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in Venezuela

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EU Ministers discussed the deepening political, economic and social crisis in Venezuela on 15 October at the Foreign Affairs Council. The crisis has taken a devastating toll on the people of Venezuela and negatively impacted the stability of the wider region.

The EU recalls and reaffirms its position as set out in the Council Conclusions of May 2018 which called on the Venezuelan Government to take the necessary steps to reinstate democracy, the rule of law and human rights; to restore the full constitutional powers of the national assembly; release all political prisoners, and respect and promote fundamental freedoms. The holding of free, credible and transparent elections in full respect of the Constitution remains crucial.

Following recent developments, the EU repeats its calls on for the Government to respect the immunity of the members of the National Assembly and to uphold press freedom. The EU also calls for a thorough, independent and impartial investigation to clarify the circumstances of councillor Albán's tragic death. It is the duty of the State to ensure the safety and well-being of all people in its custody.

As regards the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the EU calls on the Venezuelan Government to constructively cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The EU remains convinced that there can only be a democratic political and peaceful solution to the current crisis and rejects any initiatives that could further threaten regional security. The EU therefore underlines its commitment to use all its policy instruments to contribute to achieving such a solution and to explore, in cooperation with other international and regional partners, ways to help create the conditions that could allow for a meaningful political process, aimed at finding a peaceful way out of the current crisis.

The EU reiterates its commitment to continue monitoring closely developments on the ground and stands ready to react to any further erosion of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights.

The EU and its Member States will step up their support to national, regional and multilateral efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of the migrant crisis, as well as addressing the most urgent needs of the population inside the country. Countries in the region and their citizens should be supported in this challenging situation. This regional crisis requires regional and

global concerted responses. In this respect, the EU welcomes the appointment of Mr. Eduardo Stein as Joint Special Representative of UNHCR and IOM for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

The EU calls on the Venezuelan government to take concrete action to alleviate the impact of the crisis, including the facilitation of external cooperation to address the most urgent needs of the population.

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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Venezuela

Single-use plastic items such as plates, cutlery, straws, balloon sticks or cotton buds, will be banned in the EU under plans adopted on Wednesday. These products, which make up over 70% of marine litter, will be banned from the EU market from 2021, under draft plans approved by Parliament.

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