



Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations

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**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA,
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**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE
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Mr. President,

I wish to congratulate you on your election and reiterate to you our confidence on your capacity to unerringly conduct our works and deliberations.

Likewise I would like to recognize the excellent work developed by Father Miguel D' Escoto, President of the recently concluded session. The ethical dimension and the political scope of his presidency, which enabled us to move forward in the purpose of giving back to this Assembly all of its powers, will stand as a required benchmark in the future. Thanks to his example, it has become clearer to us now that reforming the United Nations Organization is about democratizing it and bringing it closer to the peoples.

Since the celebration of the General Debate one year ago, important events have occurred in the international arena. Climate change is now more visible and dangerous. The economic crisis became intense and global. Social exclusion increased.

However, the international community reacted with profound optimism to the change of government in Washington. It seemed that a period of extreme aggressiveness, unilateralism and arrogance in the foreign policy of that country had come to an end and the infamous legacy of the George W. Bush regime had been sunk in repudiation.

As it was realized at this same conference room, the original and conciliatory speech from the White House has raised great hopes and its reiterated messages about change, dialogue and cooperation have been welcomed. Unfortunately, time goes by and the speech does not seem to be supported by concrete facts. His speech does not coincide with reality.

The most serious and dangerous aspect about this new situation is the uncertainty about the real capacity on the part of the present authorities in Washington to get over the political and ideological trends that threatened the world under the previous administration.

The neoconservative forces that took George Bush to the presidency, which promoted the use of force and domination with the support of the US colossal military and economic power, the ones to blame for crimes such as torture, assassination and the manipulation of the American people, have very quickly regrouped and still have the reins of power and considerable influence, which is contrary to the announced change.

The detention and torture center in the Guantanamo Naval Base –which usurps part of the Cuban territory-, has not been shut down. The occupation troops in Iraq have not withdrawn. The war in Afghanistan is expanding and is threatening other States.

As for Cuba, which has suffered the US aggression for half a century, the new US government announced some new measures on April last to abolish some of the most brutal actions taken by the George W. Bush administration which prevented any contact between Cubans resident in the United States and their relatives in Cuba, particularly, the possibility to visit them and send them some assistance without any limitation. These measures are a positive step, but they are extremely limited and insufficient.

The announced measures included the authorization to some US companies to carry out certain telecom operations with Cuba, but other restrictions that prevent their implementation have not been modified. Neither has there been any signal indicating that the US government is ready to put an end to the immoral practice –quite expanded in recent days- of misappropriation of the Cuban funds that remained frozen at American banks, and of other goods, based on orders issued by venal judges who violate their own laws.

The crucial thing is that the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba remains intact.

The US President, despite the existence of laws such as the Helms Burton Act, still has broad executive powers, such as the ones required to grant licenses, by means of which he could modify the implementation of the blockade.

Should there be a true desire to move towards change, the US government could authorize the export of Cuban goods and services to the United States and vice versa.

The United States could allow Cuba to buy any product containing more than 10 per cent of US components or technology anywhere in the world, regardless of its trademark or country of origin.

The US Treasury could abstain from persecuting, freezing and confiscating third countries transfers –whether in US dollars or in any other currency- to Cuban nationals or entities.

Washington could lift the ban that prevent third countries vessels from entering any US port until 180 days after touching any Cuban port.

The persecution unleashed by the US Treasury Department against financial institutions and companies that trade or carry out operations with Cuba could also be suspended.

President Obama could allow American citizens, by means of a license, to travel to Cuba, the only country in the world they are not allowed to visit.

The report submitted to this Assembly by the UN Secretary-General abounds with examples. In the course of 2009 numerous actions have been taken to impose fines, confiscate and hinder transactions carried out by Cuba or by third countries with Cuba.

As has been reported by the very US Treasury Department, since January this year, almost half of the funds collected by its Office of Foreign Assets Control came from the sanctions imposed on American and foreign companies for alleged violations of the economic blockade against Cuba.

The truthful and indisputable fact is that the new US government continues to ignore the overwhelming appeal that is launched by this General Assembly year after year to put an end to the blockade against Cuba.

Contrary to what all the American public opinion polls reflect, two weeks ago President Obama instructed the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury that "it was in the US national interest" to maintain the economic sanctions against Cuba under the Trade with the Enemy Act approved in 1917 to cope with war situations, which is only applicable to Cuba.

The US blockade against Cuba is an act of unilateral aggression that should be unilaterally terminated.

For many years Cuba has expressed its willingness to normalize relations with the United States.

On August 1st last, President Raúl Castro publicly reiterated Cuba's disposition to sustain a respectful, arm's length dialogue with the United States, without overshadowing our independence, sovereignty and self-determination. He emphasized that we should mutually respect our differences and that we do not recognize in the government of that or any other country, or in any other group of States any jurisdiction over our sovereign affairs.

The government of Cuba has suggested the US government a set of essential topics it considers must necessarily be discussed during a future process of dialogue aimed at improving relations, namely, the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade; the exclusion of Cuba from the spurious list of countries that sponsor terrorism; the abolition of the Cuban Adjustment Act and the "wet foot/dry foot" policy; the compensation for economic and human damages; the return of the territory occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base; the end of all radio and television aggressions from US territory against Cuba; and the cessation of the funding of domestic subversion.

An essential topic in that agenda is the release of the five Cuban anti terrorism fighters who have been unjustly imprisoned in the United States for eleven years. President Obama has the constitutional prerogatives to set them free, as an act of justice and of commitment by his government against terrorism.

Furthermore, we made a proposal to the United States to begin talks in order to establish cooperation to fight drug-trafficking, terrorism and human smuggling, to protect the environment and cope with natural disasters.

It has been in that spirit that the Cuban government has held talks on migration and the resumption of direct postal services with the US government. These talks have been respectful and fruitful.

Mr. President,

Cuba has broad and fruitful relations with countries all over the planet. Except for the United States, Cuba maintains friendly relations with all the countries in this hemisphere and enjoys solidarity from the whole region.

We maintain a fraternal cooperation with tens of countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ours is a stable country with a united, cultured and healthy people, which has proven, beyond any doubt, even under a blockade, that is capable of coping with the consequences of the global economic crisis and the effects of climate change, which last year cost the national economy 20 per cent of its GDP.

Cuba can cope with its own problems and look for a solution. We do it in a just and equitable society, which relies on its own efforts and has been able to move forward and develop under the most adverse conditions.

We are ready to continue facing those challenges with patience and equanimity, confident that not a single citizen has been or will be left to its own fate, and certain that we defend the cause of national independence and a socialist project that is overwhelmingly supported by the Cubans.

Those who try to put an end to the Revolution and bend the will of the Cuban people are suffering from delusions. Patriotism, social justice and the decision to defend independence are all part of our national identity.

Mr. President,

Latin America and the Caribbean are living through a dramatic juncture, characterized by the sharp contradictions that exist among the big majorities. They, together with the progressive governments and the broad social movements, are claiming for justice and equity in the face of the traditional oligarchies that insist in preserving its privileges.

The coup d'état in Honduras is a reflection of that. The putschists and usurpers that kidnapped the legitimate President of that country violate the Constitution and brutally repress the people, as was done during the dark years of the military dictatorships propped up by the United States in Latin America.

Hundreds of thousands of assassinated, missing and tortured peoples are restlessly weighing on the consciousness of "Our America" in the face of impunity.

Still there has not been any clarification as to why the plane that kidnapped the constitutional President of Honduras made a stopover at the US Air Base of Palmerola. The American fascist right, represented by Cheney, openly supports and sustains the coup.

President Jose Manuel Zelaya should be immediately fully and unconditionally reinstated in the exercise of his constitutional duties.

The inviolability of the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa must be respected. The siege and aggression against its premises must cease.

The Honduran people are putting up a heroic resistance and will say the last word.

These events coincide with the renewed and aggressive interest of the United States to establish military basis in Latin America and reactivating the Fourth Fleet, obviously with the objective of placing the region within the reach of the US troops only in a matter of hours, threatening the revolutionary and progressive processes, particularly the Bolivarian Revolution in the sister nation of Venezuela and getting control over the oil and other natural resources of the region.

The slanders and lies uttered against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are brutal. We should be reminded that this was the way in which atrocious aggressions were perpetrated and carried out against our country.

The broader and clearer the policy towards that sister nation is, the bigger our contribution to independence and development of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples will be.

Latin America and the Caribbean can move on and, to a certain extent, they are moving on to new and superior forms of integration. They have more water, land, forests, and mineral and energy resources than any other region in this planet. Their population exceeds 570 million.

The Rio Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development and UNASUR are bodies created as a result of the bonds that unite us.

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA-TCP) and the PETROCARIBE cooperation scheme are the most outstanding examples.

Mr. President,

The recent and moderately optimistic forecast on the evolution of the global economic crisis which portend a probable economic recovery early next year are not based on solid data. At best, they only forecast a relief after the collapse suffered by a very limited group of the most powerful economies in the planet.

No one should ignore that this is an unheard-of crisis of the capitalist system that encompasses its respective food, energy, ecological, social, and financial crisis; or the risk of debt-inflation combination, the bursting of other financial bubbles or a second collapse.

Developing countries are not responsible, but rather victims of the consequences of the irrational and unsustainable model of consumption, exploitation and speculation, the destruction of the environment and the corruption of the industrialized economies.

As discussions take place, the number of hungry people will reach the record figure of 1.20 billion in 2009, which is equivalent to one sixth of the world's population. This year an additional 90 million will go into poverty and another 50 million will be left unemployed. In the current months, another 400 thousand children are expected to die as a result of the crisis.

The measures that have been adopted are mere palliatives that perpetuate the deficiencies of an unjust, excluding and ecologically unsustainable international economic system. It is necessary to promote a fully inclusive and encompassing international dialogue, with the active participation of all developing countries.

We need to establish a new international economic order based on solidarity, justice, equity and sustainable development. The international financial architecture should be founded anew. The United Nations, particularly this General Assembly, is called to play a key role in this endeavor.

Mr. President,

In concluding my speech I would like to reiterate Cuba's appreciation for the traditional and invaluable solidarity it has received from this General Assembly in its struggle against aggression and the blockade. Today, that solidarity continues to be indispensable.

As was expressed by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz at this very rostrum nine years ago: *"There is nothing in the existing economic and political order that can serve the interests of Humankind. Thus, it is unsustainable and it must be changed. Suffice it to say that the world population is already 6 billion, 80% of which live in poverty. Ages-old diseases from Third World nations such as malaria, tuberculosis and others equally lethal have not been eradicated while new epidemics like AIDS threaten to exterminate the population of entire nations. On the other hand, wealthy countries keep investing enormous amounts of money in the military and in luxurious items and a voracious plague of speculators exchange currencies, stocks and other real or fictitious values for trillions of dollars every day.*

Nature is being devastated. The climate is changing under our own eyes and drinking water is increasingly contaminated or scarce. The sources of man's seafood are being depleted and crucial non-renewable resources are wasted in luxury and triviality...The dream of having truly fair and sensible rules to guide human destiny seems impossible to many. However, we are convinced that the struggle for the impossible should be the motto of this institution that brings us together today!"

Despite everything, the Cuban Revolution, victoriously and self assured, is celebrating its Fiftieth Anniversary.

Thank you, very much.