



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

STATEMENT BY HE. Mrs. MARÍA ESTHER REUS

MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

**10th session of the Human Rights Council
High Level Segment**

(Check against delivery)

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Mr. President:

Three years have gone by since the Human Rights Council started its work.

The Council was the result of the urgent necessity of facing up to the profound disrepute into which the Commission on Human Rights had sunk, trapped by double standards, confrontation and political manipulation imposed on its work by the United States and its allies. The Human Rights Council was born out of intense and participative debates and negotiations. Its representativity was ensured with proper geographical distribution in its membership. As it should be, the Council was subordinated to the UN General Assembly. There are no dangers of veto or impositions to hold back its work.

The Council has borne witness to solid democratic foundations in its working methods and in the drafting of its agenda. Therefore, U.S. neo-conservatives have disqualified and furiously attacked it. Their hopes of transforming the Council into a tool to support their unsuccessful plans for global domination and for the legitimization of excuses for their wars of pillage and conquest had been frustrated. While it was kidnapping, disappearing and torturing hundreds of people all over the world in the name of an alleged struggle against terrorism, while it was infringing upon international law and encroaching upon the right to self-determination of peoples in the shadow of a false commitment to liberty and democracy, the Bush administration had no other option than to distance itself from the work of this Council. The truth is that nobody was sorry about that nor did they miss them.

In spite of everything, the challenges and threats to the climate of cooperation and genuine dialogue in the Council are still significant. The Non-Aligned Movement has denounced the fact that it has not been possible to put an end to all those mandates of countries established on the discriminatory and selective bases that characterized the treatment of Article 9 in the Commission on Human Rights.

Nevertheless, the positive balance of these three years of work by the Council cannot be rationally or objectively denied.

The body's process of institutional building has concluded. It was a victory for the will of the majority before those who, until the very last minute, tried to hijack and block the process according to their own interests. In particular, it was a triumph of the Non-Aligned Movement which actively contributed to the success achieved and assumed the initiative that, with the support of many other countries, allowed for General Assembly acceptance of the agreement reached here.

During its brief lifespan, the Council has managed to strengthen effective practices for a truly universal scrutiny of the human rights situation in the world, and a climate of respect and confidence that are essential for its work.

The Universal Periodic Review, the Council's newest and most distinctive mechanism, is fully operational and accumulates four cycles of experience in which 64 countries have been considered, one third of the UN members. To strengthen its functioning and to deepen the approach of cooperation and respectful dialogue that

have been paramount for its tasks constitutes a collective duty and a priority in the endeavours of all.

The Council has also demonstrated its capacity to tackle emergency situations requiring the attention of the international community.

On various opportunities, it has analysed the serious human rights violations perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people. The most recent case was the brutal and massive Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, where thousands of Palestinian civilians were despicably massacred, half of whom were women and children. On behalf of NAM, Cuba promoted the special session to look at this dramatic situation.

A milestone in the work of the Council was the holding of two special sessions to look after thematic matters. The first of these, initiated by Cuba on behalf of NAM, was a debating space to suggest answers to the serious impact of the world food crisis on the realization of the human right to food. The second, recently concluded, allowed the Council to participate in the world debate on the current economic and financial crisis, and especially to take note that any solution to this would have to bear in mind a human rights perspective. Initiatives like these make manifest the Council's capacity to react in the face of emergency situations that are not subject to national borders, nor are they derived from internal conflicts or international controversies.

Mr President:

The international community hopes that we can respond collectively and effectively to the great expectations that have been generated by the arrival of a new United States government and that we ensure a just and efficacious respond to the colossal crisis affecting humankind. To those who criticize and attack the Council because they lost their questionable privileges, to those who, with their rhetoric of change, would like to restore old approaches of confrontation and selectivity, we suggest that they reflect and we call on them to come together with serenity and modesty and join our efforts to achieve a world where everyone has the right to peace, justice and development.

When the world is confronting serious challenges -still unpredictable in their magnitude - presented by the profound economic, financial, energy, environment, food and social crisis which is affecting the planet, the right to international solidarity becomes an unavoidable demand, whose implementation the Council must ensure.

The Council must continue to raise its voice in favour of the right to development. Official Development Assistance cannot be sacrificed using the excuse of the international economic crisis. Today it is evident that the developed countries really do have resources. Proof of this is the zeal with which they move scandalous figures in order to rescue bankers and corporations that speculated and made profits on the financial markets as if they were Las Vegas casinos. Meanwhile, figures for hunger and poverty are rapidly growing and it becomes evident that the modest Millennium Development Goals will not be able to be met.

While an unjust and excluding international economic and political order persists, the Council must continue calling for a democratic and equitable world order.

While unilateral coercive measures are being imposed and rigid blockades are being maintained, such as the one Cuba has been suffering for the last 50 years, the Council must reject and demand the end of these practices.

While in the world injustice and inequality persist, the spiral of hunger affects almost a billion human beings, more than 800 million people live without knowing how to read and write and more than 11 million children die before reaching their fifth birthday, this Council has to work to look after economic, social and cultural rights with the same energy and conviction that it looks after civil and political rights.

While the cultural heritage of peoples is being threatened, the respect for diversity and access to the enjoyment of culture for hundreds of millions of people, the Council cannot give up establishing a thematic procedure that will contribute to the realization of cultural rights.

Mr President:

For twenty long years, Cuba has waged an exemplary battle against the unjust and selective exercise the United States imposed on our people in the Commission on Human Rights. Those manoeuvres were motivated by the aim of fabricating an excuse that would allow for continuing the policy of hostility, blockade and aggressions against our Homeland.

Finally, the Human Rights Council has put an end to the manipulation, in an act of justice for and recognition of our people's steadfast resistance. That day, the Council lifted a cumbersome burden off its shoulders.

Recently, Cuba presented its report to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. The positive results of this review constitute an important recognition of the work of the Cuban Revolution in favour of human rights. It was indisputable and broad acknowledgement and clear encouragement for the Cuban nation's permanent endeavour to promote and protect all human rights.

It has again been corroborated, in an objective and universal process, that the achievements of Cuba cannot be silenced. We welcome the expressions of solidarity and appreciation we have received, and we make a commitment to continue improving our work.

We reiterate our commitment to cooperate with this Council and the human rights machinery of the United Nations system and its institutions of universal and non-discriminatory application. We confirm our will to dialogue with all states, sustained in mutual respect, acceptance of the sovereign equality and the acknowledgement of the right of every people to choose their political system and their institutions.

For now, this shall be the last time that Cuba participates in this High Level Segment as President of the Non-Aligned Movement. We are encouraged to note that today

the Movement is a respected and active participant in this forum. Starting in July, under the presidency of Egypt, we, the non-aligned countries, will continue working with the same maturity, commitment and determination.

I end by expressing to the Human Rights Council our hope that one day we shall be able to come and inform you, and thank all of you who supported us, that the Cuban political prisoners René González, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and Ramón Labañino have finally returned to our Homeland after their interminable years of unjust and cruel captivity in the United States; that the blockade against Cuba has been lifted and that our people are now permitted, in peace, to build their own future of justice, equality and dignity for all its sons and daughters.

Thank you very much.