Caricom to Almagro: 'You Don't Speak For The Entire OAS'

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The Caribbean Community has written to Luis Almagro rejecting his position on Venezuela.

The Caribbean Community (Caricom) has rejected Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Luis Almagro's unilateral decision to recognize Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.

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In a letter to Almagro dated Jan. 31, Caricom expressed its “disapproval and grave concern with regard to the position that you [Almagro], in your capacity as Secretary-General, have adopted, by recognizing President of the Venezuelan National Assembly Juan Guaido as interim president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” in the words of Timothy Harris, prime minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, chairman of the conference.

Caricom held an emergency meeting on Jan. 24 attended by heads of state from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the foreign ministers of Grenada and Suriname.

The Caribbean states deemed Almagro’s decision “inappropriate” because he didn’t have the full support of OAS member states, and they demanded he publicly confirm he doesn't speak on their behalf.

"We are aware that this is not the only occasion on which you have made public utterances in the name of the organisation without authority," the letter reads.

"This type of unilateral action by a head of an international organisation, whose membership comprises sovereign states, is a clear departure from normal practice and causes great concern."

Caribbean Community

31 January 2019

H.E. Mr. Luis Almagro Lemes
Secretary-General
Organization of American States
17th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dear Secretary-General

The Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held a Special Emergency Meeting of the Conference on Thursday, 24 January 2019 to discuss the on-going situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Those in attendance were the Heads of Government of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, and the Foreign Ministers of Grenada and Suriname.

Heads of Government mandated me as Chairman of the Conference, to write to you to express our disapproval and grave concern with regard to the position that you, in your capacity as Secretary-General, have adopted, by recognising the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaido as interim President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This action on your part, without the authority of the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS), is considered inappropriate.

The Heads of Government consider it imperative that you publicly clarify that you did not speak on behalf of all the Member States of the Organisation of American States. We are aware that this is not the only occasion on which you have made public utterances in the name of the Organisation without authority. This type of unilateral action by a Head of an International Organisation, whose membership comprises sovereign States, is a clear departure from normal practice and cause for great concern.

Yours sincerely

TIMOTHY HARRIS (DR. THE HONOURABLE)
PRIME MINISTER OF ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE OF
HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

Almagro recognized Guaido as soon as he was appointed interim president by the National Assembly, in judicial contempt, on Jan. 23.

The following day, OAS member states rejected a resolution by the Argentine delegation, contradicting the position adopted by Almagro, the United States, and Latin American right-wing governments.

Distancing from the previous secretaries' more neutral position, in June 2018 Almagro filed a complaint against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro at the International Criminal Court (ICC) over alleged crimes against humanity.

He was expelled from his own Broad Front of Uruguay (FA) party in December due to his interventionist comments against the Venezuelan government and others in Latin America.

"One thing is having a critical position about the situation in Venezuela or other countries in Latin America, and another very different one is to actively criticize one of the countries from a position that should generate consensus in the Americas, besides having a perspective absolutely in line with that of the United States, even showing sympathy for an eventual invasion," said Jose Carlos Mahia, FA's vice-president.

Almagro served as foreign minister during Mujica's presidency (2010-2015) and was a member of the Movement of Popular Participation (MPP), a socialist party founded by former guerrilla fighters of the Tupamaros National Liberation Movement (MLN-T).

His position drastically changed after he was named secretary general of the OAS and he recently said he had "irreconcilable differences" with the FA regarding "human rights and democracy."