



Voting in Venezuela.
Election of the
National Constituent
Assembly. July 30,
2017.

Sends letter to Secretary General Antonio Guterres

VENEZUELA INVITES THE UN TO SEND OBSERVERS TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In compliance with the Agreements of the Dialogue Table of the Dominican Republic, as announced by President Nicolás Maduro, the National Electoral Council (CNE) of Venezuela has delivered to Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, a invitation to the General Secretariat of the UN to send a high-level delegation of companions and observers to the presidential electoral process next April 22. The communication was delivered through the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry directly to the Office of the Secretary General by the ambassador of Venezuela to the UN, Samuel Moncada in the city of New York.

In the letter, the president of the Electoral Power, Tibisay Lucena, proposes to the Secretary General that said delegation be lead by the former Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and that he may participate on election day and in all

audits and tests of the electoral system. The president of the Electoral Power in Venezuela said that UN delegation will be able to verify the transparency of the electoral process and the deep democratic conviction of the Venezuelan people

Bellow the text of the letter:

Caracas, February 16th, 2018

*H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary General of the
Organization of the United Nations
New York, -*

His Excellency, Secretary General,

It is a pleasure for me to address to you, His Excellency on the occasion to inform you that the Presidential elections for the 2019-2025 term are expected to be held on Sunday, April 22nd, 2018.

In this regard, on behalf of the Electoral Branch of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I hereby would like to extend my warm invitation to you to send an Elections Accompaniment and Observation Delegation to witness the election process, as well as the set of audits planned in the electoral schedule, which encompass all the components of the automated voting system. This shall be a meaningful opportunity to verify the transparency of the electoral process and the deep democratic conviction of the Venezuelan People.

It should also be noted that this request is in accordance with what was stated in the negotiation process of the Peace Agreement and for Peaceful Coexistence in Venezuela, resulted after several meetings between the National Government and the Venezuelan Opposition within the framework of the dialogue roundtable that took place in the Dominican Republic.

Taking into account the principal role as facilitator of His Excellency Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, former president of the Government of Spain, I would respectfully suggest his name to perform the role of Coordinator of such Delegation.

Being certain that I can count on your positive answer, I take advantage of the occasion to renew to His Excellency the assurances of my highest and distinguished considerations.

TIBISAY LUCENA RAMIREZ
*President of the Electoral National Council
of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

ALL ABOUT ELECTORAL ACCOMPANIMENT AND OBSERVATION IN VENEZUELA



2017. Companions and electoral observers in Venezuela

The Constitutional Character of Participation in Venezuela

According to the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Venezuela's democracy is participatory and protagonistic, which means that it promotes the direct participation of the people and of citizens in different public management and decision-making processes as essential values of the democratic life and in all the processes leading to the exercise of the right to vote.

The Electoral Power as a Public Power of State Government

The Electoral Power is one of the five branches of Government that constitute the structure of the Venezuelan State. The National Electoral Council (CNE in Spanish) is the Electoral Power's institutional body and the governing body of electoral processes in Venezuela. During the holding of elections, the Electoral Branch assumes the highest authority and its decisions are binding for all public branches of Government.

The CNE and Electoral Accompaniment in Venezuela

In fulfillment of the constitutional faculties of the Electoral Branch, the CNE established in 2004 a process of participation of national and international organizations with the purpose of accompanying the electoral processes, understand the dynamics, particularities, and characteristics of the Venezuelan system and to contribute to perfecting it, within the constitutional framework of respect to the sovereignty and independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

This constitutional role is exerted through two activities, namely:

- International Electoral Accompaniment Program**
- National Electoral Observation Program**

What is the Legal Basis in which the Electoral Accompaniment in Venezuela is founded?

Two fundamental principles define the international electoral participation in Venezuelan elections: one, respect for the sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, its democracy, and its electoral processes, and two, international electoral cooperation.



Venezuelan electoral laws and regulations establish that: “electoral institutions or authorities from other States, organizations or international bodies, as well as the institutions and persons in general, are those duly accredited with such a role by the National Electoral Council, be it by invitation of the body itself or by request made before the National Electoral Council within the lapses and conditions provided for in the corresponding plan”.

What Happens with International Electoral Observation in Venezuela?

The so-called “electoral observation” is reserved for Venezuelan citizens and legally constituted national observation organizations, which request to witness the electoral event. Both the activities of national observation as well as of international accompaniment are subject to the National Electoral Observation Plan and the Plan for International Electoral Accompaniment that the National Electoral Council approves for each election.

What Differences Are There Between Electoral Accompaniment and Observation in Venezuela?

The international electoral accompaniment that takes place in Venezuela is a very wide and deep technical activity, which comprises all the stages and activities of the elections, by offering the credited accompaniers extensive guarantees in their work so that they can effectively determine the reliability and transparency of the electoral processes and its results. The activities and conditions under which they take place are new and original, due to the high electoral technical development of Venezuela, positioning it in all cases above the so-called international standards.

The rules of the so-called Electoral Missions established by multilateral organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations (UN), among others, are governed by their own

regulations, independent from the legislation of the countries visited.

The fundamental difference is that the Venezuelan legislation, in order to safeguard the national sovereignty and the integrity of the electoral processes, does not consider the existence of **International Observation Missions** under the terms in which these are held in other countries, where such Missions receive a mandate from a foreign multilateral organization and act outside of the electoral authority, exercising in practice, functions of tutelage and certification over the electoral process, and thus over its results.

What Does International Electoral Accompaniment Imply?

The International Electoral Accompaniment Program establishes the bases for the presence and participation of electoral experts and other credited persons in all the technical and institutional stages, before, during, and after an election. The CNE's work scheme allows for the monitoring of the electoral process in all of its phases, from a legal, political and technical perspective. The Venezuelan International electoral accompaniment is pioneer and it is constituted by the cooperation and respect between sovereign countries. It adheres to the principles established in the Venezuelan legal framework on the subject, in particular to the principles of constitutional supremacy, self-determination, non-interference, impartiality, transparency, and respect to electoral rules and authorities.





What Stages Does International Electoral Accompaniment Follow in Venezuela?

The process is carried out in three clearly established phases:

The pre-electoral phase, in which electoral technicians, representatives from non-government organizations, experts, and academics from various countries accompany the audit process for the automated voting platform and the electoral tools.

The electoral phase, where the members of the accompaniment program monitor the activities related to the end of the campaign and the holding of the elections.

Finally, the post-electoral phase, in which international accompaniers witness the proclamation of the elected candidates as well as the subsequent audits following the election.

In all the phases, the accompaniers interact with the electoral authorities, technical teams of CNE, electoral officials and technical and political representatives of participant political organizations, as well as with media, within the framework of the conditions set by the CNE.

Which activities do international accompaniers fulfill?

The international accompaniers fulfill the following activities:

- Participation in all the activities related to the auditing of the electoral system, previous and subsequent to the elections.
- Visits to the technical spaces and centers of production, storage, and distribution of the machines and electoral material.
- Tour of the voting centers and exchanges with the officials in charge of the process, witnesses and citizens in a free manner.
- Participation in the citizen auditing that entails the opening of 54% of the ballot boxes and its counting as a public act.
- Meetings with the technical teams of the National Electoral Council.

- Contacts with media.
- After the election, submission of a report addressed to the Electoral Power, related to the results of the work, including the report of the situations and recommendations.

What is the importance and meaning of the electoral accompaniment in Venezuela?

The National Electoral Council's (CNE) International Electoral Accompaniment Program is based on the participation and encounter of peers, who, given their current or previous condition as organizers or administrators of electoral processes, are aware of the particularities of electoral processes, their complexities, implications at every stage, and of every decision made as well as of the eventualities and ways of solving them that may arise.

The program allows for a mutual exchange of experiences and enrichment between the accredited experts and the electoral authority, placing value on the knowledge among those that are able to understand and comprehend the worth of the electoral process, the way in which every election administrator solves, improves and innovates the procedures, and, above all, the possibility of learning from the strengths of the voting systems of each country. Therefore, the National Electoral Council considers the accompaniment of electoral authorities throughout the world as essential for the task of international accompaniment.



New Approach in International Electoral Cooperation

This new approach of electoral accompaniment is not exclusive of Venezuela. The strengthening of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent decades has led several countries to move towards a new approach shifting from traditional Observation Missions of invasive and tutelary nature to processes of institutional cooperation and strengthening in electoral matters. The progress achieved by other countries of the region in this regard is evident, while there are fewer countries that are still bound to notions that rely on recognition or certification of organizations, countries or multilateral entities unconcerned about peoples and citizens.

The Venezuelan Electoral System with regards to Other Countries' Electoral Systems

As evidenced in the chart below, the legislation of many countries does not consider, establish or allow for any kind of foreign participation in their electoral processes, while some others still rely on the concept of Observation Missions, which constitutes an obstacle for their own political sovereignty. Venezuela has included a groundbreaking figure that promotes the enrichment and verification of the absolute reliability of their elections: the accompaniment.

Country	It DOES NOT allow international observation	It allows international observation
Argentina	X	
Brasil	X	
Canadá	X	
Chile	X	
Colombia		X
Costa Rica		X
EE.UU	X	
España	X	
Guatemala		X
Honduras		X
México		X
Panamá		X
Paraguay		X
Perú		X

What International Organizations Have Taken Part in the International Accompaniment Programs in Electoral Matters in Venezuela?

The National Electoral Council integrates the International Accompaniment Program into a series of bodies and integration and coordination mechanisms such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Council of Electoral Specialists of Latin America (CEELA), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Mercosur Parliament (PARLASUR)

Additionally, the International Accompaniment Program sees the participation of authorities and technical specialist of countries that have established cooperation and exchange agreement in the field of technological and electoral development, including the Russian Federation, India, the Philippines, Nepal, the Republic of Mali, and the Republic of Korea as well as other electoral organizations that intend to sign agreement such as the case of Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.