

China calls for peaceful dialogue on Venezuela crisis

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Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China "believes that Venezuela's affairs should be resolved by the Venezuelan people under the framework of its constitution and laws and through peaceful dialogue and political means.

Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido speaks during a news conference in Caracas, Venezuela. (Reuters/File Photo)

Beijing: China insists that peaceful dialogue and political means are the "only way" toward enduring peace in Venezuela, the Foreign Ministry said, adding that it backs multinational efforts to reach such an outcome.

Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying's statement came in response to a question about a meeting Thursday of an "International Contact Group" led by Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez and attended by leaders of 14 countries, including Spain, Italy, Portugal and Sweden.

China is a close ally of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, to whom it has lent billions to help shore up his embattled regime.

Hua said China "believes that Venezuela's affairs should be resolved by the Venezuelan people under the framework of its constitution and laws and through peaceful dialogue and political means.

This is the only way toward enduring peace in the country."

However, she added that "China supports the efforts by the international community to this end and hopes that all sides will continue to play a constructive role in the peaceful resolution of the Venezuela issue."

Late last month, the ministry issued a statement in Hua's name saying China "opposes external intervention in Venezuela," in a rebuke to calls in the US for military action to remove Maduro.

Over the last decade, China has given Venezuela USD 65 billion in loans, cash and investment.

Venezuela owes more than USD 20 billion.

China's only hope of being repaid appears to lie in Venezuela ramping up oil production, although low petroleum prices and the country's crashing economy bode poorly for such a possibility.

Two dozen nations, including the US and some of Latin America's biggest countries, have recognised opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president, while China and Russia are backing Maduro.

- AP