

**Written submission by the World Peace Council (WPC) to the
UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 3rd cycle, 2022**

1. The U.S. imposed economic, commercial and financial sanctions on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are a main obstacle to the full implementation of human rights for the Venezuelan people as they severely restrict the importation of food, medicines and other necessities. International, U.S.-dominated banks and financial institutions refuse to make money transfers on behalf of the Venezuelan government, making it almost impossible for Venezuela to acquire goods on the international markets.

2. In addition, mainstream media reporting on Venezuela - often misleading and one-sided - does not accurately reflect the reality of life for Venezuelans. On the one hand, the mainstream media hardly covers the negative impact of the economic sanctions on human rights in Venezuela. On the other hand, the mainstream media does not report on the social and economic achievements of the government of Venezuela in cooperation with civil society organizations in Venezuela (see for example Alan Mcleod, *Bad News from Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting*, published by Routledge Focus on Communication and Society in 2018).

3. In April of 2019, the World Peace Council organized an international solidarity mission to Venezuela. During the trip, delegates had firsthand contact with residents and made visits to key centers of civic involvement. The delegates learned about the achievements of Venezuelain the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Theme: D7 Right to participation in public affairs and right to vote

4. External experts including the independent Council of Electoral Specialists of Latin America (CEELA) have repeatedly confirmed Venezuela's automated voting system to be one of the safest worldwide. Venezuela's National Election Council (NEC) regularly invites international organizations and civil society organizations to Venezuela to observe the elections. In the past years, the European Union and the U.S. have systematically ignored or refused the invitation, preemptively declaring elections in Venezuela to be illegal.

5. 1,500 international observers attended the December 6, 2020 parliamentary elections in Venezuela. They could observe every step in the election process, from the installation of the polling stations, the verification of the functionality of the electronic voting system, the voting process on election day, the counting of votes and the communication of results to the NEC data center in Caracas. The members of the polling stations are drawn from among the people on the electoral register, which also includes opposition members.

6. In addition to institutions of representative democracy, the government of Venezuela has implemented policies and legislation promoting and facilitating the active participation of the population in decision-making processes. Through communal councils (*consejos comunales*) and communes (*comunas*), the residents of Venezuela - independently of their nationality - actively participate in resolving the problems affecting their communities.

7. Communal councils comprise 200-400 households in metropolitan areas, 20 households in rural areas and 15 households in indigenous areas. The Venezuelan government has passed several laws, including the Law on Communes (*Ley Orgánica de Comunas*), the Law on People's Power (*Ley Orgánica del Poder Popular*) and the Law on the Communal Economic System (*Ley Orgánica del Sistema Económico Comunal*) to allow for communal councils to federate and join together with factories, service enterprises and farms to build communes (*comunas*).

8. As of September 2020, there were 45,095 communal councils and 3,230 communes in Venezuela. To strengthen participation in decision-making processes for all Venezuelans, Venezuela's National Assembly passed two legislative projects in the spring of 2021 promoting the building of communal cities (*Ley Orgánica de Ciudades Comunales*) and the creation of a national parliament of communes (*Ley Orgánica del Parlamento Comunal*).

Theme: D43 Freedom of opinion and expression

9. In an article published on May 20, 2019, U.S.-based media watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) shows that private television subscribers in Venezuela rose from 17% in 2000 to 68% in 2015. Top satellite provider Direct TV controls 44% of the paid subscription market, offering plans from international news networks such as Fox News, CNN and BBC, which are notorious for their anti-Bolivarian news coverage.

10. Article 58 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela states the right of the Venezuelan people to appropriate, truthful and impartial information, without censorship. To counter misinformation and disinformation on Venezuela by the national and international mainstream media and guarantee the people's constitutional right to truthful information, the Government of Venezuela has implemented legislation to promote community-based media made for the people and by the people.

11. Article 1 of "The People's Power Communication Act" (*Ley de la comunicación del poder popular*) of 2015 describes the objective of the law as guaranteeing the right to information and the full development of the people's communication abilities and creative powers, which are considered fundamental human rights by the Venezuelan Constitution.

12. Article 28 of the 2002 regulation on non-profit, public service community radio and television stations (*Reglamento de radiodifusión sonora y televisión abierta comunitarias de servicio público, sin fines de lucro*) states that at least 70% of community radio and TV programs must be produced by the community.

13. On April 16, 2019, the Swiss delegation participating in the WPC international solidarity mission to Venezuela met with representatives of Terra TV, an independent, community-based audiovisual media organization founded in August 2018 by peasants from all over Venezuela. Terra TV teaches the skills of audiovisual media production to peasants and their families.

14. In 2019, Terra TV produced several short documentaries of women workers in Venezuela. Mardelis is one of the portrayed women. Mardelis is a literacy teacher with Mission Robinson and an organizer with several social programs implemented by the government of Venezuela. She lives in the town of Boconito in the state of Portuguesa. In the documentary Mardelis tells the story of how she and a group of women learned how to produce the bricks the bricklayer used to build her home along with other materials provided by the government.

Theme: E21 Right to an adequate standard of living - general

15. Article 82 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela guarantees every citizen the right to a decent, safe and clean home. As of July 2021, 3.6 million homes have

been built and given to low-income families in Venezuela through the government's Great Housing Mission (*Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela GMVV*). In May of 2019, the United Nations has recognized Venezuela as a leader in guaranteeing peoples' right to housing at the first UN Habitat-Assembly taking place in Nairobi, Kenya.

16. On April 15, 2019, the Swiss delegation participating in the WPC international solidarity mission to Venezuela visited a community-based housing project in the neighborhood of Antímano in Caracas that was planned, designed and built by 130 families with the assistance of GMVV. The materials, tools and equipment as well as professional expertise needed for the construction work were provided by the government through the GMVV. The housing project includes 137 homes, a day-care center for children ("Simoncito"), a medical center ("Barrio Adentro"), a community garden, a cultural center, a radio station, a library as well as a bakery that employs 12 people from the housing project.

17. During their visit, members of the delegation were welcomed by Edith and her daughter in their apartment. Edith's daughter is in a wheelchair. Their apartment on the first floor in one of the buildings of the housing project is wheelchair-accessible.

Theme: E22 Right to Food

18. The economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed on Venezuela by the US-government, the European Union and Switzerland severely restrict Venezuela's access to international food markets. To guarantee the right to food for the Venezuela people (SDG goal #2), the Bolivarian government set up community-run distribution centers of subsidized food called Local Committees of Supply and Production (CLAP). As of March 2021, 36,135 CLAP monthly delivered subsidized food boxes to over 7 million families in Venezuela.

19. On April 15, 2019, the Swiss delegation participating in the WPC international solidarity mission to Venezuela visited the CLAP of the communal council Mini Parque La Cruz in Caracas' Sucre neighborhood, an area covering over 300 households. Volunteers of the community served run door-to-door canvasses to inquire about the residents' food needs and specific diets and organize the transport and distribution of the CLAP boxes.

20. The CLAP boxes distributed to residents of the Sucre neighborhood on April 15, 2019 contained corn flour, pasta, lentils, tuna, sugar, oil and other basic foods. Elderly people,

pregnant women and families with small children were served first. The CLAP food boxes protect the Venezuelan population from shortages and massive food price increases caused by the economic war headed by the U.S. on Venezuela.

21. The Venezuelan government pays special attention to the prevention and reduction of child malnutrition resulting from the economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed on Venezuela. 23,800 schools in Venezuela offer free meals to 5.5 million children in the school system. In April of 2021, the Government of Venezuela signed an agreement with the UN World Food Program for providing food assistance to 1.5 million students by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Theme: E41 Right to Health - General

22. Articles 83 - 85 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela guarantee the right to universal, free-of-charge public health care to the Venezuelan people. The economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed on Venezuela severely limit Venezuela's access to medicine, vaccines, medical equipment and other basic health care necessities, daily putting at risk the lives of thousands of Venezuelan children, women and men.

23. The worldwide Covid-19 pandemic has made the cruel character of the sanctions even more visible. In June 2021, the Swiss bank UBS blocked a payment of 10 million USD made by the Venezuelan government to the COVAX mechanism to buy Covid-19 vaccines for the Venezuela population.

24. To guarantee the right to health to the Venezuelan population, the Government of Venezuela has promoted the creation of a public health care system based on the communes, local community-based entities of self-governance that allocate decision-making power and material resources directly to the people in the community.

25. One example is the commune Altos de Lídice in Caracas' La Pastora neighborhood, composed of 5,190 residents, 1,000 of whom are children. The commune has a 100% health coverage; every single resident has access to free health care. Teams of volunteers do door-to-door canvasses to all neighborhood households to inquire about the health needs of residents, distribute medicine to residents who cannot leave their homes, join doctors during home visits to sick residents and monitor sick residents. Health committees set up communal drug stores

for the distribution of medicine to the people of the neighborhood and organize vaccine and prevention campaigns to protect residents from specific health issues.

26. Particular attention is given to the 1,000 children in the community. Health committees check the health of each single child and keep track of undernourishment and overweight to make sure the affected children receive the necessary care.

27. Venezuela's community-based health care system has saved countless Venezuelan lives during the Covid-19 pandemic despite the increased economic, commercial and financial sanctions. With 11.3 deaths per 100,000 residents (John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center, July 7, 2021), Venezuela is among the countries with the lowest number of casualties related to Covid-19 worldwide. For comparison, there are 184.59 casualties per 100,000 residents in the U.S.

28. Health teams canvass all households in affected areas for mass testing. Residents who test positive are brought to specific centers for isolation or transferred to a hospital if necessary. Every step of their care process is free of charge, including the food and the medicine.

29. The online-platform *Sistema Patria* set up by the government provides assistance in detecting infected individuals and providing them the necessary care. People with Covid-19-symptoms can register online to receive a home visit by a medical team who will test the person and, in the case they're positive, transfer them to a hospital.

30. Households in shut down areas receive food, drinking water and gas through the CLAP system. The commune's work brigades disinfect public spaces. Community-run factories produce masks for their population.

Theme: F14 Participation of women in political and public life

20. Women are a majority of leaders in Venezuela's civil society organizations. 70% of organizers and leaders in communal councils, communes and social programs are women.

Theme: F39 Youth

20. On April 14, 2019, the Swiss delegation participating in the WPC international solidarity mission to Venezuela visited the community Center "Gran Base de Misiones de Paz 'Hugo

Chavez" in the Catia neighborhood of Caracas. The Center provides equipment for sports, including boxing, fencing, basketball, table tennis and more, free-of-charge for youth and children from low-income families. The Center also serves free meals to children from low-income families.

21. The WPC urges the UN Human Rights Council to recognize Venezuela's achievements in the implementation of fundamental human rights, in particular SDGs #1 (eradication of poverty), #2 (end hunger and achieve food security), #3 (ensure healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages) and #5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) in the face of the economic war waged on Venezuela by the United States, the European Union and Switzerland. An immediate end to the illegal economic, commercial and financial sanctions against Venezuela is essential to fully guaranteeing the Venezuelan people the full enjoyment of their human rights.