

Address by the minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Bruno Rodriguez to present draft resolution “Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade imposed by the United

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Your Excellency Mr. Chairman;

Your Excellencies Permanent Representatives;

Delegates;

In 2020, Cuba, like the rest of the world, was faced with the singular challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. administration took on the virus as an ally in its merciless non-conventional war; it deliberately and opportunistically stepped up the economic, commercial and financial blockade, bringing about losses for the country in the amount of around 5 billion dollars.

President Donald Trump implemented 243 unilateral coercive measures to restrict the visit of U.S. travelers and harm third tourist markets; adopted wartime measures to deprive us from fuel supplies; hounded the health services we provide in many countries; increased harassment against commercial and financial transactions in other markets, and set its mind to intimidate foreign investors and commercial entities with the application of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.

It also prevented regular and institutional flow of remittances to Cuban families; deal a harsh blow to the self-employed or private sector, and hindered relations with Cubans living in the United States and family reunification.

All these measures remain very much in place and implemented today and, paradoxically, are shaping the conduct of the current U.S. administration precisely during the months in which Cuba has experienced the highest infection rates, the highest death toll, and a higher economic cost associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The campaign platform of the Democratic Party promised voters a speedy reversal of the actions taken by Donald Trump's Administration, particularly the removal of restrictions regarding travel and remittances to Cuba and compliance with the bilateral migratory agreements, including the granting of visas.

Evidence shows that a large majority of U.S. citizens support the lifting of the blockade and their freedom to travel to the island, and that Cubans living in this country want normal relations and wellbeing for their families.

Some blame this baneful inertia on the electoral ambitions associated with Florida or on far-from-transparent balances of political and legislative elites in Washington.

What do those who voted for President Joseph Biden think about what is going on?

Mr. President;

The human damage caused by the blockade cannot be measured. No Cuban family is spared from the effects of this inhuman policy. Nobody could honestly state that it has no actual impact on the population.

In the health field, impossibility to access equipment, technology, devices, treatments and ideal drugs that cannot be procured from U.S. companies and must be obtained at skyrocketing prices through intermediaries or replaced by less effective generic drugs, even for sick newly born and children, persists.

But now, the sly blow to our finances and COVID-19- related expenses, which amount to 2 billion pesos and 300 million dollars, also cause shortages or lack of medicaments for use in hospitals that make the difference between life and death, as well as difficulties for persons to buy in time the insulin, antibiotics, pain killers, and drugs for blood pressure, allergy and other chronic disease treatments.

Cuba sought to protect everyone against the virus; it activated its sound and universal health system; relied on the dedication, willingness to sacrifice and high qualification of its personnel; mobilized its scientists and its world class biopharmaceutical industry, and harnessed the unambiguous support and consensus of the people, particularly of the youth and students, who volunteered to work in the red zones and on epidemiological screening.

That was why we succeeded in developing highly effective domestic protocols to treat both COVID-19 confirmed and under investigation cases; creating conditions to hospitalize all confirmed cases; ensuring the sustainability of intensive care services, institutional isolation of contacts of confirmed cases and free access to PCR or antigen tests; as well as commissioning molecular biology labs in all provinces of the country.

When the blockade cruelly prevented the supply of ventilators, Cuba developed its domestic production with its own prototypes.

All this effort by the nation has enabled us to maintain a comparatively low case fatality rate throughout the pandemic, particularly among our health personnel, infants, children, and pregnant women.

It is remarkable that a small island subjected to a blockade has been able to produce 5 vaccine candidates and apply 3 of them –in intervention studies or sanitary interventions– to 2,244,350 Cubans with at least one shot and plans to immunize 70% of the population during this summer and the whole population before the end of the year, despite the fact that the blockade is seriously hampering the industrial scale-up of vaccine production.

This illustrates the results of putting science to the service of the people as well as the effectiveness of civil service.

When the slanderous campaign of the U.S. administration against our medical cooperation was intensified amidst the pandemic, Cuba sent 57 specialized brigades of the “Henry Reeve International Contingent” to 40 countries or territories, in addition to the over 28,000 health professionals already providing services in 59 nations.

The blockade also deprives the national industry of the funds to procure required inputs for the production of food –causing a drop in pork production– and other goods.

Food imports from the United States are under strict licenses and discriminatory conditions. Their small levels, on the other hand, do not compare to the enormous toll exacted on our finances by the blockade and the effects of its extraterritorial application in third markets.

I bear witness to the suffering and distress that shortage of and instability in the supply of essential and basic goods causes in Cuban households, visible in the long lines that weigh down Cubans every day amidst the pandemic.

The measures to step up the blockade amidst the pandemic and under the global economic crisis also have a decisive impact on the shortage of supplies in stores, inflation or soaring prices, despite the strenuous efforts of the government.

As Army General Raul Castro stated last April 16, and I quote: “the damage caused by these measures to the living standards of the population is not accidental or the result of collateral effects; it is the result of a deliberate purpose to punish the Cuban people as a whole”, end of quote.

The blockade is a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people as a whole that, pursuant to Article II c) of the Geneva Convention of 1948, constitutes an act of genocide.

Mr. President;

U.S. authorities have cynically tried to plant the idea of the failure of our system and the ineffectiveness of the Cuban government; that the coercive measures do not affect the people nor are actually a significant factor for the difficulties faced by the domestic economy.

But let us review the data. From April 2019 to December 2020, the damages caused by the blockade amounted to over 9.1 billion dollars at current prices, an average of 436 million dollars per month. During the last five years, losses due to the blockade exceeded the amount of 17 billion dollars. At current prices, the accumulated damages in six decades amount to over 147.8 billion dollars, and against the price of gold, it amounts to over 1.3 trillion dollars.

Last June 10, our banking and financial system was compelled to temporarily suspend the acceptance of cash deposits in US dollars. This is an inevitable measure in the wake of the obstacles created by the blockade to dispose of or give use value to that currency, a step we would have wanted to avoid but could not be put off any longer.

This is an extraterritorial economic war against a small country, already affected by the recession and global economic crisis caused by the pandemic that has deprived us of much needed revenues, as the ones derived from tourism.

As President Miguel Diaz-Canel stated on April 19, and I quote: “nobody with an ounce of honesty and publicly available economic data can disregard the fact that this siege is the main obstacle to the country’s development and in our quest for prosperity and wellbeing”, end of quote.

I wonder what would happen in other economies, including those of rich countries, if subjected to similar conditions. What would be the social and political repercussions?

Mr. President;

The blockade is a politically motivated act, clearly described in the infamous memorandum of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lester Mallory, dated April 6, 1960, and I quote:

“Every possible means should be immediately used to weaken the economic life... denying Cuba funds and supplies to reduce nominal and real salaries with the objective of provoking hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government,” end of quote.

It is maliciously complemented by a fierce campaign of political interference in the internal affairs with subversive programs to which the US Administration allocates every year tens of millions of dollars from the federal budget and additional amounts from covert funds. The purpose is to create political and social instability amidst the economic difficulties created by the same US Administration.

They reckon that if they subject the Cuban population to hardships and promote artificial leaders who incite to chaos and instability, they could create a virtual political movement in digital networks to be later transposed into the real world.

They invest considerable resources, social labs and high-tech tools in a frenzied campaign aimed at discrediting Cuba with shameless lies and the manipulation of information. They unleash a renewed McCarthyism, ideological intolerance and brutal attack against those who uphold the truth.

Some even dream about provoking social chaos, disorder, violence and death in Cuba. It is no surprise, since this is a political weapon already used against other countries with fatal consequences.

A few rave about provoking an irregular and uncontrolled migratory flow from Cuba to the United States. This is a dangerous bet about which we have warned the US government, who has the legal and moral obligation to honor the migratory agreements, particularly regarding the granting of visas. This is a sensitive issue that costs lives.

Mr. President;

The states here represented are a victim of the extraterritorial effect of the blockade that infringes upon their sovereignty, violates their domestic legislations, subjects them to U.S. Court rulings and are detrimental to the interests of their companies wishing to maintain relations with both countries, all of which is contrary to international law.

It is neither legal nor ethical for the government of a power to wage an endless economic war against a small nation, for decades, in order to impose an alien political system and a government design by it. Depriving the population of an entire nation of its right to peace, development, wellbeing and human progress is unacceptable.

The fact that the U.S. government has ignored for 28 years the successive resolutions of this democratic and representative United Nations General Assembly is unacceptable and inadmissible.

In September 2000, Comandante en jefe Fidel Castro pointed out at this very rostrum, and I quote: "It is high time to strongly state that the principle of sovereignty cannot be sacrificed for the sake of an unjust and exploiting order in which an hegemonic superpower can decide everything on the basis of its power and strength," end of quote.

Cuba's demand is to be allowed to live in peace, with no blockade, and no persecution of our commercial and financial relations with the rest of the world.

We demand an end to the manipulations, discrimination, and obstacles that disrupt relations between Cubans living in the United States and their relatives in Cuba and with the country where they were born. We acknowledge the efforts of those who, in this time of trial, have maintained their communication with and support to their families in the island in the wake of hate and political persecution.

Many pragmatically argue –even within the U.S. Administration– that the blockade should be ended because it is an ineffective and anachronistic policy that has not and will not achieve its purpose and has ended discrediting and isolating the United States.

Manipulating the fight against terrorism for political and electoral purposes is also unacceptable.

In January this year, 9 days before the current administration took office, President Trump's administration included Cuba in an arbitrary and unilateral list of States that allegedly sponsor international terrorism and which has serious consequences in the global financial system.

No one can honestly argue that Cuba is a country which sponsors terrorism! No one! Recent disclosures expose the latest pretext to ridicule.

Nonetheless, last May 14, the State Department once again classified Cuba as a country that does not cooperate enough with U.S. counter-terrorism efforts, just as was done in 2020 during the previous administration.

Cuba has been the victim of terrorist acts organized, financed and executed by the U.S. government or from this country's territory, which have taken the lives of 3,478 Cubans and caused disabilities to another 2,099. There is overwhelming evidence of our attempts to cooperate and of effective cooperation between the two countries' agencies in recent years.

Our stand on terrorism is well known. We fully condemn such practices in whatever form or manifestation whatsoever.

Mr. President;

As our sovereign decision and for the good of the nation, Cuba has for several years been involved in an ongoing process to update our model and our socialist state of law and social justice, supported by the vast majority of the citizens in a free, direct and universal referendum.

This is a highly complex and challenging endeavor under any circumstances, but even more difficult under the persistent hostility of U.S. imperialism, which will in no way stop us or crush the will of present and future Cuban generations.

We deeply appreciate the solidarity aid of our fellow countrymen and of the friends of Cuba in many parts of the world, who we greatly cherish, including those that with great effort, given the opposition of the government, have arrived from the United States.

We are encouraged by the support received from thousands of persons around the world who have gathered to demand the U.S. government to put an end to the blockade. Many Cubans who uphold the solitary star flag even here in this country have been among the protagonists of these actions.

On behalf of my country and its honorable and generous people that resists and heroically advances, I submit draft resolution A/75/L.97 "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" to your consideration.

The blockade asphyxiates and kills, just like the virus and must end!

Homeland or Death! We shall prevail!

Thank you.