



## ***CIVIC FORUM: THE APPOINTMENT OF NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE) AUTHORITIES IS A FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO THE RECOVERY OF ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONALITY***

Venezuela is going through a decisive moment today. The plural configuration of the new National Electoral Council opens a new cycle in the history of an institution whose questionable performance undermined confidence in the vote. It is a first step towards the difficult recovery of democratic institutions in Venezuela. This process should be conceived as a journey in stages that requires the commitment and work of all Venezuelans.

The appointment of a plural electoral authority opens up an opportunity and constitutes the first sign of political will. Some might rate it as insufficient, and if we consider all that is lacking, it certainly is. However, the social and political effort that led to the appointment of this new CNE directive is an example of what we can achieve when joining forces.

We know that there are sectors that have their reservation about this process. However, the Civic Forum considers it prudent to evaluate the appointments with serenity, sensing the breadth of opportunities that may open up to rebuild our country's democratic project.

Recovering our institutions demands that we stand firm and united in building the transformation we need, continuing to do what needs to be done for the common good.

It is necessary to continue moving forward together so that the electoral agenda is respected. This agenda includes an electoral schedule; the restoration of the right of political parties to use their symbols and to be directed by their legitimate authorities; the ability of opposition political leaders to participate in elections; qualified national and international electoral observation; and total audits and updating of the Electoral Registry so that the millions of Venezuelans who are outside the electoral registry can exercise their right to political participation. To continue on the path of democratic recovery in the country, it is necessary to produce a true crusade of citizenship that rescues the right to choose.

Those of us who are part of the Civic Forum - members of churches and communities of faith, universities, academies, the business sector, unions, and social organizations, among others - believe in voting as our best and most legitimate tool of struggle. Therefore, conscious that an election alone will not solve the crisis that is causing the suffering of Venezuelans, we decided to nominate candidates for CNE rectors, aware that the peaceful resolution of the Venezuelan conflict unavoidably requires holding free, fair, and



democratic elections. We invite citizens to see the appointment of this new CNE as a first and crucial step, which we salute.

It is imperative that the new rectors firmly assume a full commitment to democracy, consistent with the historical moment of their appointment. They must show the will and the ability to implement agreements that return sovereignty to the people, promoting trust and participation. It is essential that the new CNE work for all Venezuelans. From the diverse spaces that summon us, we will continue in the firm and peaceful fight for the defense of citizens' rights: the right to participate, the right to vote freely, the right to choose and be elected, the right to democratic alternation. All of this is part of the fight for fundamental rights, and for this reason, the Civic Forum also works to mediate in the search for urgent solutions to alleviate the severe crisis we are suffering.

We trust that to the extent that we obtain concrete results and the opening of spaces for advances in democratic construction, the people of Venezuela will renew their hope that a different future is possible for all. With this, we seek to open the possibility of a national dialogue that includes all sectors and leads us to a comprehensive negotiation that ensures democratic stability and future governance. Therefore, we call on the international community to accompany this work. We Venezuelans want to choose our destiny, and that requires the broadest and most constructive cooperation possible.

From the Civic Forum, we invite the people of Venezuela to resolutely reaffirm their commitment to building a new democracy that will lead us to progress and well-being. We will continue in the struggle!

Caracas, Venezuela  
May 4th, 2021