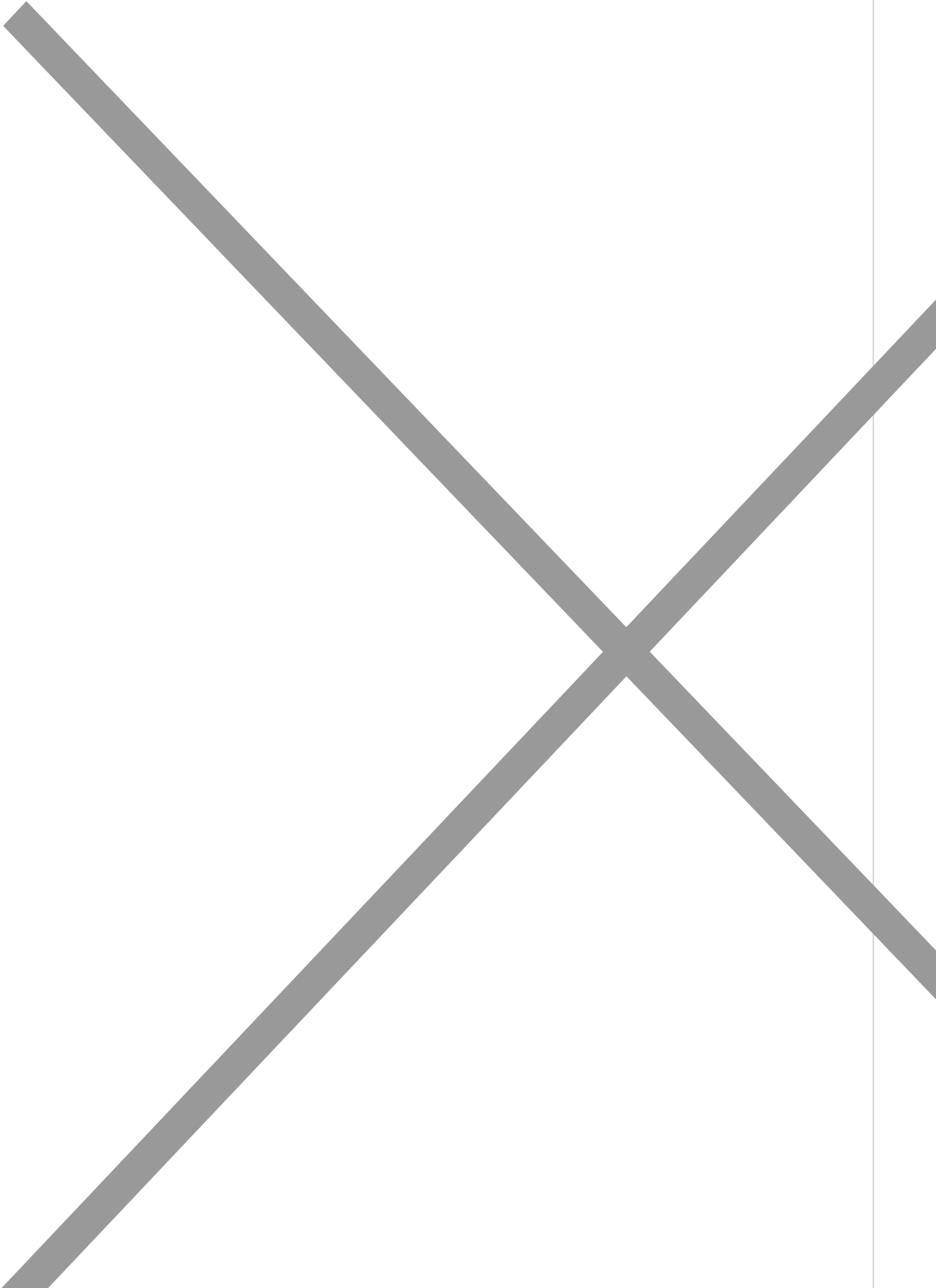


*Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno
Rodriguez says Cuba and the
world are facing difficult times*

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Havana, March 15 (RHC)-- Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, appeared this Thursday on the prime time TV program "The Round Table" to report on the fundamental lines and projections of Cuba's foreign policy.

Offering an overview of the current world scenario, Rodríguez Parrilla commented that "it is a difficult time. We are overcoming situations that characterized the world in previous decades. It is a time of change and naturally causes threats to peace and international security."

"It affects the development of peoples, generates growing polarization and inequality in the midst of the pretensions of imperialism, fundamentally that of the United States, to safeguard a unipolar order that has already been surpassed by history. And it does so with coercive instruments, such as those used against Cuba."

Cuba's top diplomat pointed out that the situation is also marked by "the proliferation of conflicts, economic instability, disruption of trade flows, artificial price increases," the consequences of which have repercussions, above all, on the peoples.

"There is sometimes talk of a change of epoch, sometimes of an epoch of change, but there is no doubt that the contradictions in the international system require solutions that only the peoples can find through their struggles, especially the peoples of the South."

"We are coming out of a pandemic that made more evident the inequity that the world suffers from. The richest 1% of the planet accumulates more than 40% of the wealth. There are recent data that illustrate how in recent years that 1% has hoarded two thirds of the wealth produced," said the Minister, recalling, in addition, "environmental unsustainability and the tremendous danger of the development of nuclear weapons and new weapons of mass extermination or of high lethality."

"One senses," the foreign minister continued in his speech, "that we are witnessing an epochal change that will have to break through if the human species is to survive. This will have to give way to a different international order and different relations between human beings and the countries of the North and the South."

"A new international order is needed and will have to be fought for. It will never be the result of a gift from imperialism, from developed capitalism, but we will have to struggle, to give birth to a new epoch."

"In particular, Cuba, which is an island subjected to a cruel, excluding, suffocating policy of U.S. imperialism, will have to fight as it has done throughout its history. Today there is no more important task for Cuban diplomacy, for the foreign service of the Republic of Cuba, which goes far beyond the ministry; it is of the Cuban State as a whole, of the Government, of the National Assembly of People's Power, of the political, mass and non-governmental organizations. It is necessarily a struggle of all."

He stressed the importance of finding ways to overcome this economic siege, "not only in terms of resistance, but also on the basis of a real creative effort to overcome problems and the recovery of the economy, which will then allow us not only to continue growing, but also to develop the country".

The mission of diplomacy is to contribute to this resistance effort.

The foreign minister explained that two thirds of Cuban embassies are very small. "They are embassies of two pairs of diplomats. A peculiarity of the Cuban foreign service is that spouses must necessarily work and be hired in our state missions."

Bruno Rodríguez added that a quarter of the missions are of a single couple of Cuban diplomats "and they have to do everything, because the demands of the struggles of our people and the difficult

international situation require it.

"For that reason, the preparation of diplomatic personnel is very important, which not only includes specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also from other entities of our Government".

This work has at its core "the priorities of national life; above all, the search for additional sources of income for the country, the solution in the best possible conditions to ensure food and fuel imports".

Rodríguez Parrilla affirmed that Cuban diplomats "work with a very personal mission, from a deep conviction of what are the problems that our people live today, the shortages, the difficulties, the shortages, which are suffered by their families. They feel them in their hearts and work hard in the search for economic options, for Cuban imports; the attraction of foreign investment, the solidarity that is expressed in many ways, because Cuba is a very dear country internationally.

"Likewise, the solidarity movements, the associations of Cubans, the role of diplomats in international economic organizations and, in general, in multilateral bodies; the promotion of foreign participation in our events, forums; the development of the links of Cubans living abroad with development projects, sometimes local, which are fundamental in our economy, stand out."

Today, Cuba's foreign minister stressed, the fundamental mission of Cuban diplomacy is to "contribute to this effort of resistance, to alleviate the severe economic difficulties we are suffering today and to do so in the direction of economic growth and development in these moments of contingency that the country is suffering due to essentially external causes."

The Cuban diplomat said that most Cubans living in the United States want a normal relationship with the country. Later on, he considered that there are many opportunities for Cubans living abroad, despite the siege suffered by Cuba, "without many natural resources, but with the enormous talent of our people and their ability to overcome difficulties and even help others in difficult times."

The foreign minister noted that "it is impressive how, in the midst of the pandemic, during which the set of coercive measures was strongly tightened, Cuba sent dozens of medical brigades to more than 40 countries, in an effort of international cooperation that is highly recognized.

"The essential thing is that foreign policy, the enormous sympathy that Cuba arouses in the world, is also reverted in resources and ways to contribute to the development of our economy. In that sense, a significant force are the Cubans who in different migratory conditions reside abroad, but who feel deeply for their homeland and their family."

He recalled that in recent years there has been an important development, "especially of small projects, which come from that patriotic sector, which feels Cuba as their homeland and wants to contribute to our development."

The Cuban foreign minister affirmed that the recent Fourth Conference The Nation and Emigration expressed, as a fundamental characteristic, "an extraordinary patriotism, a great willingness to participate in the solution of the dissimilar problems we face today, in the insertion of personal projects of those who come and go, circulate, are in the country for a while and abroad, but who feel deeply Cuban."

The debates of the conference -he added- reflected an enormous patriotism of Cubans living abroad and living in different conditions. "They all feel a great desire to contribute to the solution of our problems, to accompany their families and to develop normal relations between Cubans living abroad and those in their homeland, whose main obstacle today is U.S. policy."

He stressed that most Cubans living in the United States want a normal relationship with the country. "But there is no doubt that today U.S. policy continues to be repressive, politically motivated, and intends to

use these migratory movements, in a political manipulation of the issue, to which Cuba has responded with an increasingly open policy in the country's relationship with Cubans living temporarily and permanently abroad."

Bruno Rodríguez pointed out that in recent years there has been a growth in these flows, which are not strictly migratory, but reflect the circularity, "the universal tendency to reside abroad for a while. Of course, this has generated in the last years a significant growth of migratory procedures and the legalization of documents."

He explained that "today there is no automation of these processes in the world. Legalization as a rule ends with a seal, a stamp. The documents have to go through a process, which goes from the registry institutions, such as, for example, a university, and a legalization is required from the Minrex receiving these documents, so that they have legal effect abroad.

"It is a complicated process and the numbers have been growing in a relatively short time and have clogged those systems. An additional problem is that these documents have a perishable life: sometimes, the foreign government claims that the document is less than six months old".

Faced with this reality," he explained, "many measures have been taken. For example, the incorporation of 65 young people from the Military Service, who are now working at the Minrex in response to this need.

"There is a group of workers in the ministry that works hard. There has been a modernization of these processes. And more fundamental solutions are also underway," he said.

He explained that a first solution would be for developed countries not to put up barriers. A second solution would be for Cuba to adhere to an international convention that would allow up to 60% of the documents not to be legalized by means of a procedure in order for them to be legally effective outside Cuba. That instrument is the Apostille Convention and studies are being carried out in that sense.

"A great effort is being made to automate these processes. Thirdly, there is an effort to integrate and facilitate all this long process that comes from the registry entities, the consultancies, and the legalization unit of the Minrex, which is an effort that is about to be concluded and that I hope will soon allow integrating and compacting these processes," he said.

Cuba's foreign minister affirmed that "the protagonist is the Cuban people, the way in which they participate in foreign policy. The process of the Constitution of the Republic was very important. Our people participate very actively in these issues. Along with baseball and meteorology, foreign policy is also a topic of gatherings, something that amazes foreign visitors."

He highlighted, in the period in which we are, since the changes in the Constitution, "the leadership of the president, the way in which Cuba takes part in international scenarios, with a greater influence than its geographical dimension or its GDP; the sympathy, affection and solidarity that it generates, the respect of its adversaries, the feat that the Cuban people do every day in defense of independence, and the consideration that foreign policy is made by all of us, the mass organizations, the leadership and orientation of the PCC, the role of the National Assembly, the role of the non-governmental organizations of the civil society and the role of the people in the streets. The confrontation of the genocidal blockade, the increasingly universal demand for the elimination of the arbitrary list of countries sponsoring terrorism."

"Cuba also has a significant diplomatic and consular network, diplomatic relations almost without exception with all States, it is very well known internationally, and they are the most austere and cheapest embassies on the planet. The consular collection, which is a process that every State carries out, is in a significant part a contribution to the economic life of the country."

Stressing that 2023 was an important year, he referred to the Cuban presidency of the Group of 77 and China, which was a great effort. He recalled the presence of Cuba, in its capacity as president of the Group of 77, in international events, and the holding of the Summit in September in Havana.

"It has been one of the most participatory summits in recent years on an international scale, and probably, one of the most austere that have been made in recent years on this planet. And it had a great impact. It is totally unprecedented that there was a second summit a few months after that one, in Uganda, which was also very important", he commented.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said that "the so-called US exceptionalism serves to characterize the isolation of the United States on the planet in relation to Cuba. The nature, the essential sense of the relationship, of the successive governments with respect to the Cuban Revolution, has sought to establish imperialist domination over our homeland. We have diplomatic relations, there are official and some unofficial exchanges in areas of common interest, but what determines the essence of that relationship is the blockade, which today is applied with unprecedented rigor.

"Perhaps we have lacked the explanation of this phenomenon in a more accessible way, especially to the younger ones. But the main nature of the blockade is that it interferes and intends to suffocate the relationship, not only with the United States, but of Cuba with the rest of the planet. And the worst happened during the pandemic. Never was the blockade so cruel as at that time, and it is unforgivable that the U.S. government has chosen the pandemic as an ally to intensify the blockade".

The Cuban foreign minister recalled that cruises and flights were cut off. Brutal measures were applied. The 243 additional measures were applied, "we are not counting individual sanctions here".

During the pandemic -he added- "it became clear that an oxygen balloon cannot be imported, in the midst of asphyxia, without a license from the United States Government. During the pandemic, Cuba's oxygen imports from third countries were hindered. That was an unforgivable crime.

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Rodríguez Parrilla recalled that in the previous Democratic Administration certain steps had been taken in the positive direction in relation to Cuba, but with the Biden Administration there was a continuity in Democratic policy with respect to Republican policy regarding Cuba.

"The effects of the inclusion of Cuba on the list of countries sponsoring terrorism take place during the Democratic Biden Administration. This policy has a lethal effect, above all, from the economic point of view".

There has also been a continuity in the extreme tightening of the blockade. "That policy will have to change, because it is obsolete, it is opposed by the majority of Americans, of the majority of Cubans living in the United States, and it corresponds to the Cold War period, but we will have to overcome it and develop with our own efforts", he said.

Cuban Foreign Minister: A crime against humanity, genocide of the Palestinian people
Addressing the situation of the last few months in Gaza, the Foreign Minister denounced it as "a crime against humanity, genocide of the Palestinian people. Cuba has always advocated a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, based on the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination".

He pointed out that, recently, ISRI youth were among the first to take to the streets to express themselves in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and that Cuba has made far-reaching proposals, including sending a UN General Assembly mission to Palestinian territory and incorporating Palestine into the UN as a member state.

"What is happening today in Palestine would not be happening without the complicity of the U.S. government," he said, adding that Cuba has developed concrete actions of solidarity with the Palestinian people and called for international mobilization in this regard.

In another moment of Thursday's Round Table, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla stressed that the *raison d'être* of our foreign policy is the protagonism of the people.

"The participatory manner in which we approach foreign policy decisions is significant. The people's opinion must be taken into account in these aspects. Today communication is an indispensable tool in the communication of the people, but it is also used by the Empire as a weapon.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be permanently accountable to our people, to the National Assembly. Not simply to inform, but also to listen and debate. Communication is a strength and foreign policy is democratic, participatory. Foreign policy must be flexible, adjust to the conjunctures. Communication is an instrument of the Revolution's policy".

Rodríguez Parrilla quoted President Díaz-Canel and reiterated that Cuba suffers a real siege, an extraterritorial economic war. Even so, "despite the hostility of the U.S. government, we will continue to build bridges with the people of the United States and strengthen ties with Cuban emigrants in any corner of our planet."

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