

Speech by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez at United Nations General Assembly on Friday, September 22nd



Mr. President:

Mr. Secretary General;

Allow me to reiterate to you Cuba's support to your work at the helm of the United Nations and as a guarantor and advocate of international peace.

Heads of State and Government;

Distinguished delegates;

I would like to express my deep condolences to the relatives of the deceased and the victims of hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as our disposition to increase our cooperation, to the extent of our modest possibilities, with the brother peoples and governments of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, small Caribbean islands which suffered a terrible devastation; with the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, Virgin Islands and Anguilla.

I call upon the international community to give the highest priority to this situation and mobilize resources to assist the small Caribbean Island States and territories which have suffered such devastation.

We would like to convey Cuba's warmest feelings of solidarity to the government and people of Mexico, particularly to the victims and their relatives, who were affected by both earthquakes, and reiterate to them our disposition to assist the population and support the recovery works with our modest efforts.

We also want to express our sorrow to the US people, as well as our heartfelt condolences to the relatives of the deceased and to all of the victims of hurricane Irma.

Mr. President:

I want to convey the testimony of the people of Cuba, who are currently carrying out a colossal effort to recover from the severe damages caused by hurricane Irma to housing, agriculture, the power system and other services. Despite the all-encompassing preventive measures - which included the evacuation of more than

1.7 million persons- and the full cooperation of all citizens, we suffered the loss of ten persons.

The painful damages to services as well as the loss of social and personal goods as well as the hardships endured by families that spent many hours without electricity or water, contributed to strengthen the unity and solidarity of our noble and heroic people.

The moving scenes of rescuers saving a girl and giving her back to her mother; of a little boy picking up a bust of Jose Marti from the rubble; of students helping families they had not met before; of soldiers from the Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior doing the toughest jobs; of local leaders heading the most difficult tasks have become all too familiar.

During a visit paid to the area that suffered the most severe devastation. President Raul Castro issued an appeal which literally read, and I quote: "These have been tough days for our people who, in only a few hours, have seen how what was built with great effort has been destroyed by a devastating hurricane. The images received during the last few hours are too eloquent, just as much as the spirit of resilience and victory of our people that are reborn in the face of every adversity."

On behalf of the government and the people of Cuba, I sincerely appreciate the genuine expressions of solidarity and affection expressed by numerous governments, parliaments, international organizations and representatives of the civil society.

I would like to convey my profound gratitude for the numerous offers of assistance that we have received.

Mr. President:

I still keep vivid and emotional memories of the imposing presence of Fidel Castro Ruz, the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, and the great validity of the ideas he expressed before this Assembly.

On behalf of our people and government, I would like to express our gratitude for the feelings of respect, affection and admiration we have received from all latitudes.

Mr. President:

On Tuesday last, President Donald Trump came here to convince us that one of his purposes is to promote the prosperity of nations and persons. But, in the real world, the wealth owned by eight men altogether is equivalent to the wealth shared by 3.6 billion human beings, who make up the poorest half of humanity.

In terms of turnover, 69 of the 100 biggest entities of the world are transnationals, not States. The turnover of the world's ten biggest corporations is higher than the public revenues earned by 180 countries combined.

Seven hundred million persons live in extreme poverty; 21 million are victims of forced labor. In 2015, 5.9 million children died of preventable or curable diseases before reaching the age of 5. A total of 758 million adults are illiterate.

Eight hundred and fifteen million persons suffer from chronic hunger -tens of millions more than in 2015. Two billion are undernourished. Even if the precarious decreasing growth rate of recent years rebounds, 653 million persons will continue to face hunger by the year 2030, and this will not be enough to eradicate hunger by the year 2050.

There are 22.5 million refugees. Humanitarian tragedies associated to migrants flows worsen and increase amidst a clearly unjust international economic and political order.

The construction of walls and barriers as well as the laws and measures adopted to prevent the waves of refugees and migrants have proved to be cruel and ineffective. There is a proliferation of exclusive and xenophobic policies that violate the human rights of millions of persons and fail to solve the problems of underdevelopment, poverty and armed conflicts, which are the main causes of migration and refugee claims.

Military expenditures have increased to 1.7 trillion dollars. That reality belies those who claim that there are not enough resources to eradicate poverty.

However, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lacks the means for its implementation, due to the egoism and lack of political will of the United States and other industrialized countries.

What is the miraculous recipe that President Donald Trump recommends to us in the absence of the financial flows of the Marshall Plan? Who will contribute the resources for that? How can this be reconciled with the "America First" idea advanced by Presidents Reagan and Trump?

President Trump ignores and distorts history and portrays a chimera as a goal to be pursued. The production and consumption patterns proper of neoliberal capitalism are unsustainable and irrational and will inexorably lead to the destruction of the environment and the end of the human species.

Can anyone forget about the consequences of colonialism, slavery, neocolonialism

and imperialism?

Could the several decades of bloody military dictatorships in Latin America be referred to as an example of a successful capitalism?

Does anyone know of any recipe of neoliberal capitalism that has been better applied than those which destroyed the Latin American economies in the 1980s?

It is both indispensable and urgent for the United Nations to work in order to establish a new participatory, democratic, equitable and inclusive international economic order, as well as a new financial architecture that take into account the needs and peculiarities of developing countries and the asymmetries that exist in world trade and finances as a result of centuries of exploitation and plundering. Industrialized countries have the moral duty, the historical responsibility as well as sufficient financial and technological means for that.

Not even the rich will enjoy the announced prosperity if climate change is not stopped.

Cuba regrets the decision taken by the government of the United States, which has been historically the principal greenhouse gas emitting government in the planet, to withdraw its country from the Paris Agreement.

In 2016, and for the third consecutive year, the average global temperature increase records have been broken, which confirms that climate change is a threat to the survival of humanity and the sustainable development of our peoples.

We reiterate our solidarity with the Small Island Developing States, particularly from the Caribbean and the Pacific, which are the most affected by climate change and for which we claim a just, special and differentiated treatment.

Mr. President:

The US government has come here to tell us that, in addition to prosperity, the other two "beautiful pillars" of international order are sovereignty and security. We all share the common responsibility to preserve the existence of human beings in the face of a nuclear threat. An important contribution to the achievement of that goal was the historical adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons under the auspices of the United Nations, which proscribes the use and the threat of use of those weapons that have the capacity to annihilate the human species.

Obviously, the United States strongly opposed this treaty. It announced that it will invest 700 billion dollars in military expenditures and is developing an extremely aggressive nuclear and military doctrine based on the threat to use and the use of force.

NATO member States attempt against international peace and security and International Law by promoting military interventions and non-conventional wars against sovereign States.

As was pointed out by the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz: "Let the philosophy of plunder disappear and the philosophy of war will also disappear!"

The illegal imposition of unilateral coercive measures and the use of financial, legal, cultural and communicational instruments to destabilize governments as well as the denial of peoples' right to self-determination have become customary. The covert use of ICTs to attack other States increases, while several developed countries strongly oppose the adoption of international treaties that would regulate

cooperation in order to achieve a safe cyberspace.

The US President manipulates the concepts of sovereignty and security to his exclusive benefit and to the detriment of all others, including his allies.

The attempt to resort to military threats and force to stop the irreversible world trend to multi-polarization and polycentrism will seriously jeopardize international peace and security, which should be defended and preserved through international mobilization.

The principles of sovereign equality, respect for the territorial integrity and non interference in the internal affairs of States should be observed. The UN Charter and International Law admit no re-interpretation.

The United Nations reform should pursue the principal goal of responding to the pressing needs of peoples and the great disadvantaged majorities. Multilateralism should be protected and reinforced in the face of the imperialist interests of domination and hegemony.

The democratization of the Security Council, both in terms of its composition and its working methods, is a most urgent task.

The strengthening of the General Assembly and the recovery of the functions that have been usurped from it are indispensable.

Mr. President:

The "patriotism" invoked in the US statement is a perversion of humanism, the love and loyalty to the homeland and of the enrichment and defense of national and

universal culture. It embodies an exceptionalist and supremacist vision of ignorant intolerance in the face of diverse political, economic, social and cultural models.

In developed countries, the loss of legitimacy of political systems and parties worsens and electoral abstentionism is on the rise. Corruption, whether legal or illegal, has turned into metastasis. So is the extreme case of the so called "special interests" or corporate payments in exchange for benefits in the country that spends the highest amount of money in electoral campaigns and where, paradoxically, a candidate with the lowest number of popular votes can be elected or entitled to govern with a negligible support by voters.

There has been an increasing and unheard-of use of science and technology to exercise hegemony, mutilate national cultures and manipulate human behavior, as is the case of the so called "big data" or psychometry, used for political and advertising purposes. Seven consortia keep a strict control of whatever is read, watched or heard in the planet. Technologies are being monopolized. The governance of digital networks is dictatorial and discriminatory and, despite appearances, the digital divide between rich and poor countries is increasing. The opportunities and rights of youths, migrants and workers are curtailed and their human rights are openly and systematically violated.

The day before yesterday, the US Vice-president, Michael Pence, ridiculously ignoring the functions of the Security Council and attempting to establish new prerogatives, said that this organ should modify the composition and methods of the UN Human Rights Council, which "doesn't deserve its name" because "a clear majority of the Human Rights Council members fail to meet even the most basic human rights standards". I suppose he is not including, in this case, his own country, which will in fact deserve to be included because of its pattern of systematic violations of human rights, namely the use of torture, arbitrary

detentions and imprisonment -as occurs at the Guantanamo Naval Base-, the assassination of African Americans by law enforcement agents, the killing of innocent civilians perpetrated by its troops and the xenophobia and repression against immigrants -including minors- as well as its scarce adherence to international instruments.

Mr. President:

We reaffirm our strongest condemnation against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and reject the double standards in combating them.

The urgent search for a just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East is based on the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the existence of a free and independent State within the pre-1967 borders, with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation in Western Sahara requires an effort in conformity with the UN resolutions to guarantee the Saharan people's exercise to self-determination and respect for their legitimate right to live in peace in their own territory.

Cuba reaffirms its support to the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the war in Syria without any foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The threats to international peace and security resulting from the expansion of NATO's presence along the Russian borders are on the increase. We continue to reject the unilateral and unjust sanctions imposed against that country.

We demand respect for the so called Nuclear Agreement signed with the Islamic

Republic of Iran.

We reject the threat to totally destroy the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the home to 25 million human beings. War is not an option in the Korean peninsula; it would threaten the existence of hundreds of millions of persons in this area as well as in neighboring countries; it would lead to a nuclear war of unpredictable consequences. Only through dialogue and negotiation would it be possible to achieve a lasting political solution that should take into account the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved.

We support the total denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, without any foreign interference, with absolute respect for sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and strictly abiding by the principle of not using or threatening to use force.

Mr. President:

New threats are hovering over peace and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean, in open disrespect for the "Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace" signed in Havana by the Heads of State and Government of our region in January, 2014, on the occasion of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

We reiterate what was expressed by President Raul Castro Ruz about the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on July 14 last: "The aggression and putschist violence against Venezuela harms all of Our America and only serve the interests of those set on dividing us to exercise their control over our peoples, unconcerned about causing conflicts of incalculable consequences in this region, like those we are seeing in different parts of the world.

"Today we warn that those attempting to overthrow the Bolivarian and Chavista

Revolution through unconstitutional, violent and putschist methods will shoulder a serious responsibility before history (...)."

We strongly reject the military threats against Venezuela, the Executive Order that designates it as a threat to the national security of the United States and the unilateral, unjust and arbitrary sanctions applied against it.

We reiterate our unwavering solidarity with the Bolivarian and Chavista government and people and its civic-military union led by the constitutional President Nicolas Maduro Moros.

We denounce and condemn the NICA Act Initiative, promoted in the US Congress as part of an interventionist behavior which is intended to impose an economic blockade against the people and the government of Nicaragua, to whom we reiterate our support.

We express our solidarity with former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, victim of a political persecution intended to prevent him from running for direct elections by means of a judicial disqualification. Lula, President Dilma Rousseff, the Workers Party and the Brazilian people will always find Cuba on their side.

We reiterate our historical commitment with the free determination and independence of the Puerto Rican people.

We support the legitimate claim of Argentina for the sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands.

Cuba will continue to contribute, to the extent possible, and at the request of the parties involved, its efforts to achieve a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

We will uphold our commitment to share our modest achievements with the peoples of the South, including the efforts of the 41 652 cooperation workers deployed in 63 countries to struggle for the life and health of human beings.

Mr. President:

On June 16 last, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, announced the new Cuba policy of his administration, which is a setback in US-Cuba bilateral relations and undermines the bases established two years ago to advance towards a new type of relation between our countries, characterized by respect and equality.

The US Government has decided to tighten the economic, commercial and financial blockade by imposing new obstacles to the already limited possibilities its business community had to trade with and invest in Cuba as well as additional restrictions on US citizens willing to travel to our country.

Those decisions ignore the support from broad sectors in the US, including the majority of Cuban emigres, to the lifting of the blockade and the normalization of relations. They only serve the interests of a group of Cuban origin, based in South Florida, which is an ever more isolated and minoritarian group that insists in harming Cuba and its people for having decided to defend, at all costs, the right to be free, independent and sovereign.

Today we reiterate our condemnation of the measures aimed at tightening the blockade and reaffirm that any strategy intended to destroy the Revolution will fail. Likewise, we reject the manipulation of the human rights issue against Cuba, which has a lot to be proud of and has no need to receive lessons from the United States

or anyone.

This time we would like to express our strongest condemnation of the disrespectful, offensive and interventionist statement against Cuba and the Cuban government, made three days ago at this rostrum by President Donald Trump. We remind him that the United States, where flagrant human rights violations are committed, which raise deep concern among the international community, has no moral authority to judge my country. We reaffirm that Cuba will never accept any preconditions or impositions, nor will it ever renounce any of its principles.

Regarding the alleged incidents that would have affected US diplomatic officials in Havana we categorically affirm that the Cuban government rigorously and seriously abides by its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations in relation to the protection and the integrity of all diplomats without any exception, including those from the United States. Cuba has never perpetrated nor will it ever perpetrate actions of this sort. Cuba has never allowed nor will it ever allow its territory to be used by third parties with that purpose.

The Cuban authorities, based on the preliminary results of the priority investigation that is being carried out, with a high technical component, following instructions from the top level of our government, and which has taken into account the data contributed by the US authorities, have so far found no evidence whatsoever that could confirm the causes or the origin of the health disorders referred to by US diplomats and their relatives. The investigation to clarify this issue continues, and in order to be able to arrive to a conclusion, it will be crucial to count on the cooperation of the US authorities. It would be unfortunate if a matter of this nature is politicized.

As was expressed by the Cuban President Raul Castro Ruz, Cuba is willing to continue negotiating all pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the

basis of equality and absolute respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country; and maintaining a respectful dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest with the US government.

Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist, respecting their differences and promoting everything that benefits both countries and peoples, but no one should expect Cuba to make concessions that affect its sovereignty and independence.

Mr. President:

The Cuban people will not cease in their legitimate claim for the lifting and total elimination of the economic, commercial and financial blockade and will continue to denounce the strengthening of that policy. On November Cuba will once again present to the United Nations General Assembly the draft Resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

While inequality, the opulence of a few and the marginalization of many are growing in today's world, the Cuban people will keep up its struggle to achieve the most just society possible. We will continue to steadily advance down the path of revolutionary transformations that has been sovereignly chosen by all Cubans to further improve our socialism.

Thank you very much.

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