

**OCCASIONAL REPORT ON VENEZUELA'S
POLITICAL ELECTORAL CONTEXT**

CARTER CENTER VENEZUELA

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**EN ROUTE TO THE 2015 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
THE MUD HOLDS ITS PRIMARIES***Executive Summary*

Two developments in the realm of law had major repercussions during the period covered in this report. First, after a postponement of the proceedings involving political leader Leopoldo Lopez and Metropolitan Mayor Antonio Ledezma was announced, former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González, who was planning to come to Venezuela to offer “technical support” to the legal defense team representing these leaders, suspended his trip to the country until a new hearing date is announced.

Then, in the context of the case against the Venezuelan media outlets known as *El Nacional*, *Tal Cual*, and *La Patilla* for “continuous aggravated defamation,” the court prohibited 22 executives of these media outlets from leaving the country. The lawsuit, filed by National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, seeks to punish these outlets for replicating information published in the Spanish newspaper ABC last February linking him to drug trafficking.

With respect to the economy, on May 1st President Maduro announced the second minimum wage increase so far this year, approving a 30 percent scaled raise. While it’s difficult to quantify the state of the Venezuelan economy given the lack of official data from the Central Bank of Venezuela, analysts pointed out that continued wage increases are indicative of the difficult economic situation facing the country.

Concerning electoral matters, at the time this bulletin was published the CNE had yet to set a date for parliamentary elections, though in a TV interview, the institution’s president, Tibisay Lucena, gave assurances that they would be held in the last quarter of the year. The electoral management body also announced that, pursuant to a decision handed down by the National Assembly, the CNE would not hold elections for representatives to the Latin American

Parliament (Parlatino), therefore from now on these representatives will be appointed by the National Assembly.

Also, as scheduled, during the period covered by this report the Democratic Unity Table (*Mesa de la Unidad Democrática*-MUD) held the primaries it had announced to select 25 percent of the candidates to represent the various parties in the opposition coalition in the 2015 parliamentary elections. The MUD's primary elections were held with technical support from the National Electoral Council in 33 of the country's 87 districts, culminating in the selection of 37 candidates. Unity Table officers announced that the total number of voters was 570,892, accounting for 7.64 percent of the registered voters in the districts where the elections were held. The *Primero Justicia* (PJ) and *Voluntad Popular* (VP) parties managed to rank first and second, respectively, in the number of votes cast and the number of candidates elected. MUD leaders considered the elections "successful" describing the level of participation as "higher than expected."

The presence of a small technical mission sent by UNASUR, which arrived in the country in a "supportive" role, drew strong objections from the MUD. According to its leaders, the opposition coalition had not been apprised of this matter beforehand by this regional entity or by the national electoral management body. In a letter it sent to the Secretary General of the UNASUR, the MUD referred to this manner of conduct not only as "rude" and "disrespectful," but also as a "ploy" devised by the CNE. Even so, those who signed these protests welcomed any mission sent by UNASUR meeting conditions of "rigor, professionalism, and technical criteria consistent with international standards." The CNE justified the UNASUR group's presence at the opposition primaries, pointing out that the EMB had invited it to participate back in March.

I. CONTEXT OF THE COUNTRY

Felipe González cancels visit

Former Prime Minister of Spain Felipe González, who had made the offer to lend "technical support" to those defending opposition leaders Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma in the courts, announced May 15 that he would not be making a trip to Venezuela as he had planned for May 18.¹ The reason for the

¹ Even though Ledezma's lawyer, Omar Estacio, had announced that former Spanish President González would be coming to Venezuela together with former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Andrés Pastrana and Ricardo

trip cancellation was a postponement of the hearing, which the former prime minister was planning to attend ([see note](#)). González reaffirmed his plans to visit the country once a new date for the hearing is set ([see note](#)).

The Venezuelan government flatly turned down his offer to visit, reasserting that González would not be welcome and would not be lent any support whatsoever ([see note](#)). In the National Assembly, the ruling bloc declared González “persona non grata” ([see note](#)) while a court ruled out the possibility of González participating as legal “consultant” to the defense team of Leopoldo López ([see note](#)). Ombudsman Tarek William Saab, meanwhile, criticized González’s human rights record, noting that the former Prime Minister has been “accused worldwide of engaging in State-sponsored terrorism” ([see note](#)).

In a press release, the former Spanish PM asserted that his efforts in the proceedings involving the two former Venezuelan mayors were in the context of “the utmost respect” for Venezuelan constitutional norms and international standards ([see note](#)).

Lawsuits and investigations

In May, reports on the proceedings of the suit filed by National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello against three major Venezuelan media outlets for “continuous aggravated defamation” took up a great deal of space in the national press. On May 12, in response to Cabello’s accusations, the courts barred 22 executives of the *El Nacional*, *La Patilla*, and *Tal Cual* newspapers from leaving the country² ([see note](#)). Cabello’s lawsuit, filed on April 22, included the owners, managers, editorial board, shareholders and all journalists associated with the content published by the aforementioned media outlets.³

This legal action was taken against the aforementioned national media outlets for replicating reports published in February 2015 in the Spanish newspaper ABC. These reports contained statements allegedly made by Cabello’s

Lagos (of Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, respectively) these leaders eventually acknowledged that, for various reasons, they were not going to be able to participate in this trip ([see note](#)).

² A warrant had already been issued for the arrest of *Tal Cual* Director Teodoro Petkoff since March 2014 in connection with a defamation suit filed against him at the time by Deputy Cabello.

³ On March 5, 2014 the 29th Court of Control granted a hearing of the suit filed by National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello against the board of the newspaper *Tal Cual* and against columnist Carlos Genatios for alleged aggravated defamation, consequently ordering precautionary measures to ban this media outlet’s directors from leaving the country and ordering them to appear before the court once per week ([see note](#)).

former chief bodyguard, Leamsy Salazar, now living in the United States, linking the president of the National Assembly to drug trafficking.⁴

Spokespersons for the newspaper unanimously characterized the move as an attempt to silence the press. Tinedo Guía, president of the National Association of Journalists, said the aim of the lawsuit is to “intimidate the owners of media outlets” as part of the government’s escalating policy of “communicational hegemony introduced by Hugo Chávez” ([see note](#)).

By the deadline for this newsletter, the Cabello case had once again seized public attention as a result of news published May 20 in *The Wall Street Journal*, indicating that the US Department of Justice was moving ahead on an investigation of high-ranking Venezuelan officials, including Cabello, concerning their alleged involvement in activities linked to cocaine trafficking and money laundering ([see note](#)). The reaction from the ruling party’s leadership was immediate. On the very day the article was published, the ruling party bloc in the National Assembly requested an urgent motion to elevate the status of Cabello to that of “National Hero,” approving a memorandum of apology, submitting it to the Attorney General’s Office to be included in the Cabello defamation suit filed against the aforementioned media outlets ([see note](#)). In turn, the leadership of the Supreme Court also issued a statement the very same day assuring that the information published by The Wall Street Journal and reproduced by some Venezuelan media outlets “aimed to wrongfully discredit Venezuelan institutions.” According to the statement issued by the Chief Justice himself, “these news quotes, lending themselves to spurious interests, replicate and promote improper accusations in the news with the intention of reflecting circumstances that are unsupported by any credible or possible foundation and altogether lack any effect whatsoever within the scope of national law” ([see note](#)).

⁴ Last February the Spanish newspaper ABC published statements made by Leamsy Salazar, former chief of security for the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and Cabello himself, claiming that Deputy Cabello was the ringleader of the so-called *Los Soles* Cartel. Salazar is currently a refugee in the United States, where he cooperates as a witness for the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Wage increases and the state of the economy

As customary in Venezuela, the President announced another wage increase during official Labor Day festivities. On this occasion, President Maduro approved a 30 percent increase in the minimum wage for workers and for pensions as well. The increase, said the President, would be applied in two parts, 20 percent immediately and the remaining 10 percent on June 1st.

The increase announced by Maduro is the second so far this year because a 15 percent increase was approved last February ([see note](#)). Since wage increases are government measures to protect the purchasing power of workers against inflation, these steps have been interpreted as symptoms of the precarious economic situation the country is undergoing ([see note](#)). The lack of official data from the Central Bank of Venezuela makes it difficult to gauge the impact of wage increases⁵ ([see note](#)). According to estimates made by analysts and international organizations for various economic indicators (among them inflation), projections point to a serious economic situation ([see note](#)). International Monetary Fund estimates for Venezuela indicate an inflation rate of roughly 96.8 percent for 2015 and a contraction of the gross domestic product (GDP) of seven percent ([see note](#)). Other financial organizations are even more pessimistic, estimating an inflation rate of 174.4 percent and a fall in the GDP of four percent ([see note](#)).

II. POLITICAL ELECTORAL CONTEXT

Even though at the time this bulletin was published the CNE had not yet announced the date that parliamentary elections would be held or the respective electoral timetable, the electoral campaign atmosphere was ushered in with the May 17 MUD primaries, during which the majority of the opposition parties in Venezuela weighed in.

⁵ The latest data on inflation in the country from the Central Bank of Venezuela, dealing with inflation for December 2014, was released on February 15. To date, the BCV has not issued any inflation rates for 2015.

The date for parliamentary elections

Regarding the date for parliamentary elections, CNE president Tibisay Lucena pointed out in a television interview that they would be held “in the last quarter of 2015” omitting a specific date. Lucena stressed that the CNE was working to organize these elections, and that “virtually all pre-election duties” had already been carried out by the electoral authority.

In her remarks, Lucena ruled out the possibility of parliamentary elections not being held, noting that the electoral calendar had not yet been formalized because the EMB was engaged in conducting primaries for the MUD, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), and the opposition *Voluntad Popular* party ([see note](#)). Opposition spokespersons have repeatedly demanded that the CNE set the date for these elections ([see note](#)).

Elections to the Parlatino

Prominent in the electoral context was the “announcement of the legislative decision” by the CNE, regarding the emergency motion made on April 14 by National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello informing the electoral management body that, since Venezuelan representatives to the Latin American Parliament would be appointed by National Assembly deputies and not in the 2015 parliamentary elections, there was no need for the CNE to call elections to put together the delegation ([see note](#)). The CNE, therefore, through a press release, acknowledged having received the notification of the NA “concerning the legislative decision on how the Latin American Parliament would be represented” ([see note](#)). The National Assembly’s decision implies eliminating the election of the 11 deputies representing Venezuela in the Parlatino. In this regard CNE Principal Rector Luis Emilio Rondón criticized the CNE for not deliberating over abolishing Parlatino elections, reiterating that “just as the CNE cannot ask the National Assembly no to legislate, the National Assembly cannot ask the Electoral Branch not to call elections.” According to Rondón, the decision represents a “restriction” and “a step backward” with respect to political rights ([see note](#)).

Equality for women

During the session in which the NA decision to eliminate Parlatino elections was approved, rectors also approved “announcing positive steps to ensure the equitable participation of women in the nomination of candidates in political organizations participating in this year’s parliamentary elections.” This decision triggered controversy among some experts because any regulation issued by the CNE inconsistent with the principle of equality among Venezuelans or limiting participation on equal terms, would represent a violation of the Constitution.

The CNE’s decision was made after its president, Tibisay Lucena, submitted a document from the MUD’s National Women’s Front to its decision-making body requesting approval of a resolution establishing gender equality as a condition for participation, as required in the 2008 regional elections ([see note](#)).

MUD primaries

With the participation of 570,892 voters, representing 7.64 percent of all registered voters in the districts where the primaries were held, the Democratic Unity Table held its primary elections on May 17 ([see note](#)). Unity representatives reported that the total number of valid votes came to 667,066, (which was understandable because voters had to cast more than one vote in some districts).⁶

In the primaries, the MUD selected 25 percent of its candidates running for NA deputy in the 2015 parliamentary elections.⁷ As planned, the process was carried out in 33 of the 87 districts on the Venezuelan electoral map, spanning 12 of the country’s 24 states, most of which have traditionally voted for the ruling party. In three of these 33 districts, more than one candidate was up for election (in two of these districts, two deputies were being elected, three in another), amounting to 37 eligible candidates altogether.

⁶ Electoral sources expressed to the Carter Center that it is important to differentiate between the number of voters and the number of votes counted in districts electing more than one candidate (plurinominal districts) because voters may cast more than one vote in them. This is why the number of valid votes exceeded the number of voters participating in the elections. Two candidates each were selected in district one of Anzoategui and Monagas, and three in district five of Carabobo.

⁷ The Supreme Court (TSJ) has agreed to hear an appeal on primaries held in the Baruta-Chacao-El Hatillo district (Caracas). A citizen and resident of this district, José “Jota” Contreras, is demanding that the Supreme Court compel the MUD to hold primary elections in these districts (the MUD decided to select the candidate by consensus in this electoral area). The Supreme Court has not issued a decision yet on the matter ([see note](#))

The president of the Primary Electoral Commission (CEP), José Luis Cartaya, reported that 1,499 polling centers had been activated for the primaries, which included 2,742 polling stations and the participation of 18,746 CNE-trained volunteers ([see note](#)).⁸ No irregularities in or challenges to the process were recorded during the elections.

On May 20, three days after the primaries, the MUD announced the candidates selected, and issued the final outcome of the election. Opposition party coalition leaders stated that the candidates selected by way of consensus would be announced in the days following (information which, at the time this newsletter was published, had not yet been released). Below is the list of candidates announced by the MUD.

Table of candidates declared by the MUD

State | District | Principal Name | Votes | Nominating Party | Alternate Name

Estado	Circ	Nombre Principal	Votos	Partido que Postula	Nombre Suplente
Dtto Capital	1	JESUS ABREU	4.703	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	NAFIR MORALES
Dtto Capital	4	JOSE GUERRA	9.288	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	ISMAEL LEON
Anzoátegui	1	JOSE BRITO	10.106	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	MARCOS QUIÑONES
Anzoátegui	1	ANTONIO BARRERO SIRA	10.647	Acción Democrática (AD)	HECTOR CORDERO
Anzoátegui	2	CHAIM BUCARAN	4.284	Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNTC)	LEOBALDO VILLAZANA
Anzoátegui	3	CARLOS MICHELANGELI	12.686	Acción Democrática (AD)	YAJAIRA CASTRO
Anzoátegui	4	ARMANDO ARMAS	12.786	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	OMAR GONZALEZ
Bolívar	1	LUIS SILVA	7.096	Acción Democrática (AD)	ANTONIO GEARA
Bolívar	2	FRANCISCO SUCRE	20.693	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	LIGIA DELFIN
Bolívar	3	AMERICO DE GRAZIA	7.516	La Causa R (LCR)	MANUEL GONZALEZ
Carabobo	1	YLIDIO ABREU	9.735	Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNTC)	YOLANDA TORTOLERO
Carabobo	2	WILLIAMS GIL	9.288	Cuentas Claras (CC)	ARMANDO LOP EZ
Carabobo	3	VICENCIO SCARANO	41.939	Cuentas Claras (CC)	ANGEL ALVAR EZ GIL
Carabobo	4	ISAAC PEREZ	4.385	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	LUIS HERNANDEZ
Carabobo	5	CARLOS LOZANO	25.239	Cuentas Claras (CC)	LEANDRO DOMINGUEZ
Carabobo	5	MARCO BOZO	22.085	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	DANIEL ARIAS
Carabobo	5	ROMNY FLORES	21.103	Acción Democrática (AD)	ANTONIO ROMAN
Cojedes	1	JOSE ZAVARCE	3.988	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	LUIS RODRIGUEZ
Cojedes	2	JULIO HERNANDEZ	2.536	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	LILIBETH SANDOVAL
Falcón	1	AMIR MAHMUD	4.086	Avanzada Progresista (AP)	ADAN CAMARGO
Falcón	2	LUIS STEFANELLI	8.846	Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNTC)	KERRINS MANAREZ
Falcón	3	ELIESER SIRIT	5.258	Acción Democrática (AD)	JULIO C MORENO
Falcón	4	JUAN MANAURE	4.146	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	OSNEL ARIAS
Monagas	1	JUAN PABLO GARCIA	7.587	Vente	CARLOS BASTARDO
Monagas	1	M GABRIELA HERNANDEZ	14.894	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	AQUILES ARVELO
Monagas	2	MIGUEL VELZ	7.174	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	N ESTOR GUEVARA
Nueva Esparta	1	ORLANDO AVILA	6.764	Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNTC)	MAGALVI ESTABA
Nueva Esparta	2	JONY RAHAL	25.351	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	ANTONIO ARANGUREN
Portuguesa	1	VICTOR URIBE	4.518	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	ARSENIO SOSA
Portuguesa	3	MOISES REYES	2.059	Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNTC)	MAHYCOL LINAREZ
Portuguesa	4	DANIEL RANGEL	2.016	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	ZAMIR LOPEZ
Táchira	3	EDGAR CONTRERAS	N/A	(COPEI)	JOSEURBINA
Táchira	1	LADY GOMEZ	8.218	Acción Democrática (AD)	FRANKLYN DUARTE
Táchira	2	GABY ARELLANO	7.511	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	RENZO PRIETO
Táchira	5	DANIEL CEBALLOS	13.191	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	SERGIO VERGARA
Trujillo	1	MANUEL AGUILAR P	5.823	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	REBECA ZAMBRANO
Trujillo	2	CONRADO PEREZ	11.719	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	JOAQUIN AGUILAR
Trujillo	3	HUGO TORRES	N/A	Voluntad Popular (VPA)	EUDOMARIO OLIVARES
Zulia	2	AVILIO TROCONIS	N/A	Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)	RUBEN URDANETA
Zulia	11	JUAN CARLOS VELAZCO	11.620	Acción Democrática (AD)	ANGEL CARIDAD

⁸ On May 6, the CNE announced that the training workshops for polling station members were to take place May 6-15 and that 16, 452 people would be participating.

Balance of forces within the MUD

According to the results provided by the MUD, the opposition coalition parties getting the most votes and candidates selected were *Primero Justicia* (PJ) and *Voluntad Popular* (VP). *Primero Justicia* got a total of 125,916 votes, accounting for 19.7 percent of the vote, while *Voluntad Popular* earned a total of 116,371 votes, for 18.2 percent of the total vote. In terms of candidates, PJ got 11 nominations, VP eight. While, vote-wise, the Social Christian party COPEI was the third political force with 82,920 votes, they ended up with only one candidate.⁹ Conversely, the *Acción Democrática* party (AD), which ranked fourth in terms of votes at 71,573, garnered a total of six elected candidates ([see note](#)).

To understand the difference between the number of votes received and the nominations won by each party, we need to stress that the same vote allocation system used in the parliamentary elections is applied in the MUD primaries. According to this system, known as the majority representation system, the candidate winning the most votes in each district is the outright winner, regardless of the votes his/her party gets nationwide. In the case of the MUD primaries, while COPEI was the party with the largest number of candidates in the race, it won the majority of the votes in only one district. The opposite was true in the case of the AD, which, even though it ran candidates in few districts, almost all of its candidates got the majority of the votes ([see note](#)).

Internal reactions in MUD coalition parties were mixed. As explained by *Primero Justicia* General Secretary Tomás Guanipa, an alliance of parties arose within the MUD consisting of *Primero Justicia*, *Un Nuevo Tiempo*, *Acción Democrática*, and *Avanzada Progresista*. This alliance came away winning in 75 percent of districts where elections were held ([see video](#)). Meanwhile, COPEI National President Roberto Enríquez said that his party “participated in the election free of any alliances,” positioning itself as the third political opposition force in the country vote-wise ([see note](#)). The *Voluntad Popular* party, through its national policy coordinator, Freddy Guevara, saw results for its ranks as positive by virtue of its “clear political message”¹⁰ ([see note](#)).

⁹ To understand the difference between the votes cast and nominations won we need to know that not all parties fielded candidates in every district. For example, the COPEI party only ran candidates in 19 districts, while VP ran candidates in 18 districts, PJ in 17, and AD in only 7.

¹⁰ Guevara summed up this message thusly: “we’re going to win the National Assembly to remove Nicolás Maduro from office, along with the corrupt leadership governing us today, with the Constitution in hand.”

Self-assessment of MUD member parties

MUD leaders stated that the primaries had been a success and that participation was “higher than expected” ([see note](#)). Miranda state governor and *Primero Justicia* leader Henrique Capriles said that the people “gave a clear signal (to the government) in the primary elections” and that “Unity won” in this process ([see note](#)). Meanwhile, *Acción Democrática* Secretary General Henry Ramos stressed that “without electoral propaganda, the campaign consisted entirely of activism,” which is why he deemed the primaries “a success” ([see note](#)). MUD Secretary General Jesús Chúo Torrealba argued that while 316,000 people participated in the Democratic Unity Table primary for the 2010 parliamentary elections, the MUD doubled that figure in 2015.¹¹

Also, Torrealba said that while the international average of internal participation in party primaries is 3.5 percent of all registered voters, the MUD far exceeded this average. Returning to the comparison with the 2010 primary elections, Torrealba stressed negative changes in the media, which made conditions for opposition leaders “much tighter and more demanding.” The context of 2015, he added, is also characterized by “a much more exacerbated persecution” ([listen to audio](#)). Regarding the media coverage during the primaries, Torrealba denounced the existence of an information blackout, on the part of government-run media outlets and the local press. He also called into question the use of the presidential blanket broadcast aired that day ([see note](#)).

The government’s reaction

According to ruling party spokespersons, the MUD primaries were “phantom” or “false” elections. The mayor of the municipality of Libertador even described them as “the country’s worst electoral disaster.” Jorge Rodríguez challenged both the number of districts that engaged in primary elections and the financial portion that candidates had to contribute in order to participate in elections.¹² Likewise, Rodríguez also challenged the veracity of the participation data disclosed by the MUD, noting that, according to “his information” participation had not exceeded 500 thousand voters ([see video](#)). Meanwhile, President Maduro said that the MUD primaries were a “complete fraud” and that “many people had been forced to vote in the process” ([see note](#)).

¹¹ In the 2010 primaries held by the MUD, 22 candidates were selected in 15 districts, which then meant a voter participation rate of 9.38 percent ([see note](#)). In its preliminary report on the 2010 MUD primaries, *Súmate* stated that 365,974 people out of the 3,877,976 eligible voters to participate voted in the elections, representing 9.42 percent of the total (the difference between the two figures is because the MUD announcement was made with 98% of the votes tallied, whereas *Súmate* figures include 100 percent of them).

¹² Mayor Jorge Rodríguez affirmed that candidates were required to contribute BsF 150,000 altogether ([see note](#)).

While on a television program with President Maduro, Rodríguez, said that the MUD had refrained from using fingerprint capturing devices so as to “inflate” participation figures, ([see note](#)), technicians linked to the MUD confirmed to the Carter Center that these devices had indeed been used, as stipulated by the CNE.

The Presence of UNASUR as a partner

On May 15, the CNE web portal announced that a technical mission of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), including two officials from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Brazil, would be present during the Democratic Unity Table (MUD) primary elections. According to the CNE, the mission would only visit five polling centers in the capital area ([see news report](#)). The support group visit, it said, was requested by the CNE during the visit made to Venezuela by UNASUR member country foreign ministers in March 2015.

Severe objections to the UNASUR mission visit were raised by the opposition, however. MUD Executive Secretary Jesús Torrealba and the organization’s International Policy Coordinator Ramón Guillermo Avedo pointed out in a note to the Secretary General of UNASUR that neither UNASUR nor the CNE had apprised the opposition coalition of this invitation. This visit, they said, “was planned in secret, without letting us know about it in advance and without requesting our permission and cooperation” ([see note](#)).

Nevertheless, in this note the MUD welcomed any UNASUR mission that would contribute to building trust among Venezuelans by applying “rigor, professionalism and technical criteria consistent with international standards.” Democratic Unity Table stated that it is interested in there being a “substantive, impartial, and comprehensive” international presence. Because UNASUR, it stressed, as a new organization, “is just beginning to develop its capacities in electoral matters,” those who signed the note suggested that the agency request the cooperation of other international organizations, such as the OAS, the United Nations, and the European Union ([see letter](#)).

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