



International Oil Pollution
Compensation Funds

Agenda Item 1	IOPC/NOV24/1/2/1	
Date	5 November 2024	
Original	English	
1992 Fund Assembly	92A29	●
1992 Fund Executive Committee	92EC83	●
Supplementary Fund Assembly	SA21	●

EXAMINATION OF CREDENTIALS

INTERIM REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

(As at 2.00 pm on 5 November 2024)

Note by the Credentials Committee

Summary:	The Credentials Committee has examined the credentials of delegations of 1992 Fund Member States, including States members of the 1992 Fund Executive Committee and Member States of the Supplementary Fund, and submits the following interim report.
Action to be taken:	<p><u>1992 Fund Assembly</u></p> <p>(a) Take note of the interim report of the Credentials Committee; and</p> <p>(b) decide which of the two representatives should be accredited as the official representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at these particular sessions of the governing bodies of the IOPC Funds.</p> <p><u>1992 Fund Executive Committee /Supplementary Fund Assembly</u></p> <p>(a) Take note of the interim report of the Credentials Committee; and</p> <p>(b) take note of the decision of the 1992 Fund Assembly in respect of which of the two representatives should be accredited as the official representative of Venezuela at these particular sessions of the governing bodies of the IOPC Funds.</p>

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Assembly and of the Supplementary Fund Assembly and Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Executive Committee, the 1992 Fund Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee consisting of the following five members and their representatives:

Canada (Ms Caitlin O'Boyle)
Ecuador (Captain Julio Mindiola)
Namibia (Mr Pinehas Auene)
Portugal (Mr Carlos Sequeira)
Türkiye (Mr Mehmet Hanifi Güler)

- 1.2 The Credentials Committee met in person on 5 November 2024 under the chairship of Mr Carlos Sequeira and prepared this report.

- 1.3 The Credentials Committee presents this interim report in accordance with Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Assembly.

2 Examination of credentials

- 2.1 The Credentials Committee based its deliberations on Rules 9 and 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Assembly and on the guidelines given in circular [IOPC/2023/Circ.6](#).
- 2.2 The credentials of delegations of 60 Member States of the 1992 Fund, including States members of the 1992 Fund Executive Committee and of the Supplementary Fund, were examined and found to be in order at 2.00 pm on 5 November 2024:

1992 Fund Executive Committee Members

Algeria	Denmark	Republic of Korea
Bahamas	India	Spain
Canada	Italy	Thailand
Colombia	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Cyprus	Poland	

Other 1992 Fund Member States

Antigua and Barbuda	Germany	Netherlands
Argentina	Ghana	Norway
Australia	Greece	Philippines
Belgium	Ireland	Portugal
Brunei Darussalam	Japan	Russian Federation
Bulgaria	Latvia	San Marino
Cameroon	Liberia	Senegal
Cook Islands	Luxembourg	Singapore
Côte d'Ivoire	Madagascar	Sri Lanka
Croatia	Malaysia	Sweden
Dominican Republic	Malta	Trinidad and Tobago
Ecuador	Marshall Islands	Türkiye
Estonia	Mauritius	United Arab Emirates
Finland	Monaco	Uruguay
France	Namibia	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Georgia		

- 2.3 The Credentials Committee noted that 10 Member States had submitted credentials after the deadline of 29 October 2024, which were therefore not accepted for examination.
- 2.4 The Credential Committee also noted that 51 Member States had not submitted credentials.
- 2.5 In respect of the credentials of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Credentials Committee held a separate discussion as set out in section 3 below.

3 Credentials of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

3.1 Considerations at previous sessions of the governing bodies

- 3.1.1 At the meetings of the governing bodies held in October 2019, November 2020, March 2021,

November 2021, March 2022, and October 2022, the Credentials Committee examined two letters of credentials for two separate delegations claiming to represent Venezuela: one signed by H.E. Mrs Rocío Maneiro and the other signed by President Juan Guaidó^{<1>}.

3.1.2 In all six meetings the Director requested a legal opinion on this matter; and, taking into account the opinion provided, the Credentials Committee recommended to the 1992 Fund Assembly that the individuals listed in the letters of credentials issued by Ambassador Maneiro should be accepted as the official representatives of Venezuela. The 1992 Fund Assembly accepted these recommendations, and the Assembly's decisions were noted by the 1992 Fund Executive Committee and Supplementary Fund Assembly (see documents [IOPC/OCT19/11/1](#), [IOPC/NOV20/11/2](#), [IOPC/MAR21/9/2](#), [IOPC/NOV21/11/2](#), [IOPC/MAR22/9/2](#) and [IOPC/OCT22/11/1](#)).

3.1.3 At the April 2024 sessions of the governing bodies, the Director received two letters of credentials for two separate delegations claiming to represent the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: one signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr Yvan Gil, and the other one signed by Ms Dinorah Figuera as President of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Director requested Professor Antonios Tzanakopoulos, an expert in public international law, to provide an updated legal opinion on this matter. In considering this matter and the legal advice provided by Professor Tzanakopoulos on 25 April 2024, the Credentials Committee recommended once again that the *status quo* should continue (IOPC/APR24/9/1).

3.2 November 2024 sessions of the governing bodies

3.2.1 Prior to the November 2024 sessions of the governing bodies, the Director received two letters of credentials for two separate delegations claiming to represent the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: one signed by the Ambassador Félix Plasencia González^{<2>}, Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the IMO and to other International Organisations headquartered in London, authorised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yvan Gil Pinto, and the other one signed by Ms Dinorah Figuera as President of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Director requested Professor Antonios Tzanakopoulos to provide an updated legal opinion on this matter (attached at the Annex to this document).

3.2.2 As in the previous meetings, the Credentials Committee was unanimous in its view that it is not the function of the IOPC Funds to decide which is the legitimate Government of Venezuela, since this is considered to be a political question to be decided in another forum, namely the political organs of the United Nations (UN) (i.e., the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council). The Credentials Committee concluded that the role of the Credentials Committee and the 1992 Fund Assembly is simply to decide which of the two delegations should be accredited as the official representative of Venezuela at each meeting of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies.

3.2.3 In considering this matter and the legal advice provided by Professor Tzanakopoulos on 29 October 2024, the Credentials Committee recommends once again that the *status quo* should continue. The Credentials Committee thus recommends that the letter of credentials of the current delegation of Venezuela issued by the Ambassador Félix Plasencia González, should be accepted and

<1> H.E. Mrs Rocío Maneiro is the Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other international organisations headquartered in London, appointed by President Nicolas Maduro; and President Juan Guaidó is the President of the National Assembly, and President (E) of Venezuela.

<2> Ambassador Félix Plasencia González is accredited to the United Kingdom as Chargé d'Affaires *ad hoc* in the United Kingdom and Permanent Representative to the IMO, as reflected in the London Diplomatic List which is available through the UK Government website: See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6724e95c9d0d4a27787c7030/LONDON_DIPLOMATIC_LIST_-_November_2024.odt.

that the named individuals therein be deemed the official representatives for the November 2024 sessions of the governing bodies. However, the Credentials Committee also notes that this position applies to this meeting only and could be susceptible to change depending on future developments.

4 Action to be taken

4.1 1992 Fund Assembly

The 1992 Fund Assembly is invited to:

- (a) take note of the interim report of the Credentials Committee; and
- (b) decide which of the two representatives should be accredited as the official representative of Venezuela at these particular sessions of the governing bodies of the IOPC Funds.

4.2 1992 Fund Executive Committee and Supplementary Fund Assembly

The 1992 Fund Executive Committee and Supplementary Fund Assembly are invited to:

- (a) take note of the interim report of the Credentials Committee; and
- (b) take note of the decision of the 1992 Fund Assembly in respect of which of the two representatives should be accredited as the official representative of Venezuela at these particular sessions of the governing bodies of the IOPC Funds.

* * *

ANNEX

LEGAL OPINION

submitted to the

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds

concerning

the representation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at the United Nations

Professor Antonios Tzanakopoulos, Three Stone Chambers and University of Oxford

29 October 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds ('IOPC Funds') have received two sets of competing letters of credentials for representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the IOPC Funds for the purpose of the sessions of the governing bodies from 5 to 8 November 2024. The IOPC Funds will have to decide which representative should be accredited as the official representative of the State at these sessions of the governing bodies.

2. I am asked to give an opinion on 'which delegation of the Republic of Venezuela has been recognised by the United Nations and by United Nations agencies in the last months', ie since late April 2024, when the IOPC Funds last solicited and obtained a legal opinion on these matters by me, having previously also obtained a number of opinions by me and, earlier, an opinion by Professor Dan Sarooshi, KC. As in my last six opinions on these matters, which are to a large extent reproduced here, parts II and III set out the practice of the United Nations ('UN'), its specialised agencies, and conferences on credentials in general, and on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela specifically. Part IV discusses – and distinguishes – the practice in other international organisations. Part V discusses the issue from the perspective of the IOPC Funds and sets out my response to the question that has been posed to me.

3. For the purposes of preparing this opinion, I have taken into account the 1992 Fund Assembly / 1992 Fund Executive Committee / Supplementary Fund Rules of Procedure, the United Nations General Assembly Rules of Procedure, and the practice of the UN and its specialised agencies and conferences, in particular as set out in the United Nations Juridical Yearbook, which contains opinions of the UN Office of Legal Affairs on matters of credentials. I have also considered the practice of other international organisations on these matters. I have finally drawn on my own previous opinions of 24 April 2024, 24 October 2022, 17 March 2022, 25 October 2021, 24 March 2021, and 25 November 2020, on the opinion of Professor Dan Sarooshi, KC of 6 October 2019, and on a range of primary and secondary legal sources. A full list of documents and authorities is set out in Appendix 1. My biographical information is set out in Appendix 2.

4. It is worth noting at the outset that the situation with respect to the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has changed since my last opinion, some six months ago, and had also changed between that opinion and the one before it, almost a year and a half ago.

The National Assembly of Venezuela elected in 2015, which was headed by Juan Guaidó, and on the authority of which the latter claimed the title of ‘Interim President’ of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, has removed Juan Guaidó and has dissolved the ‘interim government’. The credentials then submitted allegedly on behalf of Venezuela for the previous sessions of the governing bodies in late April-early May 2024 were signed by Dinorah Figuera, whose purported title was only ‘President of the National Assembly’ and *not*, as with Juan Guaidó previously, also ‘President (I) of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’. The same is true for the almost identical letter of credentials submitted for these sessions of the governing bodies on 2 September 2024 and again signed by Dinorah Figuera as ‘President of the National Assembly’.

5. Further, the text of the letter presented to me in April 2024 differed significantly from previous versions submitted by Juan Guaidó, in that the letter of April 2024 appeared to ‘ratify’ a delegation made unanimously and in plenary session in March 2018 to the purported delegate, William Barrientos Vicuña. This delegation, however, appeared from the letter to refer to a specific maritime casualty only, namely the incident involving the tanker *Plate Princess* of 27 May 1997. The same is true of the text of the nearly identical letter presented to me now, in October 2024.

6. In any event, and while I submit a full opinion regarding UN practice as instructed, I consider it important to state the following at the outset. Irrespective of the relevant practice of the UN, it appears that the letter signed by Ms Figuera does not conform to the relevant Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Assembly, the 1992 Fund Executive Committee, and the Fund Supplementary Assembly, and in particular to Rule 9, as restated most recently in Doc IOPC/APR24/1/1, Annex I, on credentials and notifications. In accordance with Rule 9, credentials must be issued by the Head of State, Head of Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the Ambassador/High Commissioner [accredited to the United Kingdom].¹ When credentials are issued by some other entity, then a letter from the appropriate authority [ie: those mentioned just previously] appointing the person authorised to issue credentials should be provided to the Director of the IOPC Funds.²

¹ See further Part V, below, and cf Doc IOPC/APR24/1/1 of 21 February 2024, Annex I, para 1.4.

² Ibid.

7. The credentials signed by Ms Figuera are not even purportedly issued by any of the entities stated in the applicable Rules of Procedure, which entities are entitled *ex officio* to represent a State internationally (cf Article 7(2) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, reflecting customary international law). The credentials are also not accompanied by a letter from such an entity (the ‘appropriate authority’) appointing either person as authorised to issue credentials. It follows that they are not even *prima facie* admissible and that they need not be considered any further.

8. Further, and since my last opinion of 24 April 2024, presidential elections have taken place in Venezuela on 28 July 2024. For the avoidance of doubt, and irrespective of the outcome of that election, the previous government of Venezuela remains in place until 9 January 2025. The winner of the election of 28 July 2024 is due to start the new term on 10 January 2025. Accordingly, there is no need to consider the effect of that election and the reactions to it for the purposes of this opinion. I would only note at this stage that the election is unlikely to affect the practice of the UN described below, at least for the current, 79th, session of the General Assembly.

9. All of the above being as it may, and in the interest of providing a full opinion as instructed, I will now proceed with the analysis of UN practice as stated earlier.

II. UN PRACTICE REGARDING CREDENTIALS

10. The practice of the United Nations regarding credentials continues to be that which Professor Sarooshi set out eloquently in his opinion of 6 October 2019. In summary, each UN organ establishes its own Credentials Committee in order to approve the credentials of delegations. However, the General Assembly's ('GA') decisions on credentials, on the basis of the report of the GA Credentials Committee, are considered – in accordance with the UN Office of Legal Affairs ('OLA') – as providing 'authoritative guidance' to other UN organs, even though they are not binding.³ In fact, this also applies, beyond UN organs, also to UN conferences. In an opinion to such a UN conference in 2011, the OLA recommended that, should a question of a State's participation be raised at the conference, '[the conference] recall that the General Assembly has accepted the State's credentials for the 65th session and that it is the practice of UN conferences to follow the guidance of the General Assembly on decisions relating to credentials'.⁴

11. That the same applies to specialised agencies of the UN follows from paragraph 3 of General Assembly Resolution 396 (V) regarding 'Recognition by the United Nations of the representation of a Member State'. In that resolution, the GA, '*considering* that it is in the interest of the Organisation that there should be uniformity in the procedure applicable whenever more than one authority claims to be the government entitled to represent a Member State in the United Nations', and that 'in virtue of its composition, the General Assembly is the organ of the United Nations in which consideration can be best given to the views of all Member States', '*recommends* that the attitude adopted by the General Assembly [...] should be taken into account in other organs of the United Nations *and in the specialised agencies*'.⁵

12. The GA Credentials Committee, which is composed of nine members proposed by the President of the GA and appointed by the GA at the beginning of each session,⁶ submits a report to the General Assembly, which then decides on credentials by means of a resolution,

³ See United Nations Juridical Yearbook 1985, 129 and cf Sarooshi Opinion of 6 October 2019, para 7.

⁴ United Nations Juridical Yearbook 2011, 495 para 6. For a reiteration of the OLA view referred to in the text in n 3 above, see *ibid* para 5.

⁵ UN Doc A/RES/396(V) of 14 December 1950, para 3 (emphasis added).

⁶ Rule 28 General Assembly Rules of Procedure.

based on the Committee’s report. In practice, the GA usually merely adopts a resolution approving the report of the Credentials Committee.⁷ Until the Committee has submitted its report and the GA has decided on the issue of credentials, State representatives are entitled to fully participate in the work of the Assembly, including by exercising the right to vote, even when an objection to their credentials has been raised—in the latter instance on a provisional basis.⁸

13. There are two instances in which the practice of the UN regarding representation and approval of credentials⁹ becomes crucial for present purposes: (a) when there are more than one authorities issuing credentials of delegations of the same State, in which case the Credentials Committee and the GA must decide which set of credentials will be approved; and (b) when, even though there is only one authority issuing credentials of a delegation, the Credentials Committee and the GA decide to reject those credentials, and even not to allow the relevant representatives to participate in the work of the Assembly.

14. As to the former instance, Professor Sarooshi’s opinion clearly sets out the legal position in paragraphs 9 and 10: ‘it is clear that when the GA decides that certain representatives are the “only lawful representatives of a Member State” then “it follows automatically that the authorities accrediting those representatives constitute in the view of the General Assembly – again for its purposes – the only lawful Government of that Member State”.’¹⁰ Further, ‘there is no settled legal criteria that has consistently been applied by the UN in making such determinations. There was a tendency in a number of earlier cases (eg Iraq in 1958 and China in 1971) to use what is referred to as the “principle of effectiveness” – ie, whichever an authority can be said to exercise “effective control” throughout the territory of the State and is “habitually obeyed by the bulk of the population”,’¹¹ but in practice the Credentials Committee and the General Assembly have actually relied also on other considerations, including whether the relevant authority had come into power by constitutional means and the degree of international

⁷ See for example for the 74th session of the GA: UN Doc A/RES/74/179 of 18 December 2019; for the 75th session: UN Doc A/RES/75/19 of 7 December 2020; for the 76th session: UN Doc A/RES/76/15 of 6 December 2021; for the 77th session: UN Doc A/RES/77/239 of 16 December 2022; for the 78th session: UN Doc A/RES/78/124 of 18 December 2023.

⁸ Rule 29 General Assembly Rules of Procedure. See also Sarooshi Opinion of 6 October 2019, para 8.

⁹ The question whether representation of a State and approval of the credentials issued by the State’s government are two sides of the same coin, whether the power to decide over one is implied in the power to decide over the other, etc, is interesting but not crucial for present purposes. For a discussion see Dan Ciobanu, ‘Credentials of Delegations and Representation of Member States at the United Nations’ (1976) 25 ICLQ 351.

¹⁰ Referring to United Nations Juridical Yearbook 1972, 155 para 8.

¹¹ Referring to Memorandum on the Legal Aspects of the Problem of Representation in the United Nations, UN Doc S/1466 of 9 March 1950.

recognition it enjoyed.¹² In fact, while the principle of effectiveness had been included as an ‘objective’ criterion in the draft of what became General Assembly Resolution 396 (V), it was finally deleted, leaving only a reference to the purposes and principles of the UN and the circumstances of each case.¹³ A leading commentator wrote, accordingly, that ‘in testing the representativeness of a government, the political organs of the United Nations, like individual governments in bilateral relations, render *an essentially political judgment*’.¹⁴

15. As to the latter instance, it is possible, and it has happened, eg with respect to South Africa from 1970 onwards and until normalisation with the fall of Apartheid in 1994, that the Credentials Committee and the GA reject the credentials of a delegation even in the absence of a competing claim by another authority to issue credentials for the State’s delegation.¹⁵ This, however, appears to be extremely rare and is certainly not the issue with which the IOPC Funds are faced in the present instance. As such, a more detailed discussion is beyond the scope of the present opinion.

¹² See Sarooshi Opinion of 6 October 2019, para 10.

¹³ UN Doc A/RES/396(V) of 14 December 1950, para 1.

¹⁴ See Ciobanu, n 9, 370–371 (emphasis added).

¹⁵ A similar situation arose in the League of Nations in 1936, when the League considered whether to approve the credentials issued by Selassie on behalf of Ethiopia, given questions as to the extent of effective control he exercised over the territory, and notwithstanding the fact that there was no competing authority claiming the power to issue such credentials.

III. UN PRACTICE REGARDING THE REPRESENTATION OF VENEZUELA

16. In his opinion of 6 October 2019, Professor Sarooshi noted that ‘delegates from Maduro’s Government continue to represent Venezuela at the United Nations’.¹⁶ In my previous opinions of 24 April 2024, 24 October 2022, 17 March 2022, 25 October 2021, 24 March 2021, and 25 November 2020, I confirmed that this continued to be the case. I noted that there appeared to have been no submission of credentials of a delegation by the Guaidó authority or any other purported authority, or at least none was noted in the reports of the GA Credentials Committee from 2019 to 2023.

17. The Credentials Committee held its single meeting for the 74th session of the GA on 10 December 2019.¹⁷ The Credentials Committee accepted the credentials of all representatives of the Member States as submitted, including those of the Maduro Government on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in a resolution that was adopted without a vote.¹⁸ The Committee did note that ‘[t]he representative of the United States of America dissociated from the adoption of the Committee’s resolution, solely with respect to the acceptance of the credentials submitted by the Maduro representative on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’,¹⁹ but it does not appear that the US raised a formal objection.

18. In any event, the Credentials Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it adopt a resolution merely approving the Credentials Committee’s report,²⁰ which the General Assembly duly adopted on 18 December 2019.²¹ It appears from the Official Records of the 51st Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly that that resolution was also adopted without a vote,²² even though some delegations then took the floor to express their position that the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee did not signify a tacit recognition by the relevant States of the Maduro Government.²³ This was done out of an abundance of caution, and was done in that context also by some States with regard to States other than Venezuela. Other delegations, in turn, also took the floor to express their support for the Maduro Government.²⁴

¹⁶ See Sarooshi Opinion of 6 October 2019, para 12.

¹⁷ See UN Doc A/74/572 of 4 December 2019 [sic], paras 5–6.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, paras 7–8.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, para 9.

²⁰ *Ibid*, para 12.

²¹ UN Doc A/RES/74/179.

²² UN Doc A/74/PV.51 of 18 December 2019, 1.

²³ *Ibid*, 1–2.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 2–4.

As such, it was the Maduro Government that represented the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela during the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2019.

19. This was also the case during the next sessions of the General Assembly and continues to be so today. In fact, Maduro himself addressed the 75th session of the GA (though virtually, due to restrictions imposed as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic) on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on 23 September 2020.²⁵ There was no submission of competing credentials on behalf of the Guaidó authority or any other authority during this session. The Credentials Committee met on 23 November 2020 and made a recommendation to the GA that was almost identical to that of 2019, recommending adoption of a resolution merely approving the Credentials Committee's report.²⁶ The GA also adopted a decision that was similar to that of 2019 on 1 December 2020.²⁷ The resolution was adopted without a vote and again some delegations took the floor to indicate that the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee did not signify a tacit recognition by the relevant States of the Maduro Government, while others also took the floor to express their support for the Maduro Government.²⁸

20. During the 76th session of the General Assembly in 2021, there were two instances in which competing credentials were submitted for representatives of States: neither, however, referred to Venezuela, but rather to Myanmar and Afghanistan. On those two sets of credentials the Credentials Committee opted to 'defer' its decision.²⁹ The credentials submitted by the Maduro Government, however, were once again the only credentials submitted for Venezuela to the Credentials Committee, which recommended their adoption to the General Assembly, with the usual dissociation by the US representative on the Committee.³⁰ The General Assembly, in turn, adopted the recommended resolution without a vote, as per its usual practice.³¹

21. During the 77th session of the General Assembly in 2022, the Credentials Committee again had to deal with competing credentials – which however did not refer to Venezuela, but

²⁵ See <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073382>> and <https://estatemnts.unmeetings.org/estatemnts/10.0010/20200923/aCaK5IQSX0PR/KAwodvEAAVpK_en.pdf> (both accessed 22 November 2020).

²⁶ UN Doc A/RES/75/606 of 23 November 2020, paras 8, 13.

²⁷ UN Doc A/RES/75/19 of 7 December 2020.

²⁸ See UN Doc A/75/PV.33 of 1 December 2020, 17–18.

²⁹ See UN Doc A/76/550 of 1 December 2021, paras 7–9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, paras 5, 10–12.

³¹ UN Doc A/RES/76/15 of 6 December 2021.

rather to Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Libya.³² The credentials submitted by the Maduro Government were once again the only credentials submitted for Venezuela to the Credentials Committee, which recommended their adoption to the General Assembly, with the usual dissociation by the US representative on the Committee.³³ The General Assembly, in turn, adopted the recommended resolution without a vote, as per its usual practice.³⁴ Notably, neither the US nor any other State took the floor to make any statements on the Maduro Government after the adoption of the Resolution.³⁵

22. During the 78th session of the General Assembly in 2023, not only was the Maduro Government the only one to submit credentials on behalf of Venezuela as usual, which the Credentials Committee recommended that the General Assembly accept, but this time there was no dissociation by the US.³⁶ The General Assembly, in turn, adopted the recommended resolution without a vote, as per its usual practice.³⁷

23. The Credentials Committee has been appointed for the current, 79th, session of the General Assembly.³⁸ However, the Committee has not yet met in order to consider the credentials submitted to it and to make a recommendation to the General Assembly. This is unsurprising, as previous practice indicates that the relevant meetings tend to take place toward the end of November or the beginning of December – and thus after the date of this opinion. However, and as noted in the introduction to this opinion, the Maduro Government that started its term on 10 January 2019 continues in place until 9 January 2025; the election of 28 July 2024 is meant to determine who takes over or continues as the President of Venezuela from 10 January 2025. As such, there is little expectation that anything will change with respect to the acceptance of its credentials for the current, 79th, session of the General Assembly.

24. It should be noted, finally, that even before the decisions of the GA based on the reports of the Credentials Committee in December 2019, November 2020, December 2021, December 2022, and December 2023, UN conferences had followed the guidance of the GA in accepting

³² UN Doc A/77/600 of 12 December 2022, paras 8–10.

³³ *Ibid*, paras 5, 11, 14.

³⁴ UN Doc A/RES/77/239 of 16 December 2022.

³⁵ See UN Doc A/77/PV.55 of 16 December 2022.

³⁶ See UN Doc A/78/605 of 6 December 2023, para 5.

³⁷ UN Doc A/RES/78/124 of 21 December 2023.

³⁸ See UN Doc A/79/251 of 13 September 2024.

the credentials issued by the Maduro Government for the 73rd session in December 2018,³⁹ even though Guaidó declared himself interim President on 23 January 2019. The Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation convened in Buenos Aires on 20–22 March 2019, ie after the declaration by Guaidó, approved the report of the Credentials Committee established for that conference, and which had accepted the credentials submitted by the Maduro Government in a resolution adopted without a vote (though again with some ‘dissociations’).⁴⁰ Both Russia and China noted, in that connection, that the GA had accepted the credentials issued by the Maduro Government for the 73rd session of the GA,⁴¹ implicitly pointing to the ‘authoritative guidance’ discussed above, in Part II of this opinion. UN conferences have continued this practice, as did recently the Credentials Committee for the Intergovernmental Conference on an internationally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction on 23 August 2022,⁴² and the Credentials Committee for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States on 29 May 2024.⁴³

25. What follows from this practice is that (a) the Maduro Government continues to represent and appoint representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the United Nations, its specialised agencies, and conferences; (b) the Maduro Government is likely to continue to do so given the ‘authoritative guidance’ already given by the General Assembly in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023; (c) it appears that neither the Guaidó authority nor any other authority has sought to challenge this position through the submission of competing credentials, at least to my knowledge and at this time.

³⁹ See UN Doc A/RES/73/193 of 17 December 2018, approving the report of the Credentials Committee in UN Doc A/73/600 of 28 November 2018.

⁴⁰ See UN Doc A/CONF.235/5 of 20 March 2019, paras 10–14.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, paras 15–16.

⁴² See UN Doc A/CONF.232/2022/8.

⁴³ See UN Doc A/CONF.223/2024/5.

IV. PRACTICE IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

26. Beyond the UN system, discussed in Parts II and III of this opinion, I am not aware of any global international organisation having switched its accreditation from representatives appointed by the Maduro Government to representatives appointed by the Guaidó authority or any other authority. However, two regional organisations, namely the Inter-American Development Bank ('IDB') and the Organisation of American States ('OAS') did accept the appointment of representatives put forward by the Guaidó authority in 2019 and, in the case of OAS, also in 2020.

27. The IDB (and the Inter-American Investment Corporation) adopted resolution AG-1/19 and CII/AG-1/19, entitled 'Governor and Executive Director for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela' on 15 March 2019. In it, they 'take note that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has designated Mr. Ricardo Hausmann as Governor of the Bank and the Corporation and that prior designations by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to such position have been revoked.'⁴⁴ The Agreement establishing the Inter-American Development Bank simply provides in Article VIII(2)(a) that 'each member country of the Bank shall appoint a governor who shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.' The IDB does not set up a credentials committee, nor had it ever before faced a situation where two competing authorities were claiming the power to appoint Governors, according to the IDB's in-house counsel, writing in his personal capacity.⁴⁵ Given that '[a]ll the powers of the Bank shall be vested in the Board of Governors' according to the same provision noted above, the Board simply 'took note' of the designation by the Guaidó authority and of the revocation of any previous designations by the Maduro Government. There is no record of any vote, or of any relevant discussion in the Board. There appear to be no further relevant resolutions in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, or 2024.⁴⁶

28. The OAS also does not provide for a credentials committee. Rather, under Rule 27 of the OAS General Assembly Rules of Procedure, the Secretary-General receives credentials (as per Rule 3) and submits a report to the General Assembly of the Organisation. The General Assembly resolved '[t]o accept the Permanent Representative to the Organization of American

⁴⁴ Doc AG-1/19 and CII/AG-1/19 of 15 March 2019, para 1.

⁴⁵ Félix A Quintero Vollmer, 'International Law or International Politics? The Guaidó v Maduro Conundrum at the Inter-American Development Bank' (2019) 51 U Miami Inter-American LR 118, 138.

⁴⁶ See < <https://www.iadb.org/en/who-we-are/how-we-are-organized/board-governors/resolutions-governors> > (accessed 28 October 2024).

States, designated by the National Assembly of Venezuela, until new presidential elections are held and result in the appointment of a democratically-elected government’ on 28 June 2019,⁴⁷ following a Resolution of the Permanent Council with the same content on 9 April 2019.⁴⁸ The latter session did give rise to serious disagreements, with the Uruguayan delegation reportedly leaving the session in protest, and with eight other States voting against the decision, which was finally passed by 18 affirmative votes, there being also 6 abstentions.⁴⁹ A similar situation appeared to continue in 2020.⁵⁰ However, the only relevant resolution passed by the Permanent Council in 2024 refers to the 28 July 2024 election, and simply ‘acknowledge[s] the substantial and peaceful participation of the electorate of Venezuela in the elections held on July 28, 2024’ and ‘urge[s] the National Electoral Council of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to:(a) expeditiously publish the presidential election records, including the voting results at the level of each polling station, and (b) respect the fundamental principle of popular sovereignty through an impartial verification of the results that ensures the transparency, credibility, and legitimacy of the electoral process’.⁵¹

29. The first thing to note regarding this practice is that the two organisations discussed above are organisations that, to quote the IDB in-house counsel, ‘share almost the same regional membership’.⁵² The second thing to note is that the organisations that are closest to the structure and function of the IDB on a global level are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which however have no Governors that have been appointed for Venezuela—the positions appear to be vacant.⁵³ This means that neither the Guaidó authority nor any other authority has either sought, or managed, to make similar appointments in these global international organisations. The organisation that is closest to the structure and function of the OAS on the global level is the United Nations, which – as discussed in Part III of this opinion – has not switched its accreditation from the Maduro Government’s appointees to the Guaidó author-

⁴⁷ Doc AG/RES.2944 (XLIX-O/19) of 28 June 2019, para 1.

⁴⁸ Doc CP/RES.1124 (2217/19) of 10 April 2019, para 1.

⁴⁹ See Federica Paddeu and Alonso Gurmendi Dunkelberg, ‘Recognition of Governments: Legitimacy and Control Six Months after Guaidó’ [2019] *Opinio Juris* (18 July), available at: <<http://opiniojuris.org/2019/07/18/recognition-of-governments-legitimacy-and-control-six-months-after-guaido/>> (accessed 24 November 2020); see also Quintero Vollmer, n 45, 135.

⁵⁰ See Doc AG/RES.2963 (L-O/20) of 21 October 2020, para 11.

⁵¹ Doc CP/RES.1261 (2508/24) of 16 August 2024, paras 1 and 6, respectively.

⁵² Quintero Vollmer, n 45, 133.

⁵³ See <<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/45fc8267f59fdf50a364f6538c2817e7-0330032021/original/Bank-Governors.pdf>> and <<https://www.imf.org/en/About/executive-board/members-quotas>> (both accessed 28 October 2024).

ity's, or any other authority's, appointees. The third and most important thing to note for present purposes is that the IOPC Funds are not particularly similar to either the IDB or the OAS. In particular, the IOPC Funds are global treaty bodies, established by treaties adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organisation, a UN specialised agency. Their global reference and clear – if not direct – relationship with the broader UN system would militate against aligning with practice that appears to be outlying and limited to organisations with reference to the Americas, and rather in favour of falling in with the practice of the United Nations, its specialised agencies, and its conferences. An overview of the relevant provisions regarding accreditation in the IOPC Funds, in Part V below, further confirms this by demonstrating the close relationships of those provisions with the applicable provisions in the UN system.

V. THE IOPC FUNDS

30. The Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Assembly, the 1992 Fund Executive Committee, and the Fund Supplementary Assembly are very similar to those of the General Assembly of the UN regarding the establishment and operation of Credentials Committee(s). They provide for the establishment at each session of a Credentials Committee. The 1992 Fund Assembly Credentials Committee, composed of five members elected by the Assembly at the proposal of the Chair, examines the credentials of delegations of Member States and reports to the Assembly.⁵⁴ Even if an objection is made to the admission of a representative, the representative is allowed to sit provisionally with the same rights as other representatives until the Credentials Committee has reported and the Assembly has made its decision.⁵⁵

31. The Rules of Procedure of the 1992 Fund Executive Committee and the Fund Supplementary Assembly are almost identical, except for providing for fewer (three) members of the relevant Credentials Committees.⁵⁶ However, when these two bodies are holding sessions in conjunction with the Assembly, then the 1992 Fund Assembly Credentials Committee is the one that undertakes to examine credentials for all bodies.⁵⁷

32. In the present instance, the 1992 Fund Assembly Credentials Committee will examine thus credentials for the purpose of the meetings of the other bodies as well. It has received credentials signed by Ambassador Félix Plasencia González, Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the IMO and to International Organisations seated in the United Kingdom, authorised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yvan Gil Pinto. It has also received (competing) credentials signed by Dinorah Figuera as President of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

33. Yvan Gil Pinto is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; while Ambassador Félix Plasencia González is accredited to the United Kingdom as Chargé d’Affaires *ad hoc* in the United Kingdom (where the Headquarters of the IOPC Funds are located) and Permanent Representative to the IMO, as required by Rule 9 of the 1992 Fund

⁵⁴ Rule 10 1992 Fund Assembly Rules of Procedure.

⁵⁵ Rule 11 1992 Fund Assembly Rules of Procedure.

⁵⁶ Rules 9–10 1992 Fund Executive Committee Rules of Procedure; Rules 10–11 Supplementary Fund Rules of Procedure.

⁵⁷ See Doc 92FUND/A/ES.9/28 of March 2005, paras 24.5–24.7.

Assembly Rules of Procedure. This is clear from the London Diplomatic List available through the UK Government.⁵⁸ Dinorah Figuera is, or claims to be, the President of the National Assembly, ie not a person entitled to issue credentials in accordance with Rule 9, and as already explained in Part I of this opinion. In the instance, then, the credentials signed by Ambassador Félix Plasencia González clearly conform to Rule 9 of the 1992 Fund Assembly Rules of Procedure. On the other hand, the credentials signed by Ms Dinorah Figuera clearly do not conform to the same rule.

34. For the credentials signed by Ms Figuera to conform to the Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure, the IOPC Funds would have to decide that Ms Figuera is the Head of State, the Head of Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela – something which not even Ms Figuera claims in the relevant document. If the IOPC Funds were to conform to their own Rules of Procedure, and to follow UN practice in this respect, they would have to accept the credentials signed by Ambassador Félix Plasencia González and reject those signed by Ms Dinorah Figuera.



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⁵⁸ See < <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ffed54c71e42688b65f186/LONDON-DIPLOMATIC-LIST-October-2024.odt> > (accessed 28 October 2024).

APPENDIX 1**Table of Authorities****List of Documents**

Rules of Procedure of the United Nations General Assembly

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 396 (V) of 14 December 1950

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/193 of 17 December 2018

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/179 of 18 December 2019

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/19 of 1 December 2020

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/15 of 6 December 2021

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 77/239 of 16 December 2022

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 78/124 of 18 December 2023

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/73/600 of 28 November 2018

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/74/572 of 4 December 2019

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/75/606 of 23 November 2020

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/76/550 of 1 December 2021

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/77/600 of 12 December 2022

Report of the Credentials Committee, UN Doc A/78/605 of 6 December 2023

Agenda of the 79th Session of the General Assembly, UN Doc A/79/251 of 13 September 2024

51st Plenary Meeting Procès-Verbaux, UN Doc A/74/PV.51 of 18 December 2019

33rd Plenary Meeting Procès-Verbaux, UN Doc A/75/PV.33 of 1 December 2020

55th Plenary Meeting Procès-Verbaux, UN Doc A/77/PV.55 of 16 December 2022

Report of the Credentials Committee [of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation], UN Doc A/CONF.235/5 of 20 March 2019

Report of the Credentials Committee [of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction], UN Doc A/CONF.232/2022/8 of 23 August 2022

Report of the Credentials Committee [of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States], UN Doc A/CONF.223/2024/5 of 29 May 2024

[IDB] Resolution AG-1/19 and CII/AG-1/19 of 15 March 2019

[OAS] Doc AG/RES.2944 (XLIX-O/19) of 28 June 2019

[OAS] Doc CP/RES.1124 (2217/19) of 10 April 2019

[OAS] Doc CP/RES.1261 (2508/24) of 16 August 2024

[OAS] Doc AG/RES.2963 (L-O/20) of 21 October 2020

[IOPC Funds] Doc 92FUND/A/ES.9/28 of March 2005

[IOPC Funds] Doc IOPC/APR24/1/1 of 21 February 2024

List of Other Authorities

Dan Ciobanu, ‘Credentials of Delegations and Representation of Member States at the United Nations’ (1976) 25 ICLQ 351

Federica Paddeu and Alonso Gurmendi Dunkelberg, ‘Recognition of Governments: Legitimacy and Control Six Months after Guaidó’ [2019] *Opinio Juris* (18 July), available at: <<http://opiniojuris.org/2019/07/18/recognition-of-governments-legitimacy-and-control-six-months-after-guaido/>>

Félix A Quintero Vollmer, ‘International Law or International Politics? The Guaidó v Maduro Conundrum at the Inter-American Development Bank’ (2019) 51 *U Miami Inter-American LR* 118

United Nations Juridical Yearbook 1972

United Nations Juridical Yearbook 1985

United Nations Juridical Yearbook 2011

APPENDIX 2**Biographical Information**

Antonios Tzanakopoulos is Professor of Public International Law at the University of Oxford, a Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford, and door tenant at Three Stone Chambers in Lincoln's Inn, London. He is the Secretary-General of the International Law Association. Antonios advises States, international organisations, and other actors on matters of international law and has acted as counsel before the International Court of Justice and international arbitral tribunals. His publications include *Disobeying the Security Council – Countermeasures Against Wrongful Sanctions* (Oxford 2011, reissued 2013), the leading treatise on reactions to illegal acts by international organisations. A full CV is available at < <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/people/antonios-tzanakopoulos>>.