

# *Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez addresses UN General Assembly*

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**Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, at the United Nations General Assembly, presenting the draft Resolution A/77/L.5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." November 3, 2022.**

Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, at the United Nations General Assembly, presenting the draft Resolution A/77/L.5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." November 3, 2022.

I express our heartfelt solidarity with the sister Caribbean nation of Belize which is suffering today the ravages of a powerful hurricane.

Mr. President:

Distinguished Permanent Representatives:

Distinguished Delegates:

More than 80% of the current Cuban population was born under the blockade.

Three decades have passed since this Assembly began to demand, every year, the cessation of that policy, classified as an act of genocide and which has the effect of "a permanent pandemic, of a constant hurricane" and is universally rejected.

It is a deliberate act of economic warfare with the purpose of preventing financial income to the country, destroying the government's capacity to attend to the needs of the population, causing the economy to collapse and creating a situation of ungovernability. As proposed in 1960 by Undersecretary of State Mallory, it seeks to "cause disillusionment and discouragement..., reduce wages..., cause hunger, despair and the overthrow of the government."

Since 2019, the U.S. government escalated the siege against our country to an extreme dimension, more cruel and inhumane, to deliberately inflict the greatest possible damage to Cuban families.

In the first 14 months of President Joseph Biden's administration, the damages caused by the blockade reached 6 billion 364 million dollars, more than 15 million dollars a day.

Between August 2021 and February 2022, they set a record, for only seven months, of 3,806 million dollars. In the absence of the blockade, in that period our GDP could have grown by 4.5%.

The accumulated damages in more than 60 years amount to 154 billion 217 million dollars, at current prices; and, at the value of gold, they amount to 1 trillion 391 billion 111 million, one million 391 billion 111 million. What would Cuba be like today, if it had had those resources? What else could we have done? What would our economy be like?

It is impossible to quantify the anguish generated by the blackouts and the instability of the electric service, the shortages and long lines to buy basic necessities, by the obstacles to the life projects of families and, especially, of young people.

The blockade also creates the conditions that encourage irregular, disorderly and unsafe migration; the painful separation of families; it costs the lives of Cubans; and it contributes to transnational organized crime and human trafficking.

Mr. President:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Government applied temporary humanitarian waivers to countries victimized by its unilateral coercive measures and other sanctions.

Why were Cubans excluded from such temporary humanitarian relief?

Worse still, while Covid claimed millions of lives around the world and filled my country with pain, the blockade intensified and generated difficulties and delays for the arrival of medical supplies and equipment essential to face it, particularly for the industrialization of Cuban vaccines. Even the acquisition of medical oxygen in third countries was hindered.

When the blockade prevented the supply of pulmonary ventilators, Cuba developed its own domestic production with its own prototypes.

How could it be explained that a small country like Cuba was able to defeat COVID-19 with its own resources and vaccines?

At the worst moment of the pandemic and despite our limited resources, we collaborated by sending 58 medical brigades to 42 countries and territories, which were added to the more than 28 thousand of our health professionals who at that time were providing services in 59 nations.

But the blockade affects the national production of antibiotics, analgesics, hypotensive drugs, cancer and heart disease treatments and other essential medicines that were previously available on such a large scale in our hospitals and pharmacies.

Cuban children with retina and glaucoma conditions cannot count on the laser system of the U.S. company IRIDEX CORPORATION for their treatments. Cases that evolve to more severe forms run the risk of going blind.

Nor can our children use the U.S.-made biological heart valves.

At birth, low-birth-weight babies have to undergo open-chest surgeries, as low-bore catheters, marketed by US firms, such as BOSTON SCIENTIFIC, are not available.

The U.S. Government has no way of justifying, under any circumstances, a policy that deprives Cuban children with cancer from receiving the appropriate chemotherapeutic treatment.

The feat of saving and preserving life in the midst of such difficult circumstances can only be explained by the governmental and collective effort of our people, for decades, to build a robust system of science and health, of profound humanistic character and high quality, accessible to all Cubans, at no cost.

Mr. President:

The blockade has also exacerbated the financial limitations and access to credit to invest, repair and maintain the country's thermoelectric plants and suppliers have increased prices considerably, alleging the risk of doing business with Cuba.

After 26 years of uninterrupted work, the German group Continental Reifen Deutschland GmbH decided to sever relations with the Cuban Petroleum Union (CUPET).

The French supplier CNIM communicated that it could not continue supplying spare parts for the Antonio Guiteras Thermoelectric Power Plant, as they were unable to link up with a country under sanctions.

The persecution of financial, commercial and investment transactions related to our country is also incessant and obsessive.

Between January 2021 and February 2022 alone, 642 direct actions by foreign banks against the Cuban banking system were registered.

In the last year, a considerable group of banks from third countries refused to process payments to suppliers of the Cuban company ALIMPORT, a food importer.

Under permits subject to restrictions imposed by law, Cuba can purchase limited agricultural products commercially in this country, but is obliged to pay in advance, and without access to credit, which is also extremely difficult when, at the same time, our sources of income are hindered.

Under these circumstances of financial harassment, the efforts of our government to ensure the standard family food basket are incalculable.

Cuban entrepreneurs are often denied the use of payment and e-commerce platforms.

In several latitudes, our nationals are even prevented from opening personal bank accounts, just because they are Cubans.

The financial persecution has been further reinforced with the arbitrary and fraudulent inclusion of our country in the State Department's unilateral list of alleged countries sponsoring terrorism, which

exponentially raises the so-called Country Risk and forces us to pay for any merchandise even at double its price in the international market.

Such action is inadmissible against a nation victim of terrorism, which even today suffers the instigation of violence and terrorist acts from U.S. territory; and whose conduct of firm rejection and persecution of any form or manifestation of terrorism, is unimpeachable and recognized.

It was a lethal measure imposed by the previous Republican administration, only 9 days after leaving the White House. The current President could correct it with just a signature. It would be the morally correct and lawful thing to do.

Mr. President:

The extraterritorial impact of the blockade also harms the sovereignty of the countries you represent; it infringes their national legislations, subjects them to the decisions of US courts under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, sanctions their businessmen and prevents access to their ports for third party ships that have docked in Cuba.

It also prohibits subsidiaries of U.S. companies in third countries from trading with Cuba; prevents the export to Cuba of articles produced in any country, when they have 10% or more of U.S. components; and excludes products manufactured in third countries, if they contain Cuban raw materials.

Who could say without lying that the United States is a trading partner of Cuba?

We do not attribute to the blockade all the difficulties our country is facing today; but it would be untrue to deny its very serious effects and not recognize that it is the main cause of the hardships, shortages and sufferings of Cuban families.

Mr. President:

The United States controls the most powerful press media and hegemonic digital technological platforms, and uses them in a virulent communicational campaign of disinformation and discredit against Cuba.

It resorts to the most diverse methods of unconventional warfare and places our children, youth and artists in the target of political and media bombardment.

The U.S. Government allocates millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars from the federal budget and covert funds and recruits government institutions and private companies to finance political operators who carry out campaigns of disinformation, hatred and destabilization in digital networks against Cuba.

Last October 24, the U.S. transnationals Twitter and Meta (Facebook), which now has among its top executives the former campaign manager of an anti-Cuban Republican senator, simultaneously deployed censorship actions against Cuban public media and users.

They labeled publications that have seen their reach limited in the networks and eliminated accounts critical of the destabilizing operations against our country. It was a selective, coordinated action that violates the right to free expression of Cubans and expresses the subordination of these companies to the arbitrariness of U.S. politicians.

Mr. President:

President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez stated last July 22, at the Closing of the Ninth Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power in its Ninth Legislature, and I quote, "Cuba's trajectory in the development of its foreign relations demonstrates that the promotion of peace, cooperation and solidarity are defining characteristics of our international projection. We have

demonstrated this in our Latin American and Caribbean region, and also in other latitudes". End of quote.

The current U.S. government does not have its own policy towards Cuba. It acts by inertia and gives continuity to the inhumane policy of "maximum pressure" established during the presidency of Donald Trump.

In recent months, it has taken steps to adjust some of the irrational restrictions on U.S. flights to Cuba, the sending of remittances and consular procedures.

These are positive actions, but very limited in scope and application. They do not modify, in any way, the policy or the economic, commercial or financial measures.

The extremely tightened blockade continues to be the central element that defines the policy of the United States towards Cuba.

The Cuban government is willing to move towards a better understanding with that of the United States and to develop civilized and cooperative relations on the basis of mutual respect and without undermining our sovereignty.

I reiterate the call made by Army General Raul Castro Ruz, in 2017, to the Government of the United States, to remove and I quote "the obstacles that prevent or restrict the ties between our peoples, families and citizens of both countries. We must learn the art of living together in a civilized manner, with our differences," he concluded.

Even in the midst of the inhuman limitations imposed on us by the blockade, Cuba will never renounce its socialist system of social justice, confirmed in a free and universal Constitutional Referendum in 2019.

We will always defend the full exercise of all human rights by all our citizens.

We will never accept attempts to impose on us pretended paradigms of democracy or any other culture foreign to the Cuban one.

With the same energy that we defend the inalienable right of each country to decide its political, economic and social system, we demand respect for our own.

Faithful to the legacy of Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, in Cuba there will always be, and I quote: "a government of the people, for all the people" and "a Revolution of the humble, with the humble and for the humble".

The most recent example of the exercise of real, participatory and inclusive democracy in our country is undeniable evidence of this.

In a popular referendum, the Cuban people voted in favor of a new modern and progressive Family Code, one of the most advanced in the world, irrefutable proof of the vocation to listen to all Cubans, without any kind of discrimination.

Our country does not cease to renew itself, based on the principle of "changing everything that must be changed", in the construction of a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable Nation; in the development of our "socialist, democratic, independent and sovereign State of law and social justice."

We advocate for the growing participation of our youth and all citizens in the political, economic, social and cultural processes of the nation.

We advance in the decentralization of the economy and the empowerment of the socialist state enterprise; thousands of small and medium-sized private and state enterprises have been created; science, technology and innovation, the computerization of society and social communication are strengthened as pillars of government management; greater opportunities are provided to foreign investment, within our development policy.

Cuba renews itself all the time. What remains immovable, anchored in the past and isolated, is the blockade.

We highly value the support of numerous governments, personalities, solidarity movements, political, social and popular organizations from all over the world, in view of the injustice committed against Cuba.

Mr. President:

We deeply appreciate the commitment and the expressions of Cubans and Cuban descendants in all latitudes, including in the United States, whose voices are raised in defense of Cuba's sovereign rights and in rejection of the application of this policy.

We also thank all those who have expressed their support for our country in the difficult situation of recovery from the serious damage caused by Hurricane "Ian" in the western provinces last September.

Hundreds of thousands of our compatriots suffered its impact. 119,488 homes were damaged, large areas of crops were destroyed and there was severe damage to the electrical and communications infrastructure, among other devastations.

We will continue to accept with gratitude the emergency aid that is offered, without conditions, to our people.

We are grateful for the noble humanitarian efforts of U.S. organizations, movements and groups; of congressmen and personalities, of the solidarity movement and civil society organizations, who, in view of the magnitude of the hurricane's aftermath, have requested the government of President Joseph Biden to temporarily lift the unilateral coercive measures against our country, to authorize the processing of donations by U.S. banks and the purchase of materials to rebuild the affected areas.

Mr. President:

Distinguished Permanent Representatives:

Distinguished delegates:

Millions of Cubans are watching right now what is happening in this room. They have listened to your speeches and are attentive to your votes.

On your behalf, I must thank you for the statements of rejection of the blockade made by dozens of heads of state and government and other dignitaries in the general debate of this session and also by the speakers in yesterday's and this morning's sessions.

In exercising your vote shortly, you will not only be deciding on a matter of vital interest to Cuba and to Cubans.

You will also be voting in favor of the United Nations Charter and international law. You will be speaking out in support of reason and justice.

Let Cuba live in peace!

Cuba would be better off without the blockade!

Every Cuban family would be better off without the blockade!

Americans would be better off without the blockade on Cuba!

The United States would be a better country without the blockade on Cuba!

The world would be better off without the blockade!

I respectfully request you to vote in favor of draft resolution A/77/L.5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

I do so on behalf of the brave, noble and dignified people of Cuba, who despite the adversities have not been and will not be defeated; on behalf of our children and young people, who oppose the policies of hatred, but suffer its cruel effects; on behalf of the generations of Cubans who have been born and those who will be born under the most cruel and prolonged system of coercive measures that has ever been applied against any country and which must be abolished for the good of all.

Thank you very much.

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