

Speech Delivered by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez at UN General Assembly



STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA ON THE AGENDA ITEM 42 ENTITLED “NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA” AT THE SEVENTIETH PERIOD OF SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 2015 .

Mr. President;

Distinguished Permanent Representatives;

Esteemed Delegates;

On December 17 last year, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, recognized that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba had failed, is obsolete, has not met

the originally envisaged goals and causes damages to the Cuban people and isolation to the US Government.

Ever since then, the US President has been reiterating that the blockade should be lifted. He has urged the Congress of his country to do so instead of standing in the way of the US citizens who openly support its termination. He has committed to engage in a debate with that purpose and use his executive prerogatives to modify its implementation.

During the recently held 2030 Development Agenda Summit and at the United Nations General Debate, more than sixty Heads of States, Governments and Delegations welcomed and expressed their best wishes over the announcement of the new course taken by the US-Cuba relations, including the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the re-opening of embassies, and many of them demanded that the blockade is finally abolished.

Therefore, the interest and expectations raised by these deliberations and the subsequent vote, which takes place under new circumstances, are only understandable.

In the face of an almost unanimous claim by the international community -symbolized by the vote in favor of 188 member States and Cuba's participation in the Summit of the Americas held in Panama-, and the clear majority of the US society and the Cuban emigration settled here, the US government has announced a new policy towards our country.

But the measures adopted by the US Administration, which entered into force on January 16 this year and were later on expanded on September 18, although positive, only modify, in a very limited way, some elements related to the implementation of the blockade.

Many of them could not be implemented unless others are adopted that would finally allow Cuba to freely export and import products and services to and from the United States; use American dollars in its international financial transactions and operate accounts in that currency in third countries banks and have access to credits and financing from private entities and international financial institutions.

The problem is not that the Cuban order hampers the implementation of these measures and therefore it needs to be modified in order to facilitate this process, as has been stated by some US officials. The problem is the implacable and systematic existence of the blockade.

We should not mix up reality with wishful thinking or good-will expressions. In these circumstances, one can only judge by facts.

And facts show, crystal-clear, that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba is being fully and completely implemented.

Ten months after the announcements made on December 17, no tangible, substantial modification has been introduced in the implementation of the blockade.

Cuba's removal from the spurious list of States Sponsors of International Terrorism was the inevitable rectification of a nonsense, but this has hardly had any impact on the implementation of the blockade, which is supported by a far more comprehensive system of previously established sanctions and laws.

Barely a week ago, a 1.116 billion dollar fine was imposed on the French bank *Credit Agricole*, which adds up to the 1.710 billion dollar fine imposed on the German bank *Commerzbank* in March this year for doing transactions with Cuba and other States.

Only in recent weeks, the secure messaging system SWIFT cancelled a service contract; the first payment of the company Sprint to initiate direct telephone calls as well as several other banking transfers for the operations of charter flights were withheld.

The exiguous Cuban food purchases in the United States, one of the few exceptions to the blockade, which were approved in the year 2000 by the US Congress, significantly diminished last year because they are subject to discriminatory and onerous conditions: each purchase must be authorized by a license; the granting of credits is not allowed; Cuba is forced to pay in cash and in advance through banking entities of third countries and is not allowed to use its own vessels to transport those products.

Something similar happens with the imports of the medicines and the medical equipment that our country needs, which are also conditioned, since 1992, by the US law. Cuba is required to report on the final recipient of the medicines it acquires and is not allowed to make direct payments, but only through third parties and in a currency other than the US dollar, which entails additional difficulties, delays and costs.

Several other examples could be mentioned, such as the case of the company *Elekta*, which confirmed, on September 2 last, that it will not be able to supply to the National Institute of Oncology and Radiobiology or any other hospital in Cuba the radioactive isotope Iridium-192, which ensures the normal functioning of the brachytherapy equipment that are indispensable to offer higher quality and accuracy cancer therapies, because its purveyor, the US company *Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals*, refused to sell it to Cuba.

The US company *Small Bone Innovation Inc.* has refused to supply wrists and hands joints prostheses to the "Frank País" Orthopedic Complex which are intended for patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis.

In June last year, the US company *SIGMA Aldrich* refused to supply to the company *Quimimpex* the products, services and technical information which are indispensable to the chemical industry; and the US firm Columbian Boiler Company informed the aforementioned company that it was not allowed to export the cylinders necessary to transport the chlorine destined to the treatment of water.

The blockade is a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans; it is contrary to International Law; it has been described as a crime of genocide by the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 and is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of our people.

The human damages it has caused are inestimable. Seventy seven per cent of all Cubans have been suffering the blockade since the day they were born. The shortages and deprivations that it causes to all Cuban families can not be accounted for.

According to rigorous and conservative calculations, the economic damages it has caused after more than half a century amount to 833.755 billion dollars, based on the price of gold. At current prices, it amounts to 121.192 billion dollars, a figure of enormous proportions for a small economy like ours.

I hope that the US Representative will not come here now to tell us that the draft resolution does not accurately reflect the spirit of dialogue or the kind attitude of the US government; nor take on a hackneyed stand saying that the United States is the benefactor partner of the Cuban people that is only looking for its empowerment; or inflates the figure of 900 000 dollar donations by the civil society received in 2015, which are hampered by the blockade and appreciated by our people; or refer to the family remittances that are saved with great effort by the Cubans living here as if they were government funds; or consider as a commercial exchange the export licenses that are granted but are not materialized.

While it is up to the US Congress to adopt the decision to put an end to the blockade, the President has broad executive prerogatives to substantially modify its practical implementation and its humanitarian and economic impact.

We share the hope that the Congress of the United States would move on to change an inefficient, cruel and unjust policy, anchored in the past, and adopt decisions based on the values and feelings of its citizens.

Mr. President:

Historically, the United States has intended to establish its domination and hegemony on our homeland and, since 1959, it has tried to change the political, economic and social system that our people, fully exercising the right to self-determination, has freely chosen.

Some spokespersons from the US Government have declared that the announced Cuba policy is about a change of methods, not goals.

Should this be the case, the process towards the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba will face very serious obstacles.

The lifting of the blockade will be the essential element that will give some meaning to the progress achieved in the last few months in the relations between both countries and shall set the pace towards normalization.

As has been recognized by President Barack Obama, the lifting of the blockade serves the US national interest and is the will of the citizens of that country.

Any attempt to condition the lifting or modification of the blockade to the introduction of internal changes in Cuba will be in no way acceptable nor productive.

Cuba is ready to accept the opportunities and face the challenges of a new era in the relations between both countries, but it will never negotiate its socialist system or its internal affairs, nor will it allow any blemish on its independence, which was conquered at the price of the blood of its best sons and daughters and after the huge sacrifices made by many generations since the beginning of our independence wars in 1868.

As has been reiterated by President Raúl Castro Ruz, both governments must find the way to coexist in a civilized manner, despite their profound differences, and advance as much as possible for the benefit of the peoples of the United States and Cuba, through a dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and sovereign equality.

There is no enmity between the peoples of the United States and Cuba. The Cuban people expressed its solidarity at the time of the terrible terrorist actions of September 11, 2001, or the devastating impact of hurricane Katrina.

We appreciate and recognize the progress achieved recently with the re-opening of embassies, the visits paid by the Secretaries of State and Commerce and the exchange of delegations; the functioning of a Steering Committee; the expansion of the areas of dialogue and cooperation, particularly in the field of air and aviation safety; the combat of drug-trafficking, illegal migration and traffic in persons; law enforcement, environmental protection and health, among others.

We are really interested in developing fruitful relations; offering our hospitality to the US citizens who enjoy the freedom of traveling to Cuba; expanding enriching, cultural, sports, scientific and academic exchanges; promoting a multifaceted cooperation in areas of common interest, trade and investments.

We have initiated a human rights dialogue with a reciprocal character and despite our huge differences.

For all that we have been guided by the principles contained in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in January of 2014 in Havana, as well as the principles and purposes enshrined in the UN Charter.

This could also be a modest contribution to the quest for a new way in which human beings and nations can relate to one another in this era marked by global crisis, the inevitable impact of climate change, the non-conventional wars that unleash atrocious conflicts, new forms of terrorism, the existence of huge nuclear arsenals, extraordinary arms spending and the risk of pandemics.

As was stated fifteen years ago in this very hall by Fidel Castro Ruz, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, "Humanity should be aware of what we have been so far and what we can not continue to be. Presently, our species have enough accumulated knowledge, ethical values and scientific resources to move towards a new historical era of true justice and humanism. There is nothing in the existing economic and political order that can serve the interests of Humankind. Thus, it is unsustainable and it must be changed."

Mr. President:

Twenty three years after this resolution was first adopted, we have achieved a remarkable progress in 2015.

It has been a reward for the indefatigable resistance, selfless efforts, the firm convictions of our people and the leadership of the historical generation of the Revolution headed by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro and President Raúl Castro.

We are deeply grateful to all the governments and peoples, parliaments, political forces and social movements, representatives of the civil society, international and regional organizations that, particularly in this United Nations General Assembly, have contributed their voice and vote, year after year, to support the fairness and urgency of the elimination of the blockade.

We have made it all the way here thanks also to the majority and ever-growing support given by the US people to this lofty purpose, to whom we also convey our gratitude.

We know that the way ahead is long and difficult. We will continue to present this draft resolution for as long as the blockade persists.

The Cuban people will never renounce its sovereignty or the path that it has freely chosen to build a more just, efficient, prosperous and sustainable socialism. Neither will it give up in its quest for a more equitable and democratic international order.

Mr. President:

Distinguished Permanent Representatives:

Esteemed delegates:

We have presented a new draft resolution that recognizes the reality of the rigorous and oppressive implementation of the blockade against Cuba and also welcomes and recognizes, in the new preambular paragraphs, the progress achieved in the course of last year.

On behalf of the heroic, self-sacrificing and fraternal people of Cuba, I ask you to vote in favor of the draft resolution contained in document A/70/L.2. : "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

Thank you very much.



Radio Habana Cuba