



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KINGSLEY MAMABOLO, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE PLENARY MEETING IN CONSIDERATION OF A DRAFT RESOLUTION ENTITLED "NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA" AT THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 27 October 2015)

Allow me to register the following remarks on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr President;

Mr President;

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States. In this context, we welcome President Raul Castro and President Barack Obama's bold joint initiative. This joint initiative is a significant first step towards the full normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States. This needs to, however, be followed by the immediate lifting of the Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. Recognizing that the blockade is harmful to the Cuban people, it is high time that the United States Congress should now put an end to the Embargo. The Group of 77 and China supports Cuba's decision to embrace this rapprochement, despite the illegal nature of the imposition of the blockade and the immense human and economic suffering and hardship endured by the people of Cuba for over 50 years.

Mr President;

The Group of 77 and China is of the view that, although President Obama put forward an act of historical justice when he notified the United States Congress of his decision to remove Cuba from the so-called List of States Sponsors of International Terrorism, a list in which Cuba should have never been included in the first place, this has not meant an easing of all of the prohibitions and restrictions established by the blockade laws and regulations imposed against this sister country.

It is disheartening to note that the United States Congress has not approved any of the Bills seeking to eliminate some of the remaining blockade regulations. However, so far, ten (10) legal initiatives have been presented in Congress to reinforce several fundamental aspects related to the implementation of this policy and to prevent the approval by President Obama of new executive measures and the implementation of those which have already been adopted.

Mr President;

The Group of 77 and China would like to submit that, following 17 December 2014, the implementation of the blockade against Cuba has remained unchanged, the most notorious examples of these being the one point seven-hundred and ten (1.710) billion dollar fine imposed on the German bank Commerzbank and the seven million six-hundred and fifty-eight thousand and three-hundred (7 658 300) United States Dollars fine imposed on the United States company, PayPal.

Despite some of the positive overtures that have been demonstrated to date by Washington, it is still cause for concern that under President Obama's Administration, the blockade has been further tightened and its territorial implementation and grip has been intensified through the imposition of forty-two (42) fines on the United States and foreign entities to the value of thirteen billion two-hundred and seventy-nine million one hundred and forty-eight thousand one-hundred and ninety-six (13 279 148 196) Dollars.

Mr President;

The Group of 77 and China joins the international community in condemning the unilateral blockade of Cuba and calls on the United States to initiate measures to immediately repeal these inhumane actions designed to illicitly punish a nation. This measure is contrary to the principles, purposes and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, especially the principle of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Member States. The severe economic and financial restrictions that stifle the economic and social development of Cuba further exacerbate hardships and the suffering of the people of Cuba. This must come to an end.

The Group reiterates its unconditional support for the implementation of the recommendations of General Assembly Resolution 69/5, and takes this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to re-double its efforts to promote constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries, with a view to achieving the objectives of all the resolutions already adopted by the United Nations on the matter and to ensure the sustainable and further progress of the people of Cuba.

Mr President;

While regulations issued by the United States' Department of Commerce and the Treasury on January 15, 2015 were steps in the right direction in areas such as travel to Cuba; telecommunications and remittances, these are limited in scope and are only the tip of the iceberg. More commitments are therefore needed.

Mr President;

We must also denounce the constraints placed on Cuba's rights to carry out financial transactions abroad. All countries deserve to be allowed to do business in an open and just environment as this is a sovereign right that needs to be recognized.

Despite Cuba's difficulties that have been caused by the economic; commercial and financial embargo, in demonstration of their international solidarity, Cuba has consistently supplied medical assistance at an international level, of the highest quality. More than fifty thousand (50,000) health workers trained in Cuba are providing services in sixty-six (66) countries, including helping in Sierra Leone on the front-lines of the Ebola crisis.

Mr President;

Throughout all these years, the embargo and blockade have caused damages estimated at more than one hundred and twenty one point one-hundred and nine-two (121.192) Billion Dollars.

And thus, in conclusion, the Group of 77 and China again reiterates its call for the embargo and blockade against Cuba to cease. It is the most unjust, severe and longest-lasting system of unilateral sanctions ever applied to any country. Failure to do so would cause history to judge harshly the role-players who are continuing to perpetuate the afore-mentioned system. This

historical injunction remains even more relevant and timely as we move towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We all also need to make a commitment in this august forum not to leave the Cuban people behind.

I thank you for your attention.

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