**Universal Periodic Review 22 – Venezuela**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

The Netherlands thanks Venezuela for its comprehensive report and for addressing advance questions. We also welcome the establishment of the National Human Rights Council and the creation of the National Human Rights Plan (2016-2019).

In the context of this UPR, the Netherlands recommends Venezuela:

1. Firstly, to ensure the right to freedom of opinion and expression for all journalists and media groups, including by effectively investigating allegations of intimidation and attack, and by prosecuting perpetrators[[1]](#footnote-1).

2. Secondly, to take steps to ensure the independence and impartiality of judges and prosecutors, under all circumstances and in all cases, including by remedying the provisional status of the majority of judges and prosecutors[[2]](#footnote-2).

The current political situation including the state of emergency puts pressure on freedom of expression. In this regard, the Netherlands is worried about a rise in arbitrary arrests to prevent the conduct and publication of investigative journalism.

The Netherlands takes note of the concerns raised by the Human Rights Committee about the lack of autonomy, independence and impartiality of the judiciary. The majority of judges are not tenured. As they have a provisional status they can be appointed and removed on a discretionary basis.

In closing, the Netherlands wishes to commend both government and opposition for having avoided a lethal escalation of violence during the recent demonstrations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

1. A/HRC/WG.6/26/VEN/2, Compilation of UN information para. 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. HRC (2015), para. 15. <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhssbM7JCwZtFkfxb2j9CZsrncbCJTZg7FHMeF5ZKobh7v6BNh7YSs9wUKw7ySny41o4Us2cgRtSJFYiPrt6%2bdDT2Tc3gLoD4uG4tbukZp0bMy> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)