**Committee**: Venezuelan National Assembly

**Delegate**: Cilia Flores

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**Security and Safety in Venezuela:**

Venezuela is in trouble. Citizens needing to put food on the table have been pushed to the edge to do whatever they have to to bring money home. Methods of this include fraudulent currency exchanges, and violent crimes. Police are either being killed or bribed to the point where 9 of every 10 murders go unsolved. This failure to enforce justice has led to a disrespect for the law and a belief of impunity amongst criminals. A main issue lies in the foundation of law enforcement: the police. With the low wages that Venezuelan police are receiving, it is no surprise that even some of the most devoted law enforcers can be bribed by cartels and gangs. Finding funds to increase the wages for these officers will pay back in loyalty, and add incentive to keep the flow of police officers coming out of the academy high, after rates have been dropping due to extreme rates of violence against police. Chief Commissioner Francisco Escalona has pointed out that at least four times as many officers are needed to properly police the most crime infested areas of large cities, and higher wages can be a perfect solution to recruiting more police, as well as encouraging fidelity to the state for officers already on the force. Another issue facing police is the affair of firearms. Since all firearms not held by bodyguards, militants, or police are banned, criminals retain a shortage of these weapons, and target off-duty police to murder for their firearms. This issue needs to be addressed with either a replacement of police weaponry with an alternative method of protection and enforcement (taser, pepper spray, riot guns etc.), or a heavily guarded weapon depository for police to log-in weapons when going off-duty. This will negate the targeting of off-duty officers, as well as choke out the availability of firearms for criminals.

Another part of the problem lies in the disconnect between the people of Venezuela and police forces. In order to catch criminals and take down organized crime, a partnership between civilians and police must be formed. Rather than wait for the people to turn against these local criminals after a tragic event (like what happened in Colombia with Escobar), anti-organized -crime propaganda should be spread, and a special task force should be created to target and take down these large criminal enterprises. With civilian informants on the inside, police in the area, and special forces/military as back-up, organized crime cannot prosper. Lastly, the social divisions endangered by economic crisis, forces Venezuelan people into extreme wealth or poverty, and must be reversed. Poor people resort to crime out of necessity, and although organized crime is a large problem in Venezuela, smaller crimes will not happen if they have no need to exist in the first place.

**Venezuela’s Economic Crisis:**

Venezuela’s economy is a mess. The economic crisis is the root of all of the country’s problems. Socio economic differences push the lower class to crime out of necessity, and drive political wedges deeper. This dissimilarity of groups is contrary to the socialist platform that Venezuela has prospered upon, and must be reversed. A large source of the problem can be found in the laws regarding trade. Not only should Venezuela amend their laws restricting and complicating the exporting of domestic goods, but part of the problem also lies in other countries. The United States of America has imposed economic sanctions on Venezuela, and the harmful effects have been felt for years. As disagreeable as they may be, political pressure must be applied to the trading giant, The United States of America, to respect Venezuela’s sovereignty, and repeal these sanctions in order for Venezuela to begin to heal. After Chavez supplied discounted oil to low-income American families, the United States should pay their dues and return the duty of care to help raise the lower end of Venezuela’s wealth spectrum. Although straightening out the Americans can have a helpful effect on working towards solving the economic crisis, the problem can be solved internally. The Venezuelan government needs to raise funds by taxing the rich more, similar to tax programs existing in Colombia, and use these Bolivars to fund socialist programs to bring the lower end of the income distribution specter higher. Once this has started, the government can slowly start to phase out energy subsidies. The money saved from this can be turned around and invested into an expansion of the Tarjeta Misiones Socialistas cards, so as to help subsidize food and essential items on a large scale. This money is now in the hands of the poor, and available for use to purchase goods that previously would have been straining to buy. This new ease will allow for more floating capital to go towards spurring local business, as it is basic economics that the more money people have to spend, the healthier the economy’s growth. Giving a larger financial break to the poor through TMS cards will supply this capital to be spent by the people and encourage financial growth, all while bringing the upper and lower classes just a little closer together, and closing that social gap. Venezuela can also take newly freed funds from the stopping of subsidized energy and invest in infrastructure. This is one of the most effective ways to create blue collar jobs and grow local businesses, but also might help with the crime issues. According to the broken-window theory of crime, a cleaner city with healthier infrastructure will lead to decreased crime rates. Finally, the Venezuelan government can mitigate the effect that huge inflation has had on the economy over past years by lowering fixed exchange rates, and by protecting wages from inflation (something that has not been done since inflation began to skyrocket over four years ago). Competitive low rates will beat out black market rates, and making small adaptations to the fixed exchange rate based on a supply/demand basis will weed out these black market rates and give back control to the government over currency exchange, and in turn, trade.

**Social Division and Venezuelan Politics:**

Present-day Venezuelans are lost. The charismatic Chavez brought many together Venezuelans together, but his passing has left them lost, leading to heavy crime, social unrest, and a crippling economic crisis. Venezuelans have been mislead by venturous capitalist politicians, who pray on the misfortune of the vulnerable as a time of uncertainty, and try to lead these people away from the utopian socialist state that they had so recently prospered in. Members of the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática coalition claim to be able to bring democracy, human rights, and justice to Venezuela, however, it was under Bolivarian opposition that Venezuela previously suffered, and under Chavista that it was reborn. The anecdotal evidence of Venezuela’s suffering as a nation right now cannot be attributed to Maduro’s rule, but rather to mistakes that the Venezuelan government made in the past, married with an unfortunate economic dowry felt across many nations. While GPPSB has been offering opportunities for citizens to access government funds for local projects and businesses to spark employment and entrepreneurial spirit to kick-start the economy, MUD has been organizing violent anti-government rallies, and disregarding laws for something as simple as a prohibition on drones and aircraft during rallies. It is an uphill battle for a government to try and depolarize its country’s political ambitions and merge classes to mitigate social unrest, while groups such as the MUD continue to spark revolution and work against it’s own government; distracting efforts that could be put towards the unification of a country, rather than the prevention of a coup d’état. MUD needs to work together with the GPPSB to focus on saving a country now, rather than worrying about restoring it to a previous political hue that was renounced by its own people. A good course of action would be to combine efforts to incentivize growth in the healthcare sector: current conditions in hospitals are appalling, with brain surgeons having to complete surgeries by the flashlight on their cell phone. It was discovered that 80% of vital medications in cities such as Caracas were completely unavailable, or in critically low supply. Incentivizing growth in healthcare will not only benefit the economy, but will also improve quality of life to Venezuelan citizens and decrease crime, as these necessary medications that were previously stolen are now available to more citizens. Healthcare is a huge item on the MUD agenda, and working cooperatively on this sector is an first stepping stone to a mutually beneficial future between the MUD and the GPPSB. Venezuela’s current democratic state is its strongest, and the country must settle before any lasting changes are made to its constitution. En terse, Venezuela cannot move forward until it’s parties can learn to work together, as a marriage of politics will echo into a unity of the people.