

《Venezuela kicks off constituent assembly campaign》

Venezuela on Sunday kicked off a series of campaigns for candidates to the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), which will be charged with rewriting the 1999 constitution.

Venezuelans will go to the polls on July 30 to elect the 545 members of the ANC.

Leaders of the ruling socialist PSUV party took part in a ceremony in the capital Caracas, marking the start of the campaign period.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro waves to people at a gathering in support of him and his proposal for the National Constituent Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela, June 27, 2017. /VCG Photo

The country's right-wing opposition groups, meanwhile, continued to protest the government and the constitutional initiative, which they believe is an effort by President Nicolas Maduro to consolidate power.

Maduro has said the initiative aims to promote national dialogue and civic participation in a bid to overcome the political crisis that has brought government to a virtual standstill. The opposition-controlled congress refused to

cooperate with the PSUV-led executive.

Former foreign minister Delcy Rodriguez, who quit her post to run as a candidate, said she was certain the initiative could serve to break the political deadlock.



Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez speaks during a news conference on the sidelines of the Organization of American States (OAS) 47th General Assembly in Cancun, Mexico June 20, 2017. /VCG Photo

"I am deeply convinced (the ACN) is the only immediate means we Venezuelans have to overcome the violence, the hate, the intolerance," Rodriguez said in an interview with Televen TV.

However, not everyone is so sure.

Luisa Ortega, Venezuela's attorney general, unsuccessfully called on the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) to annul the process.



General Attorney Luisa Ortega Diaz speaks at a press conference at the Attorney General's headquarters, Caracas, Venezuela. /VCG Photo

Maduro has said that once drafted, the new constitution will be submitted to a referendum vote, so citizens can decide "whether they approve or not the new perfected, expanded, improved constitution."

The right-wing coalition, known by its Spanish acronym MUD, plans to hold an unofficial referendum of its own on July 16 to gauge whether the initiative has popular support.

(Source: Xinhua)

