

# *Foreign Minister address to the UN General Assembly*

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United Nations, Jun 23 (RHC)-- Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, addressed the UN General Assembly plenary to introduce the Resolution "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The full statement follows.

STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, ON AGENDA ITEM 42, 'NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL BLOCKADE IMPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED

STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA'. NEW YORK, JUNE 23, 2021.

His Excellency, Mr. President;

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives;

Delegates all;

In 2020, Cuba, like the rest of the world, had to cope with the extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government of the United States considered the virus as an ally in its ruthless, non-conventional war. It deliberately and opportunistically tightened the economic, commercial and financial blockade and caused our country to incur record losses estimated at around 5 billion dollars.

President Donald Trump applied 243 unilateral coercive measures intended to restrict travel by US citizens to our country and damage tourist markets in third countries. He adopted measures that are proper to times of war with the purpose of depriving us from fuel supplies. He persecuted the health services that Cuba offers in numerous countries. He increasingly harassed our country's commercial and financial transactions in other markets and set out to spread fear among foreign investors and commercial entities through the implementation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.

He also hindered the regular and institutional flow of remittances to families. He dealt very harsh blows to self-employed or private workers and hampered the links with Cubans residing in the United States as well as family reunification.

All these measures remain in force today and are being fully implemented. And, paradoxically, they are shaping up the behavior of the current US administration, particularly during the months when Cuba has experienced the highest COVID-19 infection rate; the highest number of fatalities and a much worse economic impact.

The Democratic Party electoral platform promised voters to swiftly reverse the actions taken by the administration of Donald Trump, particularly the elimination of restrictions on travel to Cuba, financial remittances and the implementation of the bilateral migration accords, including the granting of visas.

It is a well-established fact that a large majority of US citizens supports the lifting of the blockade and the freedom to travel to the island and that Cubans living in this country want normal relations and wellbeing for their families.

There are some who put the blame of this pernicious inertia on the electoral ambitions associated to Florida or the balances, in no way transparent, of the political and legislative elites.

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

Mr. President;

The human damage caused by the blockade is incalculable. No Cuban family is spared from the effects of this inhumane policy. No one could honestly assert that the blockade does not have a real impact on the population.

In the area of health, there's a lingering impossibility to access equipment, technologies, devices, therapies and the best-suited pharmaceuticals that the blockade prevents us from acquiring from US companies and are to be bought at exorbitant prices, through intermediaries, or replaced with less effective generics, even to treat sick newly born babies and children.

But now, the cunning blow dealt to our finances and the costs associated to the COVID-19 pandemic –which are around 2 billion pesos and 300 million dollars- are also leading to the lack or unstable supplies of medicines for hospital use, which make the difference between life and death; and create difficulties, on a daily basis, to persons that need to have timely access to insulin, antibiotics, painkillers as well as the medicines used to treat high blood pressure, allergies and other chronic diseases.

Cuba sought to protect everybody from the virus; activated its universal and sound health system; relied on the selflessness, willingness to sacrifice and high qualification of its health staff; mobilized its national scientific potential and its world-class bio-pharmaceutical industry and enjoyed the express support and consensus of the people, particularly youths and students, who offered to work as volunteers in risk areas and epidemiological surveys.

That is why we were able to quickly develop highly effective protocols of our own making to treat those who were infected or suspected to have been infected with the COVID-19 virus; increased capacities to hospitalize all infected patients; guaranteed the full sustainability of intensive care services, the institutional isolation of the contacts of sick persons, free access to PCR or antigens tests; and established molecular biology labs in all provinces of the country.

When the blockade cruelly impeded the supply of ventilators, Cuba developed their local production based on prototypes of its own making.

All this effort involving the entire Nation has made it possible to record a comparatively very low fatality rate as a result of the pandemic, particularly among our health staff, infants, children and pregnant women.

It is worth noting that a small, blockaded Island has developed 5 candidate vaccines and applied 3 of them, through intervention studies or health interventions, to 2 million 244 thousand 350 Cubans, who have received at least one dose; and intends to immunize 70 per cent of its population during the summer, and its entire population before the end of this year, despite the fact that the blockade is severely hampering the industrial scaling-up of these productions.

These results are an evidence of the efforts of science to the service of the people as well as the effectiveness of public service.

During the pandemic, when the US government strengthened its slanderous campaign against our medical cooperation, Cuba sent 57 specialized medical brigades of the 'Henry Reeve' International Contingent to 40 countries or territories, who joined the more than 28 thousand health professionals who were already offering their services in 59 countries.

The blockade also deprives the national industry from the funds needed to acquire the necessary inputs destined to the production of foodstuffs, thus causing a collapse in the production of pork and other goods.

Foodstuffs imports from the US are made under strict licenses and discriminatory conditions and their discrete volumes cannot compare to the huge damage that the blockade causes to our finances and the effects of its extraterritorial implementation on third markets.

I can attest to the hardships and anxiety that the shortage of supplies and the instability in staples and basic commodities create among Cuban families, which are visible in the long queues which day after day are overwhelming Cubans in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shortage of supplies in our stores as well as the uncontrolled increase in prices, despite the strenuous efforts made by the government are also a result of the critical impact derived from the

tightening of the blockade, under the conditions imposed by the pandemic and the global economic crisis.

As was expressed by Army General Raúl Castro on April 16 last, and I quote: '...the damage that these measures cause to the living standards of the people is neither fortuitous nor the result of collateral effects. It is a consequence of a deliberate intention to punish the entire Cuban people', end of quote.

The blockade is a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all the Cuban people and qualifies, under Article II paragraph C of the Geneva Convention of 1948, as an act of genocide.

Mr. President;

The US authorities have cynically tried to spread the idea about the failure of the Cuban system and the inefficiency of the Cuban government; that coercive measures do not affect the people nor are a truly significant factor in the difficulties facing the national economy.

Let us check the data. From April, 2019, until December, 2020, the damages caused by the blockade have been estimated at 9.157 billion dollars at current prices -436 millions a month as an average. During the last five year period, the losses Cuba incurred for that matter were above 17 billion dollars. Damages accumulated after six decades total 147.853 billion dollars, at current prices; or 1.377 trillion dollars based on gold prices.

On June 10 last, our banking and financial system was forced to temporarily suspend the acceptance of US dollars deposits in cash, which became an indispensable measure in view of the obstacles imposed by the blockade that prevent us from giving use value to that currency. This was an action we had wanted to avoid but, as it happened, it could not be put off any longer.

This is an extraterritorial warfare against a small country that had been already affected in recent times by the recession and the global economic crisis generated by the pandemic, which has deprived us from indispensable revenues, such as those derived from tourism.

As was affirmed by President Miguel Díaz-Canel on April 19 last, and I quote: '...no one with a modicum of honesty and relying on economic data that are in the public domain could ignore the fact that this siege is the main obstacle to the development of our country and the achievement of prosperity and wellbeing...', end of quote.

What would happen to other economies, even in rich countries, if they were subject to similar conditions? What would be the resulting social and political effects?

Mr. President;

The blockade is a politically motivated act, which was accurately described in the infamous memorandum written by the then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lester Mallory, on April 6, 1960, which I quote:

'...Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life (...) denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government', end of quote.

This memorandum is being maliciously complemented by an intensive campaign of political interference in the internal affairs of Cuba, by means of subversive programs to which the US government allocates every year tens of millions of dollars from the federal budget as well as some additional covert funds. The purpose is to bring about political and social instability in the context of the economic difficulties that the US government itself is creating.

The US authorities assume that if they submit the Cuban people to hardships and promote artificial leaders to instigate disorder and instability, they may generate a virtual political movement in digital networks and then take it to the real world.

They allocate huge resources and rely on social laboratories and high-tech tools to launch a wild campaign to discredit Cuba by brazenly resorting to lies and data manipulation. They have triggered a renewed McCarthyism, ideological intolerance and brutal attacks against those who defend the truth.

Some of them dream about creating social chaos, disorder, violence and death in Cuba. And it comes as no surprise, because this is a political weapon that the government of the United States has used already in other countries, with nefarious consequences.

A few others become delirious over the possibility of triggering an irregular and uncontrolled migration between Cuba and the United States. This is a dangerous bet about which we have warned the US government, the one that has the legal and moral obligation to honor the migration accords, particularly when it comes to the granting of visas. This is a sensitive issue that is taking a toll on human lives.

Mr. President;

The States represented here are victims of the extraterritorial impact of the blockade which harms their sovereignty, infringes upon their national legislations, submits them to US court rulings and harms the interests of the companies that may be willing to have relations with both countries, all of that in violation of International Law.

It is neither legal nor ethical for the government of a foreign power to submit a small nation, for decades, to a relentless economic warfare in the interest of imposing an alien political system and a government of its own design. Depriving an entire people from the right to peace, development, wellbeing and human progress is absolutely unacceptable.

It is unacceptable that, for 28 years now, the United States has ignored the successive resolutions of this democratic and representative General Assembly of the United Nations.

In September of 2000, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro said, from this very podium, and I quote: '... we must state, once and for all, with absolute firmness, that the principle of sovereignty can not be sacrificed in the interest of an exploitative and unjust order in which an hegemonic superpower, relying on its power and strength, intends to decide on everything', end of quote.

Cuba demands to be left in peace, to live without a blockade, and calls for an end to the persecution of our commercial and financial relations with the rest of the world.

We call for an end to manipulation, discrimination and the obstacles to relations between Cubans living in the United States and their relatives in Cuba and the country where they were born. We recognize the efforts that are being made by those who, at this difficult juncture, have persisted in maintaining communication with and supporting their relatives in the Island, despite hatred and political persecution.

There are many who, even within the US government, have claimed, following a pragmatic approach, that the blockade should be ended because it is an anachronistic and ineffective policy that has not achieved nor will ever achieved its goal, and has ended up by discrediting and isolating the United States itself.

The manipulation of the struggle against terrorism following political or electoral purposes is equally unacceptable.

In January this year, 9 days before the inauguration of the current US administration, the government of

President Donald Trump included Cuba in an arbitrary and unilateral list of States that were allegedly sponsoring international terrorism. This list, however, has a major impact on the international financial system.

No one could honestly claim that Cuba is a country that sponsors terrorism. Recent revelations have made the most recent of all these pretexts sound ridiculous.

Nevertheless, on May 14 last, the US State Department once again designated Cuba, as it had done in 2020, under the former administration, as a country that was not cooperating fully with the United States counterterrorism efforts.

Cuba has been a victim of terrorist actions that have been organized, financed and perpetrated by the US government or from the territory of that country, which have taken a toll on the lives of 3 478 and caused disabilities to 2 099 Cubans. There is abundant evidence of cooperation attempts and also of effective cooperation actions in recent years between agencies of both countries.

Our standing with regard to terrorism is of absolute condemnation of that practice, regardless of its forms and manifestations.

Mr. President;

Based on a sovereign decision and in the interest of the wellbeing of our Nation, Cuba has been for years carrying out sustained efforts to update its economic model and its socialist State, the rule of law and its social justice, with the support of a very large majority of our citizens, expressed through a free, direct and universal referendum.

It is an audacious and highly complex task under any circumstances that becomes all the more difficult in the face of the persistent hostility of the US imperialism which, in no case, is going to stop us or break the will of present and future generations of Cubans.

I am deeply grateful for the fraternal assistance sent by our compatriots and friends of Cuba from different latitudes, which we so much appreciate, including the assistance that, after great efforts and against the opposition of its government, has been received from the United States.

We feel encouraged for being able to count on the support of thousands of persons who, all over the world, have united to urge the US government to put an end to the blockade. Among the key actors in these actions are numerous Cubans who dignify the Lone-Star Flag even in this country.

On behalf of my country, its proud and generous people, who is resisting and advancing heroically, I submit to your consideration the draft resolution A/75/L.97, 'Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the government of the United States of America against Cuba.'

Like the virus, the blockade causes asphyxia and death, and should be eliminated!

Homeland or Death, We Shall Overcome!

Thanks



**Radio Habana Cuba**