



JOINT STATEMENT OF THE EPP GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE ASSOCIATED MEMBERS OF THE EUROLAT ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLENARY SESSION IN MONTEVIDEO ON 19, 20 AND 21 SEPTEMBER 2016.

The EPP Group Members of the European Parliament (the largest group of the EP composed of 215 Members) jointly with associated members from sister parties of the EuroLat Assembly, on the occasion of the Plenary Session of the EuroLat Assembly, taking place in Montevideo from 19 to 21 September 2016, have issued the following statement:

1. Situation in Venezuela

We reiterate our deep concerns over the serious deterioration of the situation in Venezuela, the unbearable political, economic and social crisis, the total dismantling of the democratic system and the constant violation of the rule of law. We express our full solidarity with the Venezuelan people who are unjustly and suffering badly from the lack of essential goods, including basic food and medicine as well as increasing restrictions of democratic freedoms. In this regard, we condemn the increasing harassment, intimidation, systematic persecution and illegal arrest and detention of members of the democratic opposition such as, among others, the case of the leader Yon Goicoechea. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of political prisoners, unjustly and cruelly deprived of their liberty.

We strongly reject the attacks against the National Assembly by means of judiciary decisions that intend to annul its legislative and control competences as much as the politically-motivated administrative blockade of this public institution democratically elected by the overwhelming majority of the Venezuelan people.

Given the seriousness of the crisis and the lack of support for the Government of President Maduro, we consider a recall referendum before the end of 2016 to be the only democratic and constitutional tool to reinforce the right of the people of Venezuela to decide on their own future.

2. Peace Process in Colombia

We warmly welcome the peace process agreement which has been reached in Colombia. We express our hope that the views of the majority of the Colombian people are fully reflected and will be followed by the implementation, ensuring that the rights of all victims such as knowing the truth, memory, justice, reparation and non-repetition are guaranteed.

3. The democratic repression in Nicaragua

We strongly oppose the increasing democratic involution in Nicaragua after the fulminant and unlawful dismissal of 28 members of the democratic opposition, the intentions of President Ortega to remain in power after the spurious modification of the Constitution in the past, through the control of all the institutions, via putting an end to the separation of powers, the attempts to impose a nepotistic regime with a single political party, bundled with an unacceptable level of corruption where the Ortega family seems to be the main beneficiary. In regard to the presidential elections scheduled for November, we consider the opposition members being denied to run for the elections as a lack of democratic principles which has been strongly criticised by international organisations such as the OAS and the EU, namely a lack of transparency and democratic guarantees in the electoral process. We regret that no international observation invitation has been issued due to the previous critics towards the ruling party of Ortega.

4. Bi-regional strategic partnership

We strongly support the ongoing negotiations for the early conclusion of an Association Agreement between the EU and Mercosur.

We believe that the election result in Argentina, the change of the Brazilian presidency and Venezuela's pro tempore presidency of Mercosur, are evidence of an unequivocal will to advance in the search of an ambitious and, at the same time balanced, agreement beneficial to both sides, which enhances economic growth, job creation, social development and cooperation, the reduction of tariffs, new opportunities for investment and financial transactions resulting in the creation of a stable legal framework ensuring the highest level of consumer and environmental protection. However, in order to reach a fair and balanced agreement in the near future, the negotiations must take into account the most sensitive issues on both sides, if necessary bundled with compensation mechanisms for the most affected sectors.

We also welcome Ecuador's change of mind and its decision to join the Multiparty Trade Agreement (EU, Colombia and Peru), and the modernisation of the EU-Mexico and EU-Chile agreements in force, which have been operating very successfully but require continual updating.

With regard to the renewal of our relations with Cuba, we consider that progress shall not only be achieved in economic and commercial sectors, but also in the political and social sphere, mainly in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Concerning the recent electoral process in Peru, we recognise the civic maturity and democratic patterns manifested by the Peruvian citizens as well as both candidates in the second electoral round in June. We call on the government of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski and the democratic, majority opposition in the Parliament, led by Keiko Fujimori, to conclude the necessary agreements ensuring stability, growth, prosperity and good governance in Peru.

We reiterate our appreciation for the democratic development of the referendum held [on 21 February](#) in Bolivia concerning a proposal for constitutional reform aimed at increasing the number of consecutive presidential terms. We congratulate the Bolivian people for the high degree of civility and democratic maturity and express our hopes that the Bolivian authorities will fully respect the clear mandate given by their citizens. We deeply regret the Bolivian child law which is in contradiction to all international law and conventions, and radical Left groups' attempts in the European Parliament to justify and protect the legislation which goes against children's rights.

EPP Group signatories of the statement:

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