

**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 HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON THE “CULTURE OF PEACE”**

New York, 31 August 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 the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for convening this annual high-level meeting to reflect on the Culture of Peace and, more specifically, on the importance of “Promoting the Culture of Peace in the Digital Era”, an issue of crucial relevance in a world demanding greater balance, equality and cooperation between the Global South and the North for overcoming the common challenges we all have ahead as one big community with a shared future.

Mr. President,

3. The Group of Friends considers that the Culture of Peace is synonymous to and encompasses, among others, the self-determination and sovereignty of our peoples, their egalitarian economic and social development, human rights without distinction of classes or categories, as well as without politicization, weaponization or double standards of any kind, universal social justice, health and education for all, non-interference in internal affairs, cultural diversity, and believing in a world based on the values and ideals that inspired the establishment of the United Nations over 78 years ago and which today are at risk of being diluted by extremist tendencies.
4. In this context, we seize this opportunity to reject the hegemonistic and unilateral policies that affect international peace, security and stability, in a clear attempt to threaten the principles and purposes enshrined in the founding Charter of our Organization, as well as to undermine ongoing efforts towards the democratization of international relations and the strengthening of multilateralism and of a multipolar system, based, among others, on mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, as well as on respect for the principle of equal rights



and self-determination of peoples, for the rule of law, diplomacy, political dialogue, tolerance, peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity, inclusiveness, a culture of peace and non-violence, and due consideration for existing differences, all of which are essential for constructively and effectively working together on issues of common interest and concern.

Mr. President,

5. The digital space in its breadth, scope and complexity represents one of the modern manifestations that require priority attention, because of its ability to influence society, determine the course of politics and the economy, including at the local, national, regional and international levels. It could either be an arena for transforming our world as we dream it or, if not addressed properly, it could also be misused by unscrupulous groups to destroy the social fabric our nations and promote agendas of dubious nature that may even have an impact on the maintenance of peace and security. This reality obliges us to take collective political and legal action to regulate this field, particularly in the fight against actions that disrupt peace and impede economic and social development of our peoples.
6. Moreover, we consider that it is rather urgent to actively counteract disinformation, counter-information and hate speech, which in recent times have been used by unscrupulous groups to incite discord, social conflict and permanent anxiety, through the dissemination of false news, the exacerbation of ideological or religious differences, and the promotion of attacks on potentially vulnerable groups and sectors, thereby creating a breeding ground for violent extremism leading to terrorism and for the promotion of expressions of fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism and racial supremacism, as well as discrimination against Africans and Asians and their descendants, all of which are extremist ideologies that we all thought had already been overcome by humanity.
7. In addition, our Group of Friends also welcomes the adoption of the recent General Assembly resolution on “Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech”, upon which Member States recognized deep concerns on the overall rise in instances of discrimination, intolerance and violence directed against members of many religions in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, and strongly deplored all acts of violence and hatred, including in the digital context, directed against religious symbols and holy books, recognizing it as violation of international law. In this regard, we also condemn the decisions taken by authorities of certain European countries to authorize demonstrations of insults to Muslim’s holy book, as well as the continued



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instances of hatred for Islamic symbols, under the pretext of the right to freedom of speech.

Mr. President,

8. The Culture of Peace is based, among others, on the sovereign equality of States, who are the international actors *par excellence* in the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among nations. For this reason, the repeal of any unilateral coercive economic or political measure is an urgent demand that cannot be postponed, which affects the individual and collective rights of millions of people, increases poverty and inequality, restricts access to essential goods, and fosters perpetual conflict, in contravention of the very tenets contained in the Charter of the United Nations. It is an active call that the Group of Friends reiterates today as part of its permanent commitment to achieve a true peace that is a reality for all, as, otherwise, it will never be a reality for anyone.
9. In conclusion, we reaffirm our firm commitment to continue implementing the Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as with all relevant efforts of the United Nations in this area. Let us be emphatic: only through diplomacy, political dialogue and negotiation, rooted on the promise contained in the Charter of the United Nations, would we be able to achieve a far-reaching and sufficiently solid peace, which represents an inescapable and obligatory challenge that we have the duty to face responsibly and coherently as a legacy for both present and future generations.

I thank you, Mr. President.