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**Prevention of armed conflict: prevention of armed conflict**

## **Identical letters dated 20 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to address you to denounce yet another threat by the government of the United States of America to perpetrate an act of aggression against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In one of our most recent letters to the Security Council ([S/2020/337](#)), we informed you and provided relevant evidence of two facts: (a) that the application of the unilateral coercive measures illegally imposed by the government of the United States of America against Venezuela make it nearly impossible to purchase the diluents needed to thin our heavy oil and turn it into gasoline; and (b) that United States officials have publicly admitted to exerting pressure on companies to refrain from supplying gasoline to Venezuela.

Today, as part of its “maximum pressure campaign”, the coercion of the government of the United States of America is coupled with a new peril: the threat of use of military force, in this case, against five Iranian tankers that are en route to Venezuela, loaded with fuel to alleviate the current shortages that exist throughout the country.

On 14 May 2020, a senior official of the United States administration announced that President Donald Trump was considering measures that it could take in response to the shipment from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Venezuela.<sup>1</sup> Most recently, on 20 May 2020, international media reported that, on a call with Hispanic leaders, when referring to Venezuela, President Donald Trump said “We’ve got it surrounded, it’s surrounded at a level that nobody even knows, but they know. We are watching to see what happens”,<sup>2</sup> while the former Assistant to the United States President for National Security Affairs, John Bolton, declared that any opposition to United States priorities “must be met with resolve” and that Iran and Venezuela “cannot succeed”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See [www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-fuel-iran-usa-exclusive/exclusive-us-weighs-measures-in-response-to-iran-fuel-shipment-to-venezuela-source-idUSKBN22Q2RI](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-fuel-iran-usa-exclusive/exclusive-us-weighs-measures-in-response-to-iran-fuel-shipment-to-venezuela-source-idUSKBN22Q2RI).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://twitter.com/janrodriguezvt/status/1263180901577621505?s=20>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://twitter.com/ambjohnbolton/status/1262737267581505536?s=21>.



In addition, on 20 May 2020, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that, according to officials from the Trump administration, Washington could even try to confiscate the Iranian ships through a United States court proceeding called “forfeiture action” for violating “American law”; namely, the unilateral coercive measures illegally imposed on both Iran and Venezuela, and which could be applied “when the vessels stop to refuel in ports on their way back to Iran”.<sup>4</sup> This is a clear example of how the government of United States of America intends both to violate international law and to have “authority” over the sovereignty of other independent States by appealing to “legal” arguments, including its absurd and illegal notion of claiming its national laws to be universal.

In this context, it should be highlighted that this latest development occurs at a time when British-, Dutch-, French- and United States-flagged warships are surrounding the coasts of our country, with a hostile and aggressive attitude, under the guise of an alleged counter-narcotics operation, while, at the same time, threatening the illegal imposition of a naval blockade, which, under international law, is an act of war, particularly if not authorized by the Security Council, on the basis of Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, or applied pursuant to the inherent right of self-defence.

The Iranian tankers en route to Venezuela have lawfully engaged in international commerce with my country. Therefore, any threat or attempt to forbid those vessels from reaching our ports would constitute, apart from a blatant disregard for the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, a clear violation of the principles of freedom of international commerce and trade and of freedom of navigation, as well as of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) on the endorsement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

However, the government of the United States of America, which systematically shows contempt for international law and the Charter of the United Nations, with total impunity, considers that a legal commercial transaction between two sovereign nations, in this case, between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is, apart from being “a malign activity”, as described most recently by the United States Department of the Treasury, an attempt by the former to “gain a positional advantage in our neighbourhood as a way to counter U.S. interests”,<sup>5</sup> as stated by Admiral Craig Faller, Commander of the United States Southern Command, on 18 May 2020. This is nothing more than yet another demonstration by the government of President Donald Trump of its supremacist and racist vision of our Latin American and Caribbean continent under the infamous Monroe Doctrine.

In light of the above, if the United States provocations and threats are actually materialized in any form, such an action would not only constitute military armed aggression against an Iranian-flagged civilian vessel and against the Venezuelan people as a whole, but, in addition, under the current extraordinary circumstances, when humanity as a whole is grappling with the multiple and devastating impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it would also amount to a crime against humanity, considering the fact that the tankers in reference are bringing vital goods for our people.

Consequently, we have urged the Security Council to urgently adopt the measures necessary to put a complete and immediate end to the warmongering and criminal policies of the government of the United States of America against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with a view to avoiding a further escalation of

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<sup>4</sup> See [www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-seeks-ways-to-halt-irans-oil-sales-to-venezuela-11589985467](http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-seeks-ways-to-halt-irans-oil-sales-to-venezuela-11589985467).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://twitter.com/southcom/status/1262772668190900225?s=12>.

tensions, which may ultimately endanger the peace, security and stability of both our country and our region.

I respectfully request your good offices in circulating the present letter among the States Members of the United Nations for their due information and having it issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31 (a), and of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* **Samuel Moncada**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of  
the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations

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