

**Lima Group Ministerial Meeting**

**February 20, 2020**

**Gatineau, Canada**

**Chair's Statement**

**(Final)**

Members of the Lima Group met in Gatineau, Quebec, to reiterate our unity and unwavering commitment to the return of democracy in Venezuela, based on our fundamental values, principles and positions expressed in our previous statements. This includes a strict adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights. Venezuela has been led down a path of economic collapse, human rights abuses, increased criminality and environmental destruction. The human suffering has reached an intolerable level. This only adds to the urgency for a peaceful and democratic way out of this rapidly deteriorating crisis.

Venezuelans themselves must lead any return to democracy in Venezuela. To this end, the Venezuelan people must have a voice in deciding their future. While the Venezuelan Constitution calls for parliamentary elections in 2020, democracy will be fully restored in Venezuela only through free, fair and credible presidential elections. This process must include an independent National Electoral Council, an un-biased Supreme Court, international support and observation, full press freedom and political participation of all Venezuelans.

While it is for Venezuelans to determine, the international community has a crucial role to play. Today the Lima Group issues an appeal to the international community to join us in supporting a democratic future for Venezuela. The world needs to come together to stop the human tragedy in Venezuela.

In the coming days and weeks, representatives of the Lima Group members will engage in an intensive period of outreach and consultation with all countries with an interest in the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. We believe it is time to send a clear and unequivocal message to Venezuelans that the time is now to end this crisis and that the international community stands ready to support this process.