

Speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Cuba at the Dialogues of the XV BRICS Summit



Speech delivered by Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, at the Dialogues of the XV BRICS Summit, Johannesburg, South Africa, August 24, 2023, "Year 65 of the Revolution."

(Shorthand Version - Presidency of the Republic)

His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa;

Distinguished Heads of State and Government and other heads of delegations;

Dear Participants:

It is a great honor and a privilege to participate in a BRICS summit, an integration mechanism that, because of its novelty and diversity, opens expectations and hopes on the path of strengthening multilateralism, which today is as urgent as it is essential for the very destiny of humanity.

We greatly appreciate the fact that this meeting is taking place in African lands, the cradle of a part of our ancestors that fundamentally nourishes the very essence of the Cuban identity.

The satisfaction is even greater because it brings us to South Africa, a country with which we are united by historic ties of brotherhood.

Nearly 400,000 compatriots contributed to the struggle against apartheid in African lands. Two thousand two hundred and eighty-nine of our Cuban internationalist combatants fell heroically, writing with their sacrifice one of the most beautiful pages in the history of solidarity among peoples.

I would like to quote and recall a well-known African saying: The footprints of those who walk together are never erased.

In the case of South Africa and Cuba those footprints are as solid and indelible as the memory of the historical leaders of both nations. We will never be able to forget the embrace of Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro when they met here and demanded each other's reunion, as only happens between very close brothers.

I attend this Dialogue with the enormous responsibility that it represents for Cuba to preside over the Group of 77 and China, the largest and most diverse grouping of developing nations.

We are 134 countries, two thirds of the members of the United Nations, where almost 80% of the planet's population lives, facing the colossal challenges of an increasingly unequal world, where exclusion and poverty have multiplied after two years of pandemics followed by dramatic conflicts.

In the last ten years, the nations of the South have seen their foreign debt, already more than paid off, double. Unilateral coercive measures are on the rise. More than 3 billion people are affected by the degradation of ecosystems. More than one million species of plants and animals are in danger of extinction, according to the Secretary General's Message for World Environment Day.

If we do not act immediately, we will bequeath to our children and grandchildren a planet not only unrecognizable to those of us from the previous century, but sadly doomed to become uninhabitable.

Seven years away from the deadline set for the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, the outlook is discouraging. Half of the 169 agreed targets are far from being met. More than 30% of them have not experienced any progress or, even worse, show setbacks compared to 2015, according to the most recent United Nations report.

The developed countries of the West and the large transnational corporations have designed an international order that does not take into account at all the progress of the nations of the South and is only effective for meager minorities.

The Group of 77 and China and the BRICS have the responsibility and the possibility of acting to change this unjust world order: it is not an option, it is the only alternative.

Today no one can question the growing authority of the BRICS. That is why we do not hesitate to welcome its eventual enlargement, which would contribute to strengthen its relevance and representativeness.

It has been a historical demand of the Group of 77, as it is also of the BRICS, to undertake a real transformation of the deeply unjust, anachronistic and dysfunctional international financial architecture.

We firmly believe that the New Development Bank created by the BRICS can and must become an alternative to the current financial institutions, which for almost a century have applied draconian recipes to profit from the reserves of the South and reproduce their schemes of subjugation and domination.

We especially welcome the appointment of our dear Dilma Rousseff as head of this entity and the praiseworthy initiative of the BRICS to create a broad-based foreign currency reserve mechanism to guarantee certainty and stability to the South. The extension of this mechanism to other countries would surely contribute to alleviate the imbalances of the current monetary system.

The establishment of mutual lines of credit in local currencies by the banks of the BRICS countries and the possibility of creating a single currency for their operations are also initiatives that could be applied in relations with other developing countries, in order to reduce the abusive monopoly of the US currency that reinforces and guarantees a hegemony that is harmful to the rest of the world.

The BRICS countries are world leaders in agricultural production, concentrating around one third of the food produced globally. Their joint action with the rest of the developing countries would make a substantial contribution to eliminating the hunger suffered by more than 700 million people in the world today.

On climate change, we emphasize the strategic value of effective coordination between the BRICS and the Group of 77, to safeguard the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in the implementation of the Framework Convention and the Paris Agreement.

At COP28, which will take place this year in Dubai, for the first time a G77 Leaders' Summit convened by Cuba will be held to strengthen strategic coordination.

Scientific and technical development is today monopolized by a club of countries that monopolize most of the patents, technologies, research centers, and promote the drain of talent from our countries.

The G77 and the BRICS should and can do more to change that situation, and in that spirit Cuba has called for a Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China on science, technology and innovation as a premise for development; it will take place on September 15 and 16 in Havana. We look forward to seeing you there.

To move towards a more just and sustainable future, the time for collective action is not tomorrow, it is now.

We firmly believe in the power of unity in diversity and that now is the time to act together in defense of historic grievances that, because they have not been addressed in time, have multiplied the problems facing our nations today.

And since we are in the "rainbow nation", which has overcome the hatred of the past, integrating its rich diversity of cultures, languages and religious beliefs, let us assume all the precepts of the wise African humanist philosophy of Ubuntu, the ethics of caring for others which, in the face of selfishness and individualism, promotes a life of solidarity, fraternity and respect in which no one is left behind.

The G77 and the BRICS have the opportunity to generate a historic transformation. For the sake of future generations, let us do it!

Thank you very much (Applause).

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