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To all MEP signatories of the letter on the situation in Venezuela

*Dear Colleagues,*

I would like to thank you for your letter of 31 January concerning the situation in Venezuela.

The Declaration I issued on 26 January on behalf of the European Union states very clearly the EU's shared view that "the presidential elections last May in Venezuela were neither free, fair, nor credible, lacking democratic legitimacy" and that "the country urgently needs a government that truly represents the will of the Venezuelan people". As a result, the EU reiterated on this occasion its call for the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections in accordance with internationally democratic standards and the Venezuelan constitutional order.

The EU also restated its "full support to the National Assembly, which is the democratic legitimate body of Venezuela, and whose powers need to be restored and respected, including the prerogatives and safety of its members". It stressed its "deep belief that a peaceful and inclusive democratic solution is the only sustainable way out of the current political impasse and the severe social crisis it has provoked".

The Declaration therefore indicated that "in the absence of an announcement on the organisation of fresh elections with the necessary guarantees over the next days, the EU will take further actions, including on the issue of recognition of the country's leadership in line with article 233 of the Venezuelan constitution".

This has provided the common framework on the basis of which many EU Member States have recognised Mr Guaidó as the legitimate interim President of Venezuela pending new elections. Let me stress at this point the fact that the issue of recognition of States or Governments lies firmly within the sovereign competences of individual Member States.

I nonetheless believe that, thanks to close internal coordination, the EU has been able to make it very clear to all that it is firmly backing all those who seek the restoration of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights in the country. The EU remains united on the assessment of the situation, on what is needed (free and fair presidential elections) and on how to pursue this aim (creation of political space through the international contact group and maintaining pressure).

Let me finish by thanking you for the European Parliament's continuous interest in these issues and for its support to the EU's efforts to help bring forward a peaceful, democratic outcome to the crisis in Venezuela.

Yours sincerely,

*Fulg*

Federica Mogherini