



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR-PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA,
HECTOR CONSTANT ROSALES**

54TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

**Side event by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact
of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human
rights, Alena Douhan**

**IMPACT OF UNILATERAL SANCTIONS ON HEALTH-RELATED
SDGS**

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(Check against delivery)

Thank you, Professor Douhan,

We thank you for organizing this side event within the framework of your efficient and brave mandate as Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.

There are already numerous resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, in which “States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not under international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.”¹

However, some hegemonic countries continue to adopt and increase the imposition of these measures as a weapon of political and economic pressure against sovereign States to force changes that favor their interests.

There should be no doubt about the devastating impact of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) on the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development



¹ Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly

Goals (SDGs), and especially on the right to health of people in the target countries, which is why I welcome the topic that has been selected for this event.

We commend the recent report presented by the Special Rapporteur devoted to this issue, which highlights the shameful regression of countries that are victims of UCMs in the fulfillment of the SDGs related to poverty reduction, food security and access to health care, among others.

The report reflects the complexity of the framework of the UCMs, mainly when applied by the private sector and large corporations through the so-called over-compliance, which is the most dangerous aspect of the illegal sanctions because it is a subjective and uncontrollable phenomenon, derived from a unilateral decision with devastating effects.

Dear colleagues,

While I would like to develop the approach of cruelty, illegality and criminality of unilateral coercive measures more extensively, I have the moral and political obligation to offer examples that allow the understanding of their impact on

the ground. And, my country's reality offers enough cases to understand why the Government of Venezuela has decided to typify the UCMs as crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court.

Between 2015 and 2023, more than 20 illegal “sanctions” were directed to the health sector, with actions such as blocking resources and bank transfers for the acquisition of equipment, supplies and medicines, including vaccines. Between 2017 and 2020, medication distribution in the country fell by more than 60%.

The world-renowned Children's Cardiology Hospital performed more than 1,200 free surgeries on babies and children with congenital heart disease in 2012. That figure dropped to less than 200 during the hard years of the illegal sanctions due to the refusal of suppliers to sell spare parts, perform maintenance or update software to high-tech equipment.

Furthermore, serious impediments have been imposed on bank transfers to comply with health contracts and agreements that are in force, without being able to honor the disbursement clauses of advance payments for the purchase of

anti-tuberculosis drugs, hospital drugs and drugs for chronic diseases, laboratory and blood bank reagents, osmosis plant, hemodialysis and lack of supplies for the reactivation and strengthening of the national blood products company "Quimbiotec".

Moreover, large transnational pharmaceutical laboratories have closed down operations in the country, leaving the national drug market without drugs, with wide-ranging effects on the population and, in some cases, difficult to replace, increasing the cost of access to medicines, especially those used to treat rare diseases.

In 2017, Citibank refused to receive Venezuelan funds for the importation of 300 thousand doses of insulin, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued an alert against Venezuelan financial transactions to prevent payments for food and medicines approved by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Another specific case is that of Venezuelan patients destined for bone marrow transplants. The Venezuelan company Citgo, still kidnapped by the United States, provided the resources to

channel all the subsidies offered to patients with complex diseases who needed to be transferred to other countries such as Italy and Argentina, which directly affected 52 patients who were waiting for transplants.

In 2017, another illegal and confiscatory action by the Novo Bank of Portugal meant the seizure of more than 1.7 billion dollars destined for the purchase of medicines and food due to the policy of “maximum pressure” on Venezuela. By exercising legal actions before the Portuguese justice system, we are recovering those resources, but not the lives of those who died under this aggression.

Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO COVAX mechanism notified Venezuela of the withholding of money intended to pay for vaccines by the UBS bank. Likewise, one of the most recent consequences of the UCMs has been the blocking of the purchase of spare parts for electron microscopes that have numerous medical applications, including neonatal screening, among other things, in the visualization of the structure and behavior of viruses, too small to be seen with optical microscopes.

Dear friends,

I wanted to illustrate briefly the magnitude of UCMs in Venezuelan health care. Fortunately, thanks to my government's efforts, the patience and understanding of my people and the cooperation of countries of the Global South, we have guaranteed access to health care. We must continue denouncing the atrocities of the UCMs until they disappear because they are a synonym for ignominy and imperialism and represent a real obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights.

Thank you