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Hugo Chavez comfortably wins Venezuela presidential election

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has comfortably won a fourth consecutive term in office after a hotly-contested presidential election in the Latin American country.

The National Electoral Council announced on Sunday that President Chavez won the majority, taking 54.42 percent of the votes, compared with 44.97 percent for opposition candidate Henrique Capriles.

Thousands of jubilant supporters of the 58-year-old president poured onto the streets across the capital city of Caracas to celebrate the victory, right after the electoral council president Tibisay Lucena announced the results.

Lucena also said that with 90 percent of the ballots counted, Chavez took 7,444,082 votes, while Capriles secured 6,151,554 votes.

She added that the turnout in the country's election was 80.94 percent of the 19 million eligible voters.

The 40-year-old opposition candidate has congratulated President Chavez for winning a six-year-term after about 14 years in office.

While addressing his supporters in front of the Miraflores presidential palace, President Chavez thanked Venezuelans for their ongoing support and considered the election as a "perfect democratic battle on all fronts."

Chavez, who survived a Washington-engineered coup in 2002, is a fierce US critic. He has managed to win popularity among the long-neglected poor for his strategy to use oil revenues to fund the country's health and education sectors.

The Venezuelan president has also played a key role in forming a powerful alliance of Latin American nations.

Bolivian President Evo Morales congratulated President Chavez on his re-election, describing it as a victory for Latin America.

"It is not just a victory for the people of Venezuela. It is a victory for the Bolivarian alliance and all of Latin America," Morales added.

Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa also praised Chavez's victory. "Viva Venezuela, viva the great fatherland, viva the Bolivarian Revolution!" Correa tweeted.