

# *Speech by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez at the IV Conference Nation and Emigration*

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**Photo: Omara García Mederos / Agencia Cubana de Noticias**

Bruno Rodríguez, Cuban Foreign Minister, spoke Saturday, November 18, 2023 at the opening of the IV Conference The Nation and Emigration.

## ***WE BRING YOU HIS ENTIRE SPEECH, TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH...***

Compañero Miguel Díaz Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic:

Compatriots:

On behalf of the government and the Organizing Committee, I warmly welcome you to the IV Conference "The Nation and Emigration", to reflect and exchange on important issues of the Nation and about the links with our compatriots living abroad.

The unrestricted respect for the sovereignty and independence of the Homeland and the common will to continue strengthening and diversifying our ties are premises that we share.

You are aware that the country is going through a complicated economic situation, with visible social impacts that affect the standard of living, the satisfaction of needs, social services and the welfare of our people.

We are suffering the combined effect of the extreme worsening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic impact of the global crisis and the ongoing international conflicts.

This is taking place in the midst of a transforming and revolutionary process in our economy, aimed at updating the socialist system, making it more efficient, and adapting it to the current realities of the country and the world. It is a process that generates its own tensions and that we have undertaken conscious of its necessity and its risks, but certain that it was unavoidable and urgent.

We have also encountered our own deficiencies, distortions and difficulties, on which we have worked tirelessly, always thinking of the welfare of the people.

Our government remains firmly committed to safeguarding social justice and protecting, as far as possible, the equity that characterizes us. We are convinced that we will find a way out of such a complex scenario with our own efforts.

Cuba's revolutionary history records several moments of great difficulties and we have always managed to overcome them. It is a history of which we can be proud, with seemingly inconceivable feats for a country of the dimensions of ours, heir to an underdeveloped economic potential, and subjected to the permanent aggression of the most powerful government on the planet.

The economic and social achievements between the 1960s and the 1990s, before the fall of the socialist camp, are astonishing, if compared to the countries of the region and other developing countries.

Today, our vaccines against AIDS-19 and the effort deployed to confront the pandemic are reliable examples of that creative resilience, based on talent and collective strength to overcome adversity.

Some of our scientists, creators of the vaccines and protocols that made it possible to overcome the pandemic, are among us this morning.

So are the social conquests, with new provisions in the Constitution adopted in 2019, with the Family Code, the programs for the Advancement of Women; Against Racial Discrimination and the one dedicated to Children, Adolescents and Youth.

In the international arena, our State enjoys extensive relations with practically all countries. With many of them, it has ties of friendship and cooperation, even with those governments that may have political or ideological differences with ours. Cuba enjoys high prestige and is recognized for its contributions to peace, dialogue and understanding.

The United Nations General Assembly, last November 2, almost unanimously called on the government of the United States to put an end to the blockade.

We enjoy an extraordinary solidarity in all continents; it is particularly evident in the cardinal moments of our history in which Cubans living in other parts of the planet have had an active participation, which fills us with emotion.

I wish to reiterate our deepest gratitude for the fraternal pronouncements and assistance of our compatriots, so many times accompanied by that broad and universal movement of solidarity with Cuba.

I also express our gratitude for the donations received during the most critical stage of Covid-19, which contributed to guarantee the necessary supplies for the vaccination campaign, as well as the aid sent in the face of meteorological phenomena that have affected us.

Our great challenge in foreign policy continues to be the hostility of the governments of the United States, their determination to deny our right to self-determination and to dominate our Nation.

The fundamental and determining element continues to be the blockade, originally conceived, and by official definition of the US government itself, to deprive us of money and supplies, to reduce financial resources and real wages, to provoke hunger, despair and the overthrow of our government.

It is a malicious purpose that was substantially expanded with the Helms-Burton Act and, since 2019, further and unprecedentedly reinforced. The arbitrary designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism added an extremely damaging effect, with high costs and limitations for finance and trade.

The asphyxiation caused by the blockade and the extreme measures of recent years constitute a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of Cubans, continue to be the greatest obstacle to our development and have a direct and determining impact on the high migratory flows.

This policy is accompanied by programs of destabilization and destruction of the constitutional order that the U.S. Congress finances with tens of millions of dollars, which include interfering in the process of transforming our economy, pretending to artificially segment it and ignoring that it is one.

We have the will to build a respectful and civilized relationship with the U.S. government, but the U.S. government lacks the political will to move in that direction. During 2015 and 2016, and even 2017, we demonstrated that willingness and it was also found that it would be something possible and mutually beneficial.

Our encouragement is to continue expanding and deepening ties with various sectors of U.S. society.

This Conference is a fortunate and unequivocal sign of the continuous and irreversible strengthening of ties between Cuba and its nationals abroad; the result of the Dialogue initiated in November 1978, promoted and driven by the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz.

The Revolution was in a process of consolidation and institutionalization 20 years after the triumph of January 1959. The country had expanded its links with the world and broken the siege of isolation that imperialism had tried to impose on it. At that time there was a less aggressive climate on the part of the U.S. government.

t the same time, our government was reflecting on the need to reestablish ties with those Cubans who for various reasons had left the country, especially to the United States, and who, regardless of their political leanings, wished to return or establish contact with their homeland and their families.

Under these circumstances, a policy of our government took shape which, from the beginning until today, has been developed under difficult and extraordinary conditions, which are not common in the case of other countries' links with their emigration.

In our case, the Nation has remained under the permanent aggression of a great power, located only 90 miles away and where most of the emigrants reside or are citizens, with a very concentrated presence in a community where a certain degree of hostility is manifested, encouraged, conducted or manipulated, even electorally, against their Homeland.

In the 1978 meeting, Fidel said, and I quote: "history always consigns the things that have some human, social, political value, and we believe that this has value, a high human, social and political value (...) whatever the misunderstandings of now, (...) the doubts, the future will consign with recognition to what we are doing". End of quote.

As a result of this constructive rapprochement and of the historical development, remarkable progress has been made and important decisions and measures have been gradually adopted to strengthen our ties.

The two Conferences "The Nation and Emigration" held in 1994 and 1995 made it possible to deepen the rapprochement, broaden the composition of the participants in the dialogue, coming from several countries, not only from the United States. It was also possible to design with better structure and greater institutionalism the policy of rapprochement and insertion of the then emigrants in the national life.

Something similar happened with the 2004 Conference.

Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Republic, on the occasion of his farewell to His Holiness Benedict XVI, on March 28, 2012, stated and I quote: "We recognize the patriotic contribution of Cuban emigration, from the decisive contribution to our independence of the tobacco growers of Tampa and Key West and all those who supported the yearnings of José Martí, to those who today oppose those who attack Cuba and manipulate the migration issue for political purposes. We have made prolonged efforts - he said - towards the full normalization of Cuba's relations with its emigration that feels love for the Homeland and for their families and we will persist in it for the common will of our Nation."End of quote.

Measures of a consular or migratory nature have played an important role in facilitating procedures and reducing requirements, reducing expenses, eliminating obstacles for an increasingly fluid communication and favoring family ties.

Among the most visible results are the growing manifestations of support and solidarity with Cuba by nationals residing outside the country, even in the United States.

Many of them are subjected, as are their relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances and Cubans in general, to a permanent toxic aggression through the media and digital networks with platforms based especially in South Florida, financed by government entities.

It is an aggression that, we know, many times exposes you to various dangers and admires our people as you defend with nobility your moral and political stance in the face of harassment.

Speaking at the Constitutive Session of the 10th Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power last April, President Díaz-Canel said, and I quote: "...we cannot be part of the politicization of Cuban emigration, with which the enemy traffics. We must defend a relationship with Cuban emigrants that makes it clear to them that we admire their triumphs and that their Homeland respects them, looks at

them proudly and awaits their return, simply aspiring that they respect and defend the soil that saw them born and formed them with love." End of quote.

The participation of Cubans living outside the country in national life is increasingly active. It is expressed in the economy and commercial activity, and opportunities for a growing role for them in the development of the country are expanding.

Our culture is one. It is illustrated in the thinking and artistic and literary creation of all, in the development of science and academic life, in the practice of sports and in other facets of national life.

Beyond our uniqueness, human mobility and circularity are trends of the time in all latitudes, motivated by fundamentally common circumstances associated with development and welfare.

Our history tends to overcome the concept of emigrant for that of Cubans who are and are, and come and go in their dissimilar circumstances; they participate and contribute, defend and enrich, return or are prolonged in their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren who will continue to be Cubans.

It is Martí's formula of triumphant love, inscribed in blood on the flag of the lone star. It is our faith. There they are, the "lindoros", as the Apostle called those who hate and destroy with a "spirit of submission". The neoanexionists will not be among us.

In the patriotic Cubans living abroad, the Nation grows, enriches itself, manifests itself and proudly presents itself to the world, more and more widely, wherever there is a Cuban who carries in his soul the feeling of the Homeland.

In Cuba, there is the maternal substance, the origin, the essence, the people and the history, which belongs to all Cubans.

From the bowels of the island is nourished our Cubanness, which is Cubanness and awareness of what we are and what we want to be, and from here emanates the strength of the nation and the Cuban culture.

We are honored that you are in the Homeland, in this reunion.

Thank you very much.

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