



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. JOSE MACHADO VENTURA, FIRST DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE STATE COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, HEAD OF THE CUBAN DELEGATION, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON "AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS: STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS COMMITMENTS, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD"

New York, 22 September 2008

Mr. Chairman,

It is time to stop the rhetoric. Africa's plight will not be resolved by condolences, lamentations and limited charitable aid, while fortunes are spent in the North on luxuries and extravagance. The need is for new relations of solidarity and full cooperation with our African brothers.

Whatever we do will be a sterile exercise if it does not respond to the imperative need to establish a new system of North-South relations, which puts an end to a prevailing unjust and unsustainable world economic, trading and financial order that marginalizes and places at risk 80% of the world population, in order to support waste and extravagance by a tiny minority. This state of affairs, which is aggravated by the imposition of neoliberalism, is accompanied by attempts to denigrate the right of peoples to international solidarity while denying to the African and other developing nations the special differentiated treatment they need and deserve.

It is ironic that several of the statesmen of the North who have expressed ostensible concern for Africa are also those who, through the international financial organizations they control, impose unfair conditions and structural adjustment schemes. Such policies militate against development and the consolidation of basic social services. Servicing and repayment of foreign debt is demanded, while promises of official development assistance are not kept. Servicing its debt is currently costing Africa five times more than it spends on education and public health combined. The all-too-familiar relief initiatives make good television, but do not address the hardships of the African peoples.

The self-serving rules and conditions imposed on trade by the great economies of the North suffocate the less-developed economies. The exclusive, multi-million dealings

whereby the North imposes an unfair international regime of patents and control of technologies obstructs economic development and the welfare policies of both Africa and the vast majority of the South nations.

At the same time as the United States and Europe are closing their borders to millions of people from the South seeking to migrate to improve their living conditions, applying policies of forced repatriation that breach the most elementary rights of the irregular migrants, they are also stealing a large proportion of our most skilled professionals.

Mr Chairman,

If we really want to support the efforts of the African peoples and governments, we must call for:

- Writing off the African nations' foreign debt, which they have already repaid more than once.
- Fulfilment by the countries of the North of their commitment to Official Development Assistance. This should go, unconditioned, to all the African countries, for application in the areas and sectors prioritized by the continent's governments.
- Mobilization of new and additional resources to accelerate implementation of agricultural development projects, with special emphasis on Africa's food requirements, applying measures that go far beyond the feeble results of the recent FAO conference on food security.
- Financial, technical and human support for achieving the goal of eradicating illiteracy and providing education for all.
- A global effort to create the conditions for developing effective primary healthcare systems throughout the continent, and to guarantee supply of the medicines needed for treating AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other pandemics and tropical diseases; it should also include training of doctors and technical personnel for service in the African countries, as well as other healthcare workers needed to address the continent's difficult public-health situation.

Mr Chairman,

Cuba has developed close links with Africa. Cooperation with that continent is an essential element of our nation's post-revolutionary foreign policy. Cuba has resolutely and selflessly supported the African peoples in their struggles against colonialism and apartheid.

Our universities and technical colleges have opened their doors to African students; over 32,000 young Africans have graduated in Cuba during the last five decades.

There are currently 2,253 young people from 45 African countries enrolled in our universities on full scholarships.

In 2007 alone, the 1,982 Cuban doctors and other medical personnel working in 35 African countries conducted nearly 7 million consultations, delivered around 100,000 babies, and performed almost 200,000 surgeries.

If that's what Cuba can do, what could the countries of the North achieve, with their abundance of the necessary resources? There is no shortage of resources; what is lacking is the political will.

The Africans have no need of new promises or paternalistic formulas. What the peoples of Africa need, together with the entire world population, is respect for their rights, a just and equitable international order, in which the guiding principles are solidarity and cooperation in pursuit of wellbeing for every people and every human being.

Thank you very much.