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Political developments in Venezuela

Two important events for the political life of the country have recently taken place worth to comment.

Firstly, the primary elections organized by the opposition parties grouped in the so-called “Unified Democratic Panel” (MUD) were held on 12th February resulting elected Henrique Capriles Radonski by almost a 1 million vote margin as the candidate to face President Hugo Chávez in October 2012 when the presidential election is scheduled. Five candidates run for the nomination obtaining Henrique Capriles 1,900,528 votes, Pablo Pérez 896,070 votes, María Corina Machado 110,420 votes, Diego Arria 37,834 votes and Pablo Medina 14,561 votes; the number of voters reached 3,040,449 whose attendance to the primary election took by surprise both the opposition and the government, bearing in mind that this was a private event.

Mr. Capriles Radonski was born in Caracas on 11th July 1972 and he is currently the governor of Miranda state for the period 2008-2012, with an important political background including Mayor of Baruta Municipality, east Caracas, for two consecutive terms, in 2000-2008, Vice-president of the late Congress of the Republic of Venezuela and President of the Chamber of Deputies between 1999 and 2000.

Generally speaking the primary elections developed without difficulties with the exception of the Supreme Court of Justice’s ruling two days after the event ordering to the Electoral Committee of the MUD to stop the destruction of the voting rolls used in the elections, which were scheduled

as per the regulations agreed by the MUD with the Electoral National Council to safeguard the identity of the voters. Such ruling was disregarded and the voting rolls destroyed. No doubt with the primary election over the way is paved for the presidential election to be held on 7th October with Mr. Hugo Chavez and Mr. Henrique Capriles as only contesters for a new six year term.

The second event, however, may have also impact on the campaign as it has to do with the health of President Chavez who in June last year was diagnosed with cancer. Although after treatment last year it was announced to be recovered, on 21st February 2012 in a public speech he admitted that the illness was still present needing further medical attention for which Mr. Chavez would travel to Cuba for treatment; as per an initial government statement it was reported that an operation on a lesion in the same area where Mr. Chavez had a cancerous tumour removed last year has been successful, and chemotherapy will be applied in the coming days.

The true condition of President Chavez's health is difficult to know, giving rise to uncertainties about him running for the October election which could definitely impact the campaign ahead.

Should you need any assistance or further information regarding the topic stated above, please feel free to contact:

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