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Mr President,

New Zealand welcomes the delegation from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Human Rights Council. New Zealand notes the progress that has been made since Venezuela’s first URP in October 2011, including ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2013. The situation overall, however, remains concerning and has been exacerbated by the ongoing economic crisis.

New Zealand welcomes Venezuela’s National Human Rights Plan and **recommends** that Venezuela develop and make public clear indicators to monitor progress in the Plan’s implementation and allocate necessary resources to support implementation.

New Zealand **recommends** that Venezuela ensures that no one is detained arbitrarily and that all persons who are charged with an offense have access to a fair and impartial trial, while ensuring the independence of the judiciary. Further to this, New Zealand **recommends** the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Freedom of expression remains a major challenge and New Zealand **recommends** that Venezuela take steps to ensure the right to freedom of expression including to ensure that journalists and media workers can carry out their work independently while protecting their well-being.

Prison conditions remain a serious concern. New Zealand **recommends** that Venezuela ensure that all prisoners are provided with the minimum standards of humane treatment and that the conditions of all prisons and detention centres meet international human rights standards, including the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Thank you Mr President.