

Venezuela

This Union Notes:

1. It is a basic right that countries should be able to govern their own affairs and democratically elect their own leaders, free from foreign interference.
2. Action against the severe poverty in the under-developed world is a priority and is an issue on which large numbers of students have campaigned.
3. The UN's Millennium Development Goals are important targets in poverty reduction.
4. Universal and free public services, including in education, are affordable across the world and should be a basic right.
5. That Julia Buxton of this University is a leading UK academic specialising in Venezuela.

This Union believes

1. Enormous social change has taken place in Venezuela in recent years, with the government funding wide-ranging social programmes.
2. Previously, despite Venezuela's oil wealth over 80% of the population lived below the poverty line without access to basic services.
3. In Venezuela there have been dramatic increases in democratic participation, especially by indigenous people, women and the poor, including in eight national elections and referenda since Hugo Chavez's election as President in 1998.
4. A new constitution enshrines the right to publicly funded free education including at university.
5. Through literacy drives, over 1.2m Venezuelans have been taught to read and write since 1998, virtually abolishing illiteracy. Two-thirds of the beneficiaries are women.
6. More than 70% of the Venezuelan population for the first time now have access to free healthcare and medicines.
7. Venezuela is set to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals three years ahead of schedule - many countries are decades behind.
8. A Women's' Development Bank (Banmujer) has been set up to increase economic opportunities for women.
9. The Venezuelan government, through 'Operation Miracle' is funding up to 1,500 free eye operations daily for poor people in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over six million are expected to be treated over the next decade.
10. Figures linked to the United States administration have called for intervention into Venezuela. George Bush's political ally, Pat Robertson called for President Chavez's assassination and kidnapping in August 2005. A briefly successful military coup against Chavez in 2002 reportedly had US backing.
11. This year's Trades Union Congress annual conference unanimously voted to welcome the social achievements of Venezuela in recent years and for solidarity against US intervention.

This Union resolves:

1. Oppose US military intervention in Venezuela.
2. Affiliate to the Venezuela Information Centre (VIC) to provide students with information about achievements in Venezuela.
3. To support the setting up of the Bradford VIC.
4. Send a message of support to the Venezuelan Education Ministry commending the provision of free education and steps taken to eradicate illiteracy.

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