



**Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
In the United States of America**

Statement

On Sunday, December 2, 2007, Venezuelan voters once again exercised their rights in an overwhelming display of the country's vibrant democratic system. Though a set of proposed constitutional reforms were not accepted by voters – less than 2 percent separated the “Yes” and “No” options – the results are another step in the longstanding democratic debate started by President Hugo Chávez on how to shape a new and better Venezuela.

The manner in which the referendum was carried out and its result speaks to both to the legitimacy and independence of Venezuela's electoral authority, the National Electoral Council, and the strengthening of the 1999 Constitution. It is now irrefutable that Venezuela's elections are free, fair and fully transparent. Moreover, it is finally clear that the 1999 Constitution and the principles that underpin it – including participatory democracy, a social economy and equality for all Venezuelans – are now widely accepted as representing the new Venezuela that is being created.

Regardless, both the U.S. government and the media consistently attacked Venezuela's electoral system and democracy in the months leading up to the referendum. The *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* dedicated over 11,000 words in 18 op-eds or editorials to attacking Venezuela just in the last month. Meanwhile, on Friday, November 30, White House Press Secretary Dana Perino called into question Venezuela's electoral system, while on December 3 Undersecretary of State Nicolas Burns and National Security Council spokesperson Gordon Johndroe expressed their happiness with the result instead of issuing an apology and recognizing the transparency of the electoral system and Venezuela's vibrant participatory democracy.

These statements serve as evidence of a clear double standard in which Venezuela's electoral system is judged not on how effectively it serves voters, but rather on whether the final results it emits agree with U.S. policy.

Moreover, in various statements U.S. officials tried to claim that the result of the referendum was somehow linked to a perceived disapproval of the Venezuelan government. This opinion is clear expression of U.S. interventionism in Venezuelan affairs, and stands in stark contrast to that taken by other governments and international observers. The 100-120 observers – which came from 39 countries – verified the legitimacy of the CNE and the results of referendum, while various countries and institutions, including the OAS, congratulated Venezuela for an exemplar electoral process. Additionally, Venezuelan opposition groups also recognized, for the first time, the transparency of the electoral system and CNE handling of the election.

Since 1998, Venezuelans have been called to cast their votes 12 times. In addition, the Venezuelan people have become engaged citizens, participating in debates and discussions on everything from local water usage to how Venezuela can establish the

foundations for a more equitable and efficient government. The process of the referendum demonstrates the full and irrefutable democratic character and agenda of the government of President Chávez, as well as the insistence of the government to submit to public debate and approval the discussion of how to best fulfill and deepen the principles of the 1999 Constitution.

Washington DC, December 3, 2007