

*Speech by Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the inauguration of the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Group of 77 dedicated to development issues: role of science, technology and innovation, Havana, September 15, 2023.*

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Your Excellency,

Dear delegates and guests,

Welcome to Cuba, the land of José Martí to whom we owe this beautiful idea: The homeland is humanity.

I thank you for having accepted our invitation to unite to defend the great majorities that precisely form the bulk of this vast unifying designer: humanity.

As our Foreign Minister said the day before yesterday, this summit will be austere. I hope you can forgive us for any shortcomings you may find. Cuba is literally surrounded by a blockade of more than sixty years, which has recently been tightened and which is causing us all kinds of difficulties.

Of course, we also face colossal problems derived from the current unjust international order, but we are not the only ones who suffer from them. It is precisely this accumulation of difficulties and the hope that together we can face and overcome them that brought us into being as a group almost sixty years ago. We are the 77 and China. And we are more.

As you will see these days we lack many things, but we have plenty of feelings of friendship, solidarity, fraternity and we will do everything possible to make you feel like family. You are at home.

Rest assured also that we will do our utmost to ensure that our deliberations lead to tangible results, in a climate of solidarity and cooperation that makes any collective mission possible.

The Group of 77 and China has the immense responsibility of representing on the international stage the interests of the majority of the nations of the planet. We keep our original name for historical and identity reasons, but we are more, much more than seventy-seven countries. Today we are one hundred and thirty-four, or more than two-thirds of the member states of the UN, and we represent 80 percent of the

total. 100 of the world's population.

Meeting at a summit gives us the opportunity to deliberate collectively at the highest political level in order to combine our efforts to defend the interests of these majorities, and also helps us to coordinate our positions in the context of current development issues and with a view to the well-being of our people. But this also requires us to question ourselves.

At the end of almost sixty years of hard diplomatic battles to try, but unsuccessfully to date, to transform the unjust and anachronistic rules governing international economic relations, it is worth recalling the calls to democratize the UN that have been made by our historic leaders, the warnings of Fidel Castro: "Tomorrow will be too late! " and the unforgettable phrase of Hugo Chavez: "We presidents go from summit to summit and our people from abyss to abyss!" "

The Bolivarian leader was recommending truly useful meetings from which concrete benefits could emerge for the people who are waiting for solutions, who are at the edge of the abyss due to the selfishness of those who, for centuries, have been sharing their wealth and leaving us the remains....

This Summit is taking place at a time when humanity has reached a scientific and technical potential unimaginable just twenty years ago, and has endowed itself with an extraordinary capacity to create wealth and well-being that, if there were more equality, equity and justice, could guarantee a dignified, comfortable and sustained life for almost all the inhabitants of the planet.

If we were to color the space occupied by the Group of 77 and China on a world map, we would see two forces that no one surpasses: we are more and we are more diverse. The South also exists, wrote the Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti. The North has had plenty of time to accommodate the world to its interests, to the detriment of others. Hey! Well, it's time for the South to change the rules of the game.

"It is time for the blast furnaces and we must only see the light," wrote José Martí. Given that the vast majority of the members of the G-77 are the main victims of the multidimensional economic crisis that the world is suffering today, of the cyclical imbalances in international trade and finance, of the unequal and abusive exchange, of the gap that is growing in terms of science, technology and knowledge, the risk of progressive destruction and depletion of the natural resources on which life on our planet depends, we demand now, and with full right, the democratization of the system of international relations.

It is the peoples of the South who suffer most from poverty, hunger, misery, illiteracy, who die of curable diseases, who are the first victims of forced displacement and other consequences of underdevelopment. It is said that many of our nations are poor: they should rightly be called impoverished nations. And we must reverse this condition to which centuries of colonial and neocolonial dependence have brought us, because it is not fair and because the South no longer bears the dead weight of all these misfortunes.

Those who built dazzling cities thanks to the resources, sweat and blood of the nations of the South, now suffer - and will suffer more and more - the consequences of the economic and social imbalances that our plundering has favored, because we travel in the same boat, although some travel in first class and others in the hold.

The only viable way for this ship to avoid the fate of the Titanic is cooperation, solidarity, the African philosophy of ubuntu that understands human progress without exclusions, when the pain and hope of all will be the pain and hope of all.

Excellencies,

We proposed as the thematic axis of this Summit the role of science, technology and innovation as essential components of the political debate associated with law.

And if we have done so, it is because we are convinced that it is the achievements and progress in these areas that will ultimately determine whether and when it is possible to achieve the noble Sustainable Development Goals: the elimination of poverty; zero world hunger; health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; safe drinking water and sanitation; the solution of energy problems; labor; economic growth; industrialization and social justice.

I am also absolutely convinced that without these premises it will be impossible to advance towards a sustainable way of life, in harmony with the natural conditions that guarantee life on the planet.

And it is obvious that knowledge as a creator of science, technology and innovation will in one way or another have a role to play in the transformation that will lead to the achievement of these goals.

We must now break down the international barriers that have hindered developing countries' access to and use of these determinants of economic and social progress.

I am referring to barriers closely associated with an unjust and unsustainable international economic order that perpetuates the privileges of the developed countries and relegates the majority of humanity to underdevelopment.

Without addressing these factors, it will be absolutely impossible to achieve the sustainable development to which we are all entitled, even if we set many goals.

Nor will it be possible to bridge the immense gap between the privileged life of a small segment of the world's population and the underdevelopment that is the growing lot of the vast majorities.

And how can we hope to establish without that a world of peace in which wars and armed conflicts in all their forms are banned?

Science, technology and innovation play a vital role in improving productivity and efficiency, creating added value, humanizing working conditions, promoting well-being and ensuring human development.

We are living through the greatest scientific and technical revolution humanity has ever known. Science has changed the very course of life. Human beings have been able to explore outer space and develop complex machines that automate even the most basic processes of existence.

The Internet has eliminated spatial and temporal boundaries. Technological development has made it possible to connect the entire world and eliminate distances of thousands of kilometers with a single click. It has multiplied teaching and learning capabilities, accelerated research and endowed human beings with unsuspected capacities to improve living conditions.

But these possibilities are not within everyone's reach.

UNIDO reported in this regard that the creation and diffusion of advanced digital production technologies is still concentrated on a global scale and that their development is very weak in most emerging economies. Ten economies - leaders in advanced technologies - alone monopolize 90% of the country's global economy. 100% of all world patents and 70% of the total exports associated with them.

Far from becoming instruments to close the development gap and help overcome the injustices that threaten the very fate of humanity, they tend to become weapons to further widen this gap, to subjugate the will of many of our governments and protect the system of exploitation and plunder that have, for centuries, nurtured the wealth of the former colonial powers and relegated our nations to a role of extra.

Which explains why, in the midst of the most colossal scientific and technological development of all time, the world is three decades behind the goal of reducing extreme poverty and experiencing levels of hunger not seen since 2005.

This explains why in the so-called Third World more than 84 million children do not go to school and more than 600 million people live without electricity, why only 36 million people live without access to electricity, why only 36 million people live without access to electricity, why only 36 million people live without access to electricity and why only 36 million people live without access to electricity. 100% of the world's population uses the Internet in the least developed countries and landlocked developing nations, compared to 92% in the least developed countries and landlocked developing nations. 100 in developed countries.

The average price of a smartphone is only 2%. 100% of the average salary in North America, compared to 53%. 100 in South Asia and 39 p. 100 in sub-Saharan Africa. How can we seriously speak, in the face of such realities, of technological progress or equitable access to communications?

The energy transition is also taking place in conditions of profound inequality that we aspire to perpetuate. The disparity in energy consumption between developed countries (167.9 GJ/inhabitant) and developing countries (56.2 GJ/inhabitant) is both a consequence of the existing economic and social gap and the cause of its widening. Per capita electricity consumption in OECD countries exceeds the world average by 2.38 times and that of sub-Saharan Africa by 16 times.

Many of the most prevalent diseases in developing countries are precisely those that can be prevented or cured. The World Health Organization reports in its Annual Report that eight million people die prematurely each year from treatable diseases and conditions, about one-third of the world's total. A resident of a Western country spends an average of \$947 on healthcare, but just \$20 for a resident of low-income countries.

We have a duty to try to change the rules of the game and we will only succeed if we mobilize in joint action.

We all, or almost all of us, strive to attract foreign direct investment as a necessary component of our economic development and management. And sometimes we succeed in this being accompanied by a certain amount of technology transfer.

But we know that the most common case is that it is not accompanied by knowledge transfer and capacity building assistance, which explains why developing countries are at the bottom of global value chains and why their research in health, food, environment and other areas. is very limited or shows a systematic devaluation.

This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the brain drain, better known as "brain hurting", practiced by the most developed countries, which allows them to benefit from the preparation and professional knowledge of those whom developing countries train with great effort. This is not only a massive brain drain, but also a massive brain drain, without the slightest support on their part, as a rule.

This is not only a massive outflow, but a remarkable financial contribution from developing countries to rich countries, in fact much greater than Official Development Assistance, coming from a migratory flow that has devastating consequences for them.

Let us not forget another reality: the tendency, as pushed by the World Trade Organization, to patent everything, including life forms, a practice that inflates the coffers of the big transnationals in the most powerful countries and weakens the remaining savings. The unbridled privatization of knowledge thus contributes to widening the gap and limits access to development.

Patents are part of neoliberal theology: knowledge can be privatized, bought and sold like any other good.

Developing countries are being pressured to introduce laws protecting intellectual property rights, and are deliberately forgetting that many industrialized countries industrialized precisely by pirating products and

technologies outside their geographical borders, particularly in countries that are currently developing.

Patent applications continued to increase in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, at a rate of 1.5 percent. 100 and doubled in 2021: 3.6 p. Healthcare technology continued to experience the fastest growth of all sectors. In 2021, trademark filings reached 3.4 million worldwide, or 5.5 p. 100 more than in 2020. But they were uneven by region. Asia recorded two-thirds (67.6 percent), mainly due to growth in China, and North America 18.5 percent. 100, while other regions experienced lower growth: Europe, 10.5 percent. 100; Africa: 0.6 p. Latin America and the Caribbean: 1.6 percent. 100 and Oceania: 0.6 p. 100.

The gender gap in innovation persists. From 2014 to 2018, the growth of research personnel was three times faster (13.7 percent) than that of the global population (4.6 percent). In 2018, there were 8,854,000 researchers, only one-third of whom were women. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), men still represent the vast majority of people associated with patented inventions worldwide. In 2021, only 17 p. 100% of inventors with international patents were women.

The privatization of knowledge places limits on its circulation and recombination, as well as on progress and scientific solutions to problems, erects a major barrier to development and the role that science, technology and innovation should play in it, worsens the socioeconomic conditions. of Third World countries.

Just one example: during the worst pandemic known to mankind, just ten manufacturers accounted for 70% of total sales. 100 of Covid-19 vaccine production. The pandemic has clearly exposed the cost in lives of scientific and digital exclusion, which has widened the gap between North and South.

The result ? Developing countries had access to only 24 doses of vaccine for every 100 inhabitants, while the richest countries had almost 150. In the face of the call to increase solidarity and forget dissension, the world ended up becoming absurdly even more selfish.

The World Health Organization has formulated the well-known 90/10 syndrome: 90 p. 100% of health research resources are devoted to diseases that cause 10% of the diseases. 100% of mortality and morbidity, but only 10%. 100 are allocated to those who cause 90 percent. 100.

After the pandemic, our countries have had to go through extremely complex circumstances, to the point of continuing to struggle hard to overcome them.

When they appear on the financial markets, the nations of the South face interest rates sometimes eight times higher than those of developed countries. About one-fifth of the developing economies spent more than 15 per cent of their foreign exchange reserves on foreign exchange. 100 of their international foreign exchange reserves to cushion the pressure on national currencies.

By 2022, twenty-five developing countries will have had to spend more than one-fifth of their total income on servicing external public debt, amounting to a new form of slavery.

Global spending on research and development increased by 19.2 per cent. 100 between 2014 and 2018, more than the global economy (14.6 percent), but they remain extremely concentrated, from 93 percent. 100 come from G-20 member countries.

The resources needed for a fundamental solution to these problems exist. In 2022 alone, global military spending reached a record \$2.24 trillion. What could not be done for the South with such resources!

Inclusive participation of all our countries in the digital economy would require a minimum investment of \$428 billion by 2030, or just 19 percent of the total. 100 of this global military spending.

However, it seems that the South is doomed to live on the crumbs reserved for it by the current system. The International Monetary Fund's financial support to the least developed and low-income countries did

not exceed, from 2020 to the end of November 2022, the money Coca-Cola spent on advertising over the past eight years.

Meanwhile, less than 2 p.m. 100% of the already deficient Official Development Assistance went to capacities in science, technology and innovation.

According to different estimates, 9 p. 100 of global military spending would finance adaptation to climate change in ten years (proposal of the World Commission on Adaptation), while 7 p. 100 would be enough to cover the cost of universal vaccination against the pandemic.

An international financial architecture that perpetuates such inequalities and forces the South to tie up financial resources and go into debt to protect itself from the instability generated by the system itself, which inflates the pockets of the rich at the expense of the reserves of the 80 percent. . 100 of the poorest of the world's population, is certainly an architecture hostile to the progress of our nations. It must be demolished if we aspire to foster the development of the great mass of nations assembled here.

Excellencies,

Our priority task is to demolish once and for all the research models that are limited to the cultural settings and perspectives of the North and that deprive the international scientific community of considerable intellectual capital.

For this is a trend that requires our nations to urgently regain confidence in the most dynamic element of our societies: human beings and their creative activity.

In this sense, capacity building is essential to realize the promise of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

We therefore recognize the merit of the Global Development Initiative launched by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, an inclusive proposal, tailored to the need to establish a new just and equitable international order that places knowledge-based development where it belongs: at the center of the international system's priorities.

Although it is a developing country facing serious economic difficulties, Cuba has scientific capabilities that cannot be underestimated and that are part of the legacy left to us by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, who saw in it, as a forerunner, a source of strengthening development.

We have a government management system based on science and innovation that has become a great force to preserve our sovereignty, the best example of which has been the creation of our own vaccines against Covid-19.

But connecting knowledge with the solution of development problems constitutes for us a gigantic task, because we must do it in the midst of a relentless economic, commercial and financial blockade that seriously limits our resources.

Just one example: by political decision of the U.S. administration, many Web sites dedicated to knowledge and science are blocked specifically for Cuban researchers.

But this is not the time to dwell on the repercussions that the criminal economic blockade of the United States has on our economy, on our scientific and technical progress and on our development, and on its very visible humanitarian cost. But I would like to say, however, that it constitutes a fundamental obstacle.

However, with an unwavering political will, Cuba has been able to achieve indisputable results in science and innovation.

I invite you to discuss these days the challenges of the development of our nations, the injustices that separate us from global progress, but also the value of our unity and our rich capital of knowledge.

Let us direct our thinking towards the search for consensus, strategies, tactics and forms of coordination. Let us put all our heritage on the table, let us strengthen our synergies. Let us show the courage and know-how of the South in the face of those who pretend to present us as an amorphous mass in search of charity or assistance.

Let us remind ourselves that many G-77 member nations have written impressive pages of creativity and heroism in the history of humanity, before colonization and plundering have spared the destinies of a part of them.

Let us rediscover this fighting spirit, our traditional knowledge, our creative thinking and our collective wisdom. Let us fight for our right to development, which is also the right to exist as a species.

Only in this way will we be able to participate on an equal footing in the scientific and technical revolution. Only in this way will we be able to take our rightful place in a world where we are being forced to become the gentile manufacturers of wealth for minorities. Let us fulfill together the noble mission of completing this world, of improving it, of making it fairer and more rational, without the permanent threat of disappearing weighing on our dreams.

Twenty-three years ago, during a meeting similar to this one, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, said:

"For the Group of 77, it is no longer time to implore the developed countries to submit, to demonstrate defeatism, to show our internal divisions; It is time to rediscover our fighting spirit, to unite and consolidate around our demands.

"Fifty years ago we were promised that the day would come when the gulf between developed and underdeveloped countries would disappear. We were promised bread and justice; However, today there is always less bread and always less justice. "

These very topical reflections could be interpreted as an admission of failure in the face of what the Group demanded and did not obtain. On the contrary, I ask you to take them as a confirmation of the long road we have traveled together and as a testimony of the rights we have to demand the changes we demand.

In homage to those who believed and founded. On behalf of the people we represent, let us ensure that their voices and demands are respected.

We are more. And we will win.

I thank you.

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