

STATEMENT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF CUBA AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. GENEVA, 1 MARCH 2011.

Mr. President,

The human conscious rejects the death of innocent people anywhere and under any circumstance. Cuba fully shares the concerns of the world about the death of civilians in Libya and wishes its people to find a peaceful and sovereign solution to the civil war taking place there, without any foreign interference and preserving the integrity of that nation.

Most certainly, the Libyan people is opposed to any foreign military intervention that would push an agreement further away and would cause thousands of deaths, displaced persons and huge damage to the population.

Cuba categorically rejects any attempt to capitalize on the tragic situation created in order to occupy that country and gain control of its oil.

It's become evident that it is the voracity for hydrocarbons and not peace or the protection of Libyan lives, the motivation that is driving the chiefly conservative political forces in the United States and other European countries that are calling today for a NATO military intervention in Libyan territory. Neither seems to be objectivity, accuracy and commitment to the truth what prevails among part of the press, used by media emporiums, to fuel the fire up.

In face of the magnitude of what is happening in Libya and the Arab world and in the light of a global economic crisis, responsibility and long-term view should prevail on the part of the governments of developed countries. While the good will on the part of the public opinion might be deceived, it is apparent that a military intervention will bring about a war and will entail serious consequences for human lives, in particular, the billions of poor who make up four fifths of the humankind.

Although some data and facts remain unknown, the reality is that the origin of the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa lies in

the crisis of the plunder policy imposed by the United States and their NATO allies in the region. Food prices have tripled, water is scarce, deserts are expanding and poverty is increasing; and with it goes an offensive social inequality and exclusion in the distribution of the opulent oil wealth of the region.

The fundamental human right is the right to life; and it's not worthy to live a life without human dignity

Serious concerns are rising as to the way in which the right to life is violated. According to several sources, some 111 million people have died in armed conflicts in modern wars. This hall cannot forget that whereas in World War I the death of civilians only accounted to five percent of all casualties, in the wars of conquest after 1990, mainly in Iraq with over one million casualties and Afghanistan with over seventy thousand, innocent deaths amount to ninety percent of the death toll. The proportion of children within that figure is horrible and unprecedented.

The concept of "collateral damage" has been accepted in the military doctrine of NATO and very powerful nations. This is offensive to the human nature. During the last decade, humanitarian international law has been trampled upon, as is taking place in the Guantanamo Naval Base, which is a territory usurped from Cuba.

The global number of refugees, as a result of these wars, has increased by 34%, to over 26 million people.

Military spending climbed by 49% in the decade and stands 1.5 trillion dollars, the United States accounting for more than half of the world total. The military-industrial complex continues to produce wars.

Each year 740 000 people die from armed violence associated with organized crime, and not only conflicts.

In a European country, one woman dies every five days as a result of domestic violence. In the countries of the South, half a million mothers die during childbirth.

Every day, 29 000 children die of hunger and preventable diseases. In the minutes elapsed as I have spoken, no less than 120 children have died. Four million children die during their first month of life. In total, 11 million children lose their life every year.

For undernourishment-related causes, there are 100 000 deaths every day for a total of 35 million per year.

During Hurricane Katrina alone, 1 836 people died in the most developed country in the world, almost all of them black and with limited resources. In the last two years, 470 000 people died in the world as a result of natural disasters, 97% of which earned low incomes.

In the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti alone, over 250 000 people were killed, nearly all of them lived in very poor housing. The same happened with the homes that were wiped by the heavy rainfall in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil.

If developed countries had infant and maternal mortality rates like Cuba's, 8.4 million children and 500 000 mothers would be saved each year. In the cholera outbreak in the sister nation of Haiti, Cuban doctors are treating around half the cholera patients with a case fatality rate that is five times lower than that of doctors from other countries. Cuba's international medical cooperation has saved 4.4 million lives in dozens of countries.

Human dignity is a human right. Today, 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty. There are 1.02 billion hungry people, and an additional 2 billion suffer from malnutrition. There are 759 million of illiterate adults.

Mr. President;

The Council has shown its capacity to address human rights situations in the world, including those of urgent nature which require the attention and action of the international community. The usefulness of the Universal Periodic Review has been confirmed as basis for international cooperation, to assess the performance of all countries, without distinction.

Preserving and strengthening this Council in its role of promoting and effectively protecting all human rights for all, was the spirit that drove our actions in the review process of the organ.

The outcome of this exercise expresses recognition to the major achievements of the Council during its short existence. While the agreements are insufficient in light of the demands by developing countries, the organ was preserved from those who intended to reform it to their convenience to satisfy the hegemonic appetites and bring back to life the past of confrontation, double standards, selectivity and imposition.

The debates of these days would make us expect that this Human Rights Council continue to build on and advance towards its institutional building for the full exercise of its mandate.

It would be very negative that, with the excuse of the Council institutional building and the abuse of the dramatic juncture at hand, the Council is manipulated and pressures are exerted opportunistically to set precedents and modify agreements.

If the essential human right is the right to life, is the Council ready to suspend rights of membership of a State that unleashes a war?

Does the Council intend to provide some substantial contribution to eliminate the main threat to the life of the human species which is the existence of huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, a very low part of which---the explosion of 100 nuclear heads---would bring about the nuclear winter, according to irrefutable scientific evidence?

Will a thematic procedure on the impact of climate change in the exercise of human rights be established and will the right to a healthy environment be proclaimed?

Will it suspend a member State that finances and provides military aid used by the recipient State in flagrant, massive and systematic violations of human rights and attacks against the civilian population, like those taking place in Palestine?

Will this measure be applied against powerful countries that conduct extra-judicial executions in the territory of other States with the use of cutting edge technology, like smart ammunition and unmanned aircrafts?

What will happen to a member State that accepts in its territory secret illegal prisons, or facilitate the transit of secret flights with kidnapped persons or engage in acts of torture?

Will the Council be able to adopt a declaration on the right of the peoples to peace?

Will it adopt a Program of Action, including concrete commitments, to ensure the right to food in times of food crisis, soaring food prices and the use of cereals for biofuel production?

Mr. President;

Distinguished ministers and delegates:

What measures will this Council adopt against a member State that commits acts which cause great suffering and seriously attempt against the bodily or mental integrity of people, like the blockade against Cuba, typified as genocide under Article 2, items b) and c) of the 1948 Geneva convention?

Thank you very much.

