



REPUBLICA DE CUBA

Misión Permanente ante la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas
en Ginebra y los Organismos Internacionales con sede en Suiza

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
SEVENTH SESSION
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. FELIPE PÉREZ ROQUE,
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OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA**

(Check against delivery)

Geneva, March 3, 2008

Excellencies:

I am speaking on behalf of Cuba, the country who is suffering under the longest and cruellest blockade known to history; the small rebel country which is threatened with "a change of regime", never to be forgiven its noble spirit and integrity.

That Cuba should be founding member of this Council is proof that, finally, reason conquers force, the defence of principles defeats power and wealth. Proof of the fact that you cannot fool all of the people, all of the time.

During 2007 we concluded, in essence, the institutional building of the Human Rights Council. It was the victory of our majority –the Non-Aligned Movement in particular – over a very paltry group of countries –one or two of the powerful ones – who conspired up until the last second to frustrate the process. It was the result of a delicate balance, we all know this.

When in December 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 62/219, as a result of the action of the Non-Aligned Movement, approving the institutional building of the Human Rights Council, we who struggled for years, convinced that it was possible and indispensable to create a new body to replace the discredited Commission on Human Rights, finally saw the fruits of our patience and our serious and honest labour.

And so we arrive at this moment in time. And now we should ask ourselves: can we be sure that the new Council will be different from the old Commission? Will it truly be a body that will contribute to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all the inhabitants on this planet?

No, we really cannot ensure that just yet. It is now that the Council will be put to the acid test.

The legitimacy of the Council will depend, to a great extent, on how the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism will end up functioning.

It will not be enough that every country be subject to the new mechanism. The Council has to function under the strictest respect for the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity. Otherwise, it will be a resounding failure.

If the conclusions and recommendations end up depending of the powers and influence of every country, the Council will be repeating the same errors that caused the old Commission to blow up.

If, once again, a tribunal is set up to judge the South countries, to be an instrument made to threaten those who rebel, while it turns a blind eye to human rights violations committed by a powerful country, the Council will be an abysmal failure.

And it would be far worse because it would be a copy of the former Commission on Human Rights but this time clothed with the bogus cloak of presumed universality.

Will those powerful countries that imposed their petty interests and their vision on the Commission on Human Rights be ready to correct their error?

That is the question they are going to have to answer with deeds and not with words.

The Human Rights Council must now show that it is truly a different body, based on cooperation and respectful dialogue, with no selectivity or impositions, an organ that indeed contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights the world over, from the viewpoint of full respect for the independence of all countries.

To the overly critical, to those who have been pitilessly attacking the Council because they lost their old rights and privileges, to those who have not understood that the world is changing and that the people have said "Enough!" and have started up, to the United States and to any other "sceptic", to all of you I suggest humility and reflection. To cause the Council's work to fail will be an enormous responsibility that would have to be shouldered for the rest of time.

Delegates:

The Non-Aligned Movement that has become a key player in the process of institutional building defends the need for the Human Rights Council. The Council must live and, furthermore, it must act.

While threats to bomb 60 or more countries, the ones that are disdainfully named "dark corners of the planet" exist, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While five Cuban anti-terrorist combatants are being submitted to 10 years of unfair and cruel incarceration in American jails, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While there is one person justifying asphyxiation as a legitimate method to extract confessions, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While people are still being kidnapped anywhere, clandestine flights are being organized to move them and hold them in concentration camps, in full twenty-first century, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While the heroic people of Palestine remain Stateless and are denied their rights, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While injustice and inequality still exist in the world, while every day we suffer from almost 900 million starving people, 800 million illiterate people, 11 million children

dead before their fifth birthday and 600 thousand impoverished women dead in childbirth, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

While the right to development is a chimera for more than 100 countries, while 1600 million people still have no electricity, while an unfair and excluding international economic and political world order still exists, this Human Rights Council must live and act.

Delegates:

But 2007 has also marked a historic victory for Cuba, also enjoyed and celebrated by all those who admire the steadfastness and honesty with which our country had faced up to, and still faces up to, the lies and manipulations by the media.

After twenty long years of "Cuban struggle against demons", the Human Rights Council put an end to the unfair and selective exercise conceived of and imposed by the United States as an excuse to legitimize its aggression against our Homeland.

And I have here the balance sheet on this uneven conflict: Cuba, the defendant, transformed into a founding member of the Council, presiding over the Non-Aligned Movement and working constructively to strengthen the Council. The United States, our accuser, transformed into a "failed State" in the matter; responsible for the most grievous crimes and human rights violations; foe to the new Council because it has not been able to manipulate or control it. We see it here, lacking direction and authority, thrashing around, always backing the worst of causes, defending torture, administering secret prisons, organizing clandestine flights.

And so, for now this battle has reached this point: with a resounding victory for David, small but great in his dignity, against Goliath the giant, powerful with his nuclear weapons and threats of preventive wars but small in terms of moral authority and international respect, the greatest treasure any nation can aspire to possess.

And so, also, one day we shall defeat the criminal blockade which has been forced upon us in the attempt to force us to our knees in hunger and disease.

And now, and only now, triumphing over blackmail and lies, we, the Cubans, by our own free will, in an independent and sovereign manner, are doing what could not, nor will ever, be wrested from us as concessions.

Therefore now and not before, we once again invited a Special Rapporteur of the Council and, if the constructive climate prevailing today continues and the campaign against Cuba does not resume, we will invite others in the future.

Therefore now and not before, we have signed the International Covenants on Human Rights.

Therefore now and not before, we are ready to work seriously to present ourselves in 2009 at the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism.

Today Cuba repeats her will to cooperate in the work of the Council, to cooperate with the mechanisms for universal human rights that are non-discriminatory and based on the strictest respect for our sovereignty.

Cuba also reiterates her steadfast decision to confront any new attempt to install selectivity, politicization, double standards and hypocrisy within the Council.

Delegates:

A few words about Cuba, my Homeland.

Our country has just concluded an electoral process which, according to our Constitution and our laws, saw its beginnings last September. It has been a genuine *referendum* in which the people have massively supported the Revolution and socialism in our country.

Local authorities and National Assembly members were elected by secret and direct vote.

President Bush called on the Cuban people not to vote and, nevertheless, almost 97 percent of the more than 8 million registered voters cast their ballots. Let's see if in the upcoming U.S. elections these results can be matched.

President Bush called on Cubans to cast blank ballots. Less than 4 percent of the voters did that. He urged Cubans not to vote for all the proposed candidates, as the Revolution requested, and 91 percent of the voters supported, freely and conscientiously, all of the candidates proposed by the Revolution.

It has been an extraordinary political victory that has not been able to be either covered up or distorted.

The world has been witness to the civic spirit and political awareness of the Cuban people.

Over there in Cuba, after his historic decision, Fidel is still enjoying the stingy and mediocre reaction of those who thought that his authority stemmed from his office, of those who thought that if you removed Fidel from office or assassinated him that would be the magic formula for the downfall of the Cuban Revolution.

And it didn't happen. Fidel is the people; his ideas are the ideas of the people; Raúl, with all the authority he is endowed with because of his own background, is also Fidel in his loyalty to our Homeland, to the Revolution and to socialism; at the

end of the day, Fidel is every man and woman in the world who fights for justice and liberty for people everywhere.

And that is where the Empire stands, impotent, not knowing what to do or what to say. Conscious of the fact that it cannot prevent Cubans from making their own decisions and from following a path they have freely chosen. It is the result of having carried out a profound social Revolution in our nation. It is the result of the people truly being in power. It is the result of, finally and in a case that has not happened very often in history, the lower classes, the ever-forgotten ones, now becoming the deputies, the ministers, the military leaders; it is the people in power, masters of their own destinies and masters of their own country.

That and no other, my fellow delegates, is Cuba's crossroads. Either save the Revolution and continue being a free people or return to the condition of being an enslaved people, a virtual colony, like we were at one time, of our powerful and voracious neighbour.

To those who support our struggle, who are many, who are the majority, we thank you. Our battle is also one for the independence and the respect for peoples everywhere that you represent.

To those who support our adversary, either because of convictions, hypocrisy or fear, it is not important. We know how to carry the sense of decorum that they are lacking.

In the year commemorating the 60th anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Cuba renews its commitment in the struggle for a world of justice, liberty and equality for all. The challenge is enormous, and our optimism is greater.

Thank you very much.