of visas is a very important component of the entire issue, but there are also other equally important issues; such as, the questions of travel and movement restrictions or banking, which is the matter that, for instance, has been preventing one delegation from fulfilling its assessed contributions with the Organization and has, thus, kept its voting rights suspended for almost two (02) years, despite the fact of having the financial resources to honor its commitments. This matter must therefore be addressed comprehensively, in a balanced and equal manner, without cherry-picking, in order to avoid being misled by numbers that may give the impression of a relatively and overall good performance in matters related to the implementation of the Host Country Agreement and other relevant international legal instruments.

Mr. President,

11. Let us be clear once again. Our request remains very 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, equal and non-discriminatory 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, in good faith, and abides by its legally binding international obligations, including those derived from the Host Country Agreement and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

12. 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, without precedence or preferential treatment, and in which this Committee has a key role to play.
13. In light of all the above, we conclude by reiterating that, in our view, 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.
14. We hope that the Secretary-General is now convinced once and for all that this is the only alternative left to ensure the prevalence, particularly within the very walls of this Organization, of the principle of sovereign equality of States.

I thank you, Mr. President.