

# *Cuba denounces impact of blockade on fight against COVID-19 at UNESCO*

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Paris, July 3 (RHC)-- The permanent representative of Cuba to UNESCO, Yahima Esquivel, denounced in a forum of the organization the effects of the U.S. blockade on the efforts of the Caribbean nation to confront the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the Executive Council of the multilateral body, she pointed out that at a time when countries should put solidarity, cooperation and dialogue before differences and political conflicts, as the Director General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay has demanded, Washington does the opposite.

In these difficult times, unilateral coercive measures are intensifying, and the COVID-19 crisis shows the enormous limitations generated by the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba to acquire medicines, health equipment, materials and necessary supplies, she said.

According to Esquivel, despite this hostility, Cuba ratifies its firm commitment to the collective effort aimed at promoting solidarity, breaking down the walls and providing assistance to those in need.

Cuban medical contingents are currently working in 70 countries to combat the pandemic, under the leadership and authority of national governments, while in recent weeks and months 38 health brigades have been sent to 35 nations, she said.

The diplomat insisted that humanity is going through a particularly unprecedented moment as a result of the impact of the pandemic. The COVID-19 puts the international community in front of immense challenges, in a scenario where a deep systemic crisis threatens to aggravate and perpetuate the structural problems of underdevelopment, already accumulated.

Esquivel warned that the complex panorama ahead will represent an even more difficult challenge for developing countries. "UNESCO must play a leading role in raising awareness of the crisis, in mitigating and confronting its effects in the fields of education, science, culture and information," she said.

In this context, the Cuban ambassador stated before the Executive Board that the island will continue to be deeply committed to the values of the organization and hopes to strengthen them with a new medium-term strategy.

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