

# *Cuban Foreign Minister Says Washington's Blockade of Cuba Prevents Normalization of Relations*

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New York, September 23 (RHC/UN News Center)—Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez told the United Nations General Assembly that despite the re-establishment of U.S.-Cuba diplomatic relations and some progress shown in the bilateral scene over the past year, the U.S.'s decades-old economic blockade against Cuba is still in force and “there is a long way ahead in order to move towards the normalization of relations.”

Rodriguez said there had been advancement particularly in diplomatic relations, dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, as evidenced by the high-level visits that have taken place, including that of U.S. President Barack Obama.

However, he said, the blockade is still in force, and it continues to cause serious damage and hardships to the Cuban people. The blockade hampers the functioning of the economy, and stands in the way of Cuba's relations with other countries, explained Minister Rodriguez, adding that while the U.S. executive had adopted measures that were positive, these are still insufficient.

The Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said there are numerous examples of the economic and financial damage caused by the blockade, and that as long as such policy continues, Cuba will continue to present at the UN General Assembly a resolution seeking an end of the economic circle.

He renewed the Cuban Government's willingness to move along a path of respectful dialogue with the U.S. government, as the two countries travel the long way ahead towards normalization.

That means, he said, building a new model of bilateral relations in our common history, a history that should never be forgotten.

Minister Rodriguez noted that in addition to a lifting of the blockade, for normalization to be attained it is also indispensable that the territory illegally occupied by the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo be returned.

Turning to wider development issues, the Cuban Foreign Minister stated that a gap continues to exist between the deliberations at the UN and peoples' realities. Lack of political will on the part of industrial nations remains evident, he said, adding that the irrational patterns of consumption and production of capitalism lead to the destruction of the living conditions in the planet and that such patterns continued to be replicated.

Indeed, he said, the huge nuclear and conventional stockpiles and the annual military budget of \$1.7 trillion prove false the argument that there are no resources to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

Against such a backdrop, he charged, the UN must be defended from unilateralism and reformed into a more democratic organization that is closer to the problems, needs and aspirations of people and is capable of leading the international system towards peace, sustainable development and the respect of all human rights for all.

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