**MINISTER**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: 228**

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**Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

(1) Whether, given the breakdown of democratic processes, the ongoing human rights violations and the humanitarian aid blockade currently underway in Venezuela, the Government will continue its support for the disputed President of Venezuela, Mr Nicholas Maduro; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) what is the position of the Government regarding the ongoing human rights violations and the humanitarian aid blockade underway in Venezuela? NW238E

**REPLY:**

(1) South Africa fully subscribes to the principles of international law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, that is, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, sovereign equality and independence of all States, non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, prohibition of the threat or use of force and universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

South Africa remains concerned at the attempt by outsiders to evade Venezuela’s constitutional legal mechanisms and electoral processes. South Africa believes that any political grievances or disputes inside Venezuela should be resolved in a peaceful manner through the proper mechanisms and processes provided for in the constitution of Venezuela and its electoral laws, without external influence. This is regarded by South Africa as a standard and indeed best practice in all democracies that subscribe to the Rule of Law. South Africa also calls on all parties in Venezuela to participate in a national dialogue process to ensure unity and reconciliation, and in furtherance of a political solution to the situation.

South Africa is firmly against any attempts at undue or unconstitutional change of government in Venezuela. The UN Security Council (UNSC) should never be an instrument that validates unconstitutional changes of any Government. Instead, the UNSC should promote avenues that create an environment conducive to dialogue and cooperation that would ease the challenges and hardships faced by the people of Venezuela.

(2) South Africa echoes the statements made by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres in Davos on 24 January 2019, where he urged for a de-escalation of tensions to prevent violence. South Africa further supports the Secretary-General’s call for the “urgent need for all relevant actors to commit to inclusive and credible political dialogue to address the protracted crisis in the country, with full respect for the rule of law and human rights”. South Africa is also concerned about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the resultant migration that has taken place and the influx of Venezuelan asylum seekers to neighbouring countries. South Africa calls on the international community, as well as the relevant UN bodies to work with the Venezuelan government and its neighbours to assist those in need.

South Africa fully subscribes to the Viena Convention’s commitments on the promotion and protection of human rights as adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993 and all international laws governing humanitarian action which needs to be independent of political, military or other objectives