



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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**ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF
THE CUBAN DELEGATION
TO THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2008**

Mr. President:

We are living a decisive moment in the history of humankind. The threats looming over the world put the very existence of the human species at risk.

The promotion of peace, solidarity, social justice and sustainable development is the only WAY to ensure the future. The prevailing world order, unjust and unsustainable, must be replaced by a new system that is truly democratic and equitable, based on respect for International Law and on the principles of solidarity and justice, putting an end to the inequalities and exclusion to which the great majorities of the population of our planet have been condemned.

There are no alternatives. Those responsible for this state of affairs, the industrialized nations and, in particular, the sole superpower, have to accept their responsibilities. Fabulous fortunes cannot continue to be wasted while millions of human beings are starving and dying of curable diseases. It is not possible to keep on polluting the air and poisoning the oceans; this destroys the living conditions of our future generations. Neither the peoples nor the planet itself will permit this without great social upheaval and extremely serious natural disasters.

Mr. President:

The wars of conquest, the aggression and illegal occupation of countries, military intervention and the bombing of innocent civilians, the unbridled arms race, the pillage and usurping of the Third World's natural resources and the imperial offensive to crush the resistance of the peoples who are defending their rights, constitute the greatest and most serious threats to peace and international security.

Concepts such as limitation of sovereignty, pre-emptive war or regime change, are an expression of the desire to mutilate the independence of our countries.

The so-called war on terrorism or the false promotion of their freedoms, are an excuse for aggression and military occupation, for torture, arbitrary arrests and the denial of the right of self-determination of peoples, for unfair blockades and unilaterally imposed sanctions, for the imposition of political, economic and

social models that facilitate imperial domination, in open disdain for history, cultures and the sovereign will of the peoples.

The gap between the rich and the poor widens with every passing day. The very modest Millennium Development Goals constitute an unreachable dream for the vast majority.

While a trillion of dollars is spent on weapons in the world, more than 850 million human beings are starving; a 1.1 billion people don't have access to drinking water, 2.6 billion lack sewage services and more than 800 million are illiterate.

More than 640 million children lack adequate housing, 115 million do not attend primary school and 10 million die before the age of five, in most cases as the result of diseases that can be cured.

The populations of the South are suffering with increasing frequency from natural disasters, whose consequences have been aggravated by climate change. Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba and other Caribbean countries are examples of that. Let us make a plea for solidarity especially for our sister country of Haiti as it faces its dramatic situation.

The rise in oil prices is the result of irrational consumption, strong speculation and imperial war adventures. The desperate search for new sources of energy has pushed the criminal strategy driven by the United States government to transform grains and cereals into fuel.

Mr. President:

For a large part of the Non-Aligned countries, the situation is becoming unsustainable. Our nations have paid, and they will continue to pay the cost and the consequences of the irrationality, wastefulness and speculation of a few countries in the industrialized North who are responsible for the world food crisis. They imposed trade liberalization and the financial prescriptions of structural adjustment on the developing countries. They caused the ruin of many small producers; they denied, and in some cases destroyed, emerging agricultural development in the countries of the South, turning them into net food importing countries.

They are the ones who maintain obscene agricultural subsidies, while they force their rules on international trade. They set prices, monopolize technologies, impose unfair certifications and manipulate the distribution channels, the financing sources and trade. They control transportation, scientific research, genetic banks and the production of fertilizers and pesticides.

Mr. President:

We have not come here to complain. We have come, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries, to demand and defend the vindication of thousands of millions of human beings who claim justice and their rights.

The formula is not difficult nor does it require great sacrifices. All we need is the necessary political will, less egotism and the objective understanding that if we do not act today, the consequences could be apocalyptic and would affect the rich and poor alike. For this reason, Cuba once again calls on the governments of the developed countries, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries, to honor their commitments and, in particular, Cuba urges them to:

- Put an end to the wars of occupation and to the plunder of the resources of the Third World countries and to free up at least a part of their millions in military spending to direct those resources towards international assistance for the benefit of sustainable development.
- Cancel the foreign debt of developing countries since it has been already paid more than once, and with this, additional resources would be released that could be channeled to economic development and social programs.
- Honor the commitment of directing at least 0.7% of the Gross Domestic Product for Official Development Assistance, unconditionally, so that the South countries would be able to use those resources for their national priorities and promote access of poor countries to substantial sums of fresh financing.
- Direct one-fourth of the money that is squandered each year on commercial advertising to food production; this would free up almost 250 billion additional dollars to fight hunger and malnutrition.
- Direct the money being used for the North's agricultural subsidies to agricultural development in the South. By doing this, our countries would have about a billion dollars per day available to invest in food production.
- Comply with the Kyoto Protocol commitments and set commitments to reduce emissions more generously starting in 2012, without wanting to increase restrictions for countries that, even today, maintain per capita emission levels that are much lower than those of the North countries'.
- Promote the access of the Third World to technologies and support the training of their human resources. Today, in contrast, qualified personnel from the South are subjected to unfair competition and incentives presented by discriminatory and selective migratory policies applied by the United States and Europe.
- And something that is today more urgent than ever, the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order, and a fair and transparent trading system where all States will participate, in sovereignty, in the decisions that affect them.

Moreover, it is our deepest belief that solidarity between peoples and governments is possible. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ALBA and PETROCARIBE have demonstrated this.

Mr. President:

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has remained faithful to its founding principles.

We support the cause of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination in an independent and sovereign State, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

We support the cause of all those other peoples whose sovereignty and territorial integrity is being threatened, like Venezuela and Bolivia, and we endorse the right of Puerto Rico to be independent.

We condemn the imposition of unilateral coercive measures in violation of International Law, and attempts to implant a single model for a political, economic and social system. We object to the negative practices of certifying countries according to the patterns and interests of the powerful. We strongly oppose political manipulation and the application of double standards in the matter of human rights, and we reject the selective imposition of politically motivated resolutions against the member countries of the Movement.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council gives us the opportunity to open up a new era in the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, on the basis of international cooperation and constructive dialogue. Those who caused the demise of the old Human Rights Commission are now trying to disqualify the Council because they have not been able to bend it to serve their own self interests. They refuse to participate in its work to escape the scrutiny of the international community in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism.

The legitimacy of the Council does not depend on the perception that the Empire has about its work, but on its capacity to discharge its mandate with the strictest adherence to the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non selectivity in the treatment of human rights issues.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries will continue to defend the interests of the Third World and promote the building of a world which is more just, more democratic and with more solidarity.

Mr. President:

Cuba has had to pay a very high price for the defense of its independence and sovereignty.

The heroic people of Cuba have endured the longest and cruelest blockade in history, imposed by the most powerful nation on Earth. Despite the fact that this Assembly has repeatedly and resoundingly pronounced itself in favor of ending this genocidal policy, the United States government has not only ignored the will of the international community, but in marked disregard of the same, has gradually intensified its economic war against Cuba.

Never has the foreign policy against a country been armed with such a broad and sophisticated arsenal of aggressive measures in the political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, military, psychological and ideological domain.

Cuba has just been lashed by two intense hurricanes which have devastated its agriculture and seriously affected part of its infrastructure and damaged or destroyed more than 400,000 homes.

Allow me to take advantage of this opportunity, on behalf of the Cuban government and people, to thank all those countries, organizations and persons who in one way or another have honestly and sincerely contributed with resources or moral support to the reconstruction efforts undertaken by my country.

That stands in contrast with the position of the United States government which continues to ruthlessly apply their blockade.

Cuba has asked for no gifts from the United States government. It has simply asked and asked again that it be allowed to purchase in the United States the materials that are indispensable for the reconstruction of homes and power grid and that US companies be authorized to grant Cuba private commercial credits to buy food. The answer has been negative, and it has been accompanied with an attempt to manipulate information in such a manner that the government of the United States seems to be concerned for the wellbeing of the Cuban people while the government of Cuba is perceived to be turning down their offer.

If the United States were really so concerned for the Cuban people, the only moral and ethical behavior would be to lift the blockade imposed on Cuba for the last five decades, in violation of the most elemental rules of International Law and the Charter of the United Nations .

This irrational policy has a clear aim: to destroy the process of profound revolutionary transformations undertaken by the Cuban people from 1959, in other words, trampling on its right to self-determination, wresting away its freedom and its political, economic and social conquests and plunging it backwards to its former neocolonial status.

The Bush administration intends to justify the intensification of its policy against Cuba by turning once more to fraud and deceit, with the cynicism and hypocrisy that characterizes it. Its determination to dominate and re-colonize Cuba is being presented, no less, like an endeavor to liberate and democratize.

Who, other than its accomplices, recognizes that the United States government has any authority in this world in the matter of democracy and human rights? What authority would such a government claim, one that hunts down and cruelly mistreats the illegal migrants at its southern border, that legalizes the use of torture and keeps in concentration camps, such as the one installed in the territory illegally occupied by the U.S. base at Guantánamo, people who have not been proved of or even charged with any crime?

What respect is due to a government that attacks the sovereignty of other States using the excuse of the fight against terrorism, while at the same time guaranteeing impunity to anti-Cuban terrorists?

What kind of justice can be promoted by an administration that illegally keeps imprisoned five Cuban patriots who were only seeking information to prevent the actions of the terrorist groups operating against Cuba from the United States?

Mr. President:

Cuba appreciates the solidarity which it has received from this General Assembly in its fight against the blockade and the aggressions which it has had to confront for almost five decades.

Cuba reaffirms its unyielding decision to defend its sovereignty and independence.

Cuba reaffirms its will to carry on, together with members of the Movement for Non-Aligned Countries, in the battle for a better world, where the rights of all peoples for justice and development are respected.

To conclude I would like to recall the words of the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, comrade Fidel Castro Ruz: "A world without hunger is possible (...) A just world is possible. A new world, which our species eminently deserves, is possible and will become reality".

Thank you very much.