

*Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, at the presentation of Cuba's National Report to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council (HRC).*

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Madam Vice President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates:

I bring from Cuba a message of solidarity and support to the Palestinian people. The indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population and United Nations workers; the bombing of hospitals, ambulances and schools and the massive destruction of homes and vital infrastructure, constitute collective punishment and grave violations of International Humanitarian Law.

We stand in solidarity with all the victims and share the pain of the Arab and Hebrew communities in Cuba.

These are war crimes and crimes against humanity that must be stopped now. The international community must force an immediate ceasefire, in the face of the veto that paralyzes the Security Council and guarantees criminal impunity for genocide.

Madam Vice President:

Cuba is submitting for the fourth time to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council.

The national report we are presenting today is the result of a broad and participatory process of consultations with state institutions and organizations of our civil society.

Of 226 recommendations accepted in the previous UPR, 215, or 95%, have been fulfilled. We advanced in the implementation processes of the remaining 11.

Since the previous Review in 2018, Cuba has taken significant steps in updating its legal and institutional framework for the realization of all human rights for all Cubans.

Through a popular referendum, the Cuban people adopted, in 2019, a new Constitution, which expands the catalog of rights and guarantees for their effective exercise. A 90% participation rate was recorded, with 86% support for the constitutional text.

In the last 4 years, 129 legal norms of higher rank have been approved, an unprecedented fact in Cuba in such a short time.

Among them, I would like to highlight the Family Code, one of the most important laws in the social and legal history of the country. It is a modern, comprehensive and advanced law.

Confronting all forms of discrimination has been and will continue to be a priority of the Cuban State.

In November 2019, the National Program against Racism and Racial Discrimination was approved, as an expression of the country's political will to eradicate any vestige of this phenomenon.

Since 2021, Cuba has had a National Program for the Advancement of Women and a Comprehensive Strategy for the Prevention and Attention to Gender Violence and in the Family Scenario.

Women occupy 56% of the seats in the National Assembly of People's Power, 84% of the positions in the judicial system and eight out of ten prosecutors in the country.

In 2021, the National Commission for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was constituted and, in June 2023, the Cuban Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was created.

Only one month later, the national parliament adopted the Comprehensive Policy for the Care of Children, Adolescents and Youth in Cuba.

Significant progress has been made in criminal legislation, both procedural and substantive, and due process has been strengthened.

Since 2018, we have submitted comprehensive reports to four treaty bodies, those on racial discrimination, persons with disabilities, torture and children's rights.

Various cooperation actions have been developed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and, last July, a productive meeting was held between the President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, and the High Commissioner, H.E. Mr. Volker Türk.

In May 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the enjoyment of Human Rights made a fruitful academic visit to Cuba.

We also had the opportunity to receive in our country, last June, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Madam Vice President:

The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba constitutes a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of Cubans.

Since the previous Review, the blockade was significantly tightened with the application of more than 240 additional unilateral coercive measures and the fraudulent inclusion of Cuba in the spurious list of countries sponsoring terrorism drawn up by the U.S. State Department.

From April 2018 to February 2023, the blockade has caused damages and losses to Cuba estimated, conservatively, in the order of 24.7 billion dollars.

At current prices, the accumulated effects of more than 60 years of blockade exceed 159 billion dollars.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, sanctions against Cuba, unlike the rest, were deliberately tightened to extreme levels. Cuba was prevented from acquiring pulmonary ventilators from subsidiaries of U.S. companies; and parts, pieces and inputs for the industrial production of effective Cuban vaccines; the acquisition of medical oxygen in third countries was hindered and the requirement of a specific license to do so from the United States was demonstrated.

Only 13 days ago, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly demanded the cessation of this policy that causes direct and indirect damages; suffering, shortages and anxiety to Cuban families, and is the fundamental cause of the scarce supply of medicines and food, even for the basic standard food basket, which is insufficient, but everyone receives it highly subsidized. It is the main factor in the exorbitant prices, the devaluation of the currency and salaries; in the crippling power cuts; in the limitations in basic services, with negative effects also in health and education.

In addition to the economic war, Cuba has been and is the victim of sustained media and communication campaigns, aimed at projecting an absolutely false image of human rights, in order to subvert the constitutional order of the Nation.

This modus operandi was implemented, with particular intensity, in 2021, when an attempt was made to force a destabilizing situation, combining extreme measures of economic asphyxiation with sophisticated actions of manipulation, disinformation and unconventional or cognitive warfare operations, generated from U.S. territory and technological platforms.

Madam Vice President:

Despite Cuba's progress since the previous Review, we have dissatisfactions and we strive to improve, promote "full dignity" and "full justice" and face current challenges.

Cuba will continue to improve its institutional and legal framework for the protection of human rights and will continue to promote the construction of a society that is increasingly free, democratic, just, supportive, participatory and socialist.

As newly reelected members of this Council, we will make our greatest and unchanging contribution to international dialogue and cooperation in these matters.

In a sovereign manner, we will advance in cooperation with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, on the basis of respectful and constructive dialogue.

The international community will always be able to count on Cuba to defend peace and multilateralism and to promote the realization of all human rights for all.

Thank you very much.

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