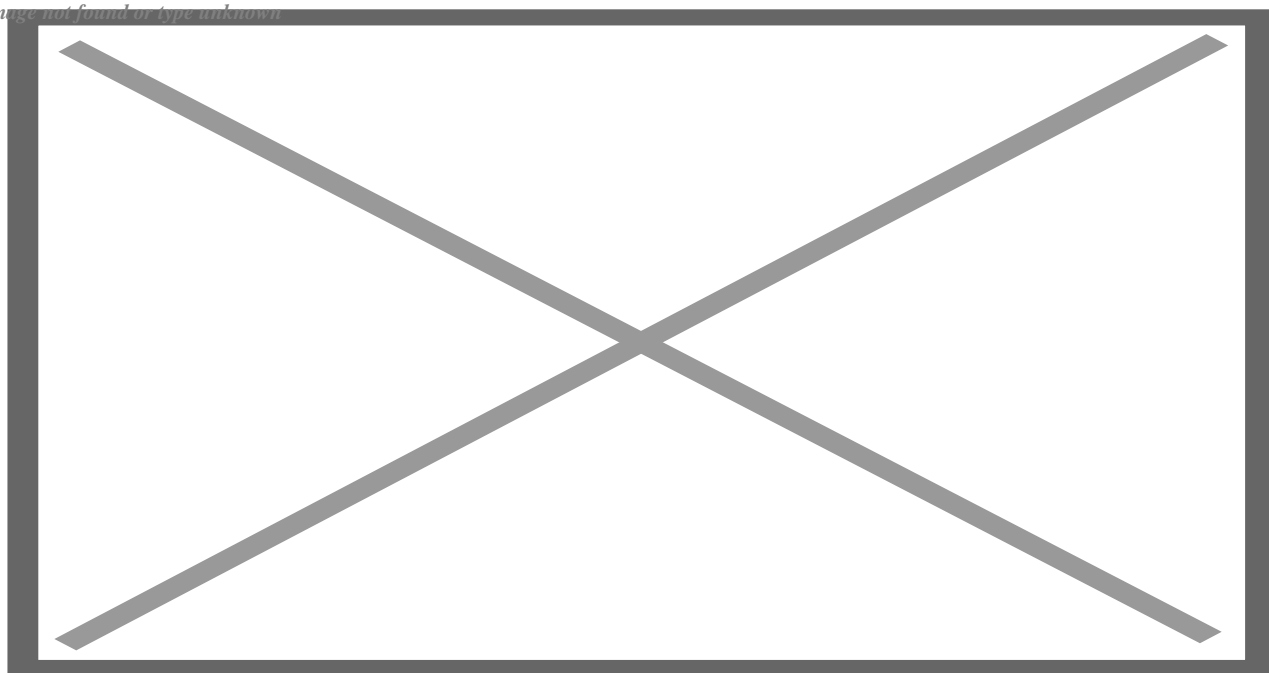


# *Cuban president calls to confront anything that deviates from the Revolution*

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Havana, January 30 (RHC) -- Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel called on Monday, at the first meeting of the Council of Ministers of 2024, to confront everything that departs from the spirit of the Revolution in Cuban society.

The meeting was informed of several political processes that will be developed during the coming months to accompany the implementation of the Government's Projections to correct distortions and boost the economy, reported the Presidency.

As a guiding thread that should mark all these processes, the President indicated the proposals of Army General Raúl Castro Ruz in his speech for the 65th anniversary of the Revolution, based on his concepts on unity, the work of the cadres, ideological work, and how to face the problems of the economy.

The objective is to advance with coherence in the implementation of the economic measures, and that we can address the social, ideological and economic problems, with a comprehensive analysis.

These will be far-reaching processes, he said, which begin with a discussion of the party militancy, covering all administrative structures, and also the workers' and students' collectives, and the population in the communities, therefore the whole Cuban society will be involved in these debates.

It is a matter of reflecting, evaluating and proposing solutions to the problems in each place with rigor and creativity. Everyone, said Díaz-Canel, has a great responsibility in this, fundamentally the cadres at different levels who must be well prepared to be able to lead these processes throughout the country.

The people who are going to debate with the population, with the militancy, have to prepare themselves. "We may find ourselves with work collectives, nuclei of the Party, who do not understand and we have to explain them well".

The Head of State stressed that "we must keep our ears open, because there will be people who consider that such and such a measure can be applied in such and such a way, or who propose another, and that will also give us, from the population, a baggage of ideas that can be turned into actions".

Díaz-Canel stressed that "the measures are necessary and cannot be postponed, because they correct deep distortions and structural deviations that hinder the performance of the Cuban economy".

Here there are projections, he stressed, aimed at boosting exports and national production, also to save; some have a taxation sense, precisely in order to boost those national productions, to provoke savings or redistribute wealth.

"These are measures aimed at macroeconomic stabilization of the country, defending social conquests, therefore, in addition to economic growth, they are seeking social development", he said.

These are measures, he insisted, aimed at the benefit of the people, "if we grow in the economy, if we depend less on imports, if we export more and increase foreign exchange earnings that the country needs, who is that for, it is for the population," he said.

Díaz-Canel rejected the attempts of the enemies of the Revolution to present the Projections of the Cuban Government as a neoliberal package, in the style of other processes in the region and the world, where "every man for himself" prevails and everything is "scorched earth".

He recalled that the first measure applied were the additional payments to the Education and Health sectors. "What neoliberal package in the world starts by increasing income to two sectors of society such as Health and Education. The neoliberal packages begin precisely by taking away the Budget and privatizing all these," he commented.

It is a recognition to two sectors that have the most important functions in a society: guaranteeing life, health and education. And when they benefit, he said, we are all benefiting.

Furthermore, he added, these projections are shedding light, because as we recover in the economy, reduce the budget deficit and have more income, pensions, the minimum wage and income in other sectors will improve.

In his key speech before the Council of Ministers, Díaz-Canel recalled that "it has been established as a principle that the measures are applied when the conditions are created, when the differentiated treatment of those who may have more impact as a result of the application of the measure has been studied, and this is how we are working".

The Government's Projections, summarized the Cuban President, "will have a good development to the extent that we are capable of implementing them and conducting them well, and that will have to be a process of constant feedback".

That is why this process of discussion with the entire population is important, that is why it is important to continue providing adequate information through all possible channels, starting with the institutional sites of the agencies, he said.

Díaz-Canel was emphatic in assuring that the Cuban Revolution, as in all its history, will not leave anyone unprotected. "There is a social work defended in all these years that even in the most complex conditions is growing, in scope and quality."

This is the case, he exemplified, of the new Casitas Infantiles that are being born all over the country with good infrastructure and service; of the program for the recovery of the Family Doctor and Nurse's Offices; of the transformations in the neighborhoods; of the 32 social programs that are maintained in the midst of these difficult circumstances, which continue to provide solutions and attention to people who have a certain problem.

We have all the arguments, emphasized the First Secretary, which lead us to the conviction that the measures must be defended.

#### TO SHAKE THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL WORK

The Council of Ministers was also informed about two other political processes to be promoted by the Communist Party of Cuba.

As explained by Roberto Morales Ojeda, member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of Organization of the Central Committee, it was decided to analyze and discuss in the grassroots organizations of the PCC and the UJC, as well as in the structures of the Government, the speeches delivered by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz and First Secretary Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, on the 65th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution.

It is a process, he specified, that will contribute to reaffirm the need and strategic importance of unity, exemplarity and combativeness in the revolutionary ranks.

"We are making a call to be rigorous, creative and that goes to the essence of the urgencies that we have today in the safeguard of the Revolution and in the construction of Socialism".

Morales Ojeda pointed out that the Party will also promote the discussion of the document: "Basic concepts for the correction of deviations and negative tendencies in Cuban society". A practice, he recalled, which is not new in our country.

It is being taken up again, he said, in a complex socio-economic context, tinged by the intensification of the blockade, which imposes serious limitations on our development, in addition to our own inadequacies and distortions.

This has, he recalled, deep historical antecedents: the Third Congress of the PCC, which resulted in the Party Program and in the Process of rectification of errors and negative tendencies, then headed by our Commander in Chief.

Throughout these years of Revolution, Fidel and Raul have been the architects of the need to change everything that must be changed, but also to correct or combat whatever threatens the survival of the Revolution. This must become a popular debate, said Morales Ojeda.

In this regard, the First Secretary warned that this is not a cold process, "what we are trying to do is to impregnate a systematic way of doing, that we are constantly analyzing what deviations there are in our sphere of action, in what concerns us, and how we are going to overcome them. We have to encourage each place to identify what problems there are and how we are going to face them".

We cannot wait to solve economic issues to address other issues that are affecting our society today. If we work on all these processes, we will advance ideologically, economically and socially, said Díaz-Canel.

## COUNTRY POLICY

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz defined as "a country policy" the "Projections of the Government to correct distortions and re-drive the economy", which were first discussed and approved in the Political Bureau, then in the Central Committee Plenary, and finally in the National Assembly with the full support of the deputies.

"This is not just more of the same," he emphasized while speaking before the highest governing body in Cuba. We have been rightly criticized - even by our people - for the plans of measures that have failed to transform the problems, regardless of the real impact that the blockade has had to move forward in a more accelerated manner.

This is a process of transformation of the Government's work in the country, insisted Marrero Cruz, of strengthening its different structures, as the maximum responsible for the economic and social problems that directly impact our population.

"The people no longer demand from us efforts, sacrifices, consecration; the people demand results from us", he stressed. We have no doubt, he clarified, of the difficult situations faced by the managers in the different instances, on a full-time basis, but we have to ensure that this effort is accompanied by results.

When we talk about re-boosting the economy, it is a profound call that goes far beyond waiting for fuels and foreign currency to fall from the sky, the Prime Minister emphasized.

The scenario is not going to change, it will be very complex, but we have to transform our economy, and we are encouraged by the examples of people, collectives, organizations that under these same complexities have done different things, have looked for alternatives.

Everything we do, Marrero Cruz said, we have to associate it to the Government's Projections, to that call to review ourselves, to do things differently, to do things better. Every time we see that something is being hindered by the attitude of a cadre, we cannot allow it.

The Prime Minister referred to the role played by cadres and how they should be to face a war economy such as the one Cuba is going through: cadres who do not stop, who have the vocation to look for solutions, who do not set boundaries that prevent them from moving forward.

We have to review everything, he pointed out. Everything that is not going well must be reviewed, "but we must review it in order to look for solutions", he added.

We have said that we are going to go through complex times, Marrero Cruz recalled, that the measures are not going to transform the country's situation from one day to the next, "but they are the way out, of that we are sure, and we will gradually find solutions and see the lights, but that will be when we all unite, and we all join together".

## DEVELOPING THE ECONOMY MEANS OFFERING GREATER WELFARE

The Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Planning, Alejandro Gil Fernández, highlighted the priority and scope of the Government's Projections for 2024, "which are not fundamentally about increasing prices, but rather they include the necessary impulse to productive activity, the increase of national production, exports and foreign currency income and macroeconomic stabilization".

It is not a matter of raising prices for the sake of raising them, he said, but of encouraging savings, making a more efficient use of resources, and seeking a fairer and more equitable distribution of the wealth generated.

"That is the sense of the tariffs and prices that we are updating, because they have lagged behind in time, disconnected from costs, and today what is really happening is that waste is being encouraged".

In his presentation to the Council of Ministers of the "Plan of Actions for the Implementation of the Government's Projections to Correct Distortions and Re-boost the Economy", Gil Fernandez pointed out that a key objective is to advance in the macroeconomic stabilization of the country.

"All the actions that are incorporated in the Government Projections are linked to the Macroeconomic Stabilization Program. What we are doing in terms of price correction, he exemplified, has to do with macroeconomic stabilization, because it eliminates or reduces subsidies, and increases tax revenues.

When we are taking measures to promote and stimulate production, when we are transforming the exchange market, this has to do with the macroeconomic stabilization of the country.

Increasing and diversifying external revenues, the minister pointed out, is also fundamental. Many of the projections will have more favorable impacts, he said, to the extent that we have more resources available. There are actions aimed at increasing revenues that are needed to face a set of issues that we have to address in the economy. Having more fuel, more inputs for national production, necessarily involves foreign currency income, external income that must be encouraged.

Gil Fernandez pointed out that one of the objectives of the Government's Projections is to increase domestic production, with emphasis on the use of installed capacities.

The measure to reduce tariffs on raw materials, inputs and intermediate goods, he illustrated, has to do precisely with encouraging the importation of raw materials to link up with the national industry. Today we have idle capacities in the industry, and we are importing products that can be produced in Cuba, he said.

The deputy prime minister also spoke of further developing social policy and protection mechanisms for individuals, families and households in vulnerable situations. "This makes explicit the distance between our government program and a neoliberal program."

It is also an essential objective to "reduce crime, corruption, illegalities and social indiscipline, through prevention and confrontation, affecting the causes and conditions that generate them". It is necessary to establish order, put an end to the softness, put a firm hand on what corresponds, and demand that what is established be complied with, he specified.

There are high impact projections, he pointed out, among them the mechanism for the allocation and management of the currency, which includes the resizing of the exchange market, which is transversal to the whole economy and we are going to face it this year; the transition from subsidizing products to subsidizing people, which implies a change in the distribution of wealth, more fair and equitable; as well as the transformation of the institutional, regulatory and organizational environment of the economy.

Developing the economy, stressed the Deputy Prime Minister, "means, no more and no less, offering greater welfare to the people, and what we are doing is going in that direction. The worst risk, he said, would be in not changing and not transforming, "everything we are changing is going in the direction of greater welfare to our people".

## WHERE IS THE IMPLEMENTATION GOING?

The Minister of Economy and Planning presented to the Council of Ministers an update of where the implementation schedule of the decisions approved as part of the Projections to correct distortions and re-

drive the economy is going, an accountability that will take place every month in the meeting of the highest Government body.

So far, the salary measures to stimulate the permanence of workers in the Health and Education sectors have been implemented. Also, the extension, until March 31, 2024, of the tariff exemptions for the importation of food and cleaning products by natural persons, without commercial character.

Likewise, the legal norms implementing the reduction of 50% of the tariffs for the import of raw materials and intermediate goods, and the increase of tariffs for the import of tobacco, cigars, rums and spirits have been published in the Official Gazette.

According to what was known, for February it is planned to update the regulations that allow the reordering of local development projects; as well as to decentralize to the territorial governments the power to approve the wholesale and retail prices of Natural and Traditional Medicine, of local dispensary and industrial elaboration.

In that month, progress will also be made in the presentation of proposals to resize the exchange market, the intervention of the informal market and the control of the exchange rate in the country, which includes the determination of the exchange rate and the formation of prices.

"We are working hard on this because of the impact it has for the promotion and productive stimulus", said Gil Fernandez.

Likewise, "to recover the flow of remittances, encourage their collection and study the feasibility of new channels, platforms and the use of digital scenarios for remittances and bank transactions of collections and payments from abroad; and implement the new mechanism for the allocation and management of liquidity for all economic actors, based on the distortions we have today, in order to achieve a more harmonious functioning of the economy, and thus be able to advance in the autonomy of the state-owned company".

As usual, the Council of Ministers analyzed several issues on the national agenda, among them on this occasion the Draft Decree-Law on the Compensation Fund, which will be submitted to the Council of State, thus exercising the legislative initiative. (Taken from the Presidency's website)

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