



Sixty-third General Assembly
Plenary
33rd Meeting (AM)

FOR SEVENTEENTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR, GENERAL ASSEMBLY OVERWHELMINGLY CALLS

FOR END TO UNITED STATES ECONOMIC, TRADE EMBARGO AGAINST CUBA

Vote on Resolution 185 in Favour to 3 Against, with 2 Abstentions; Cuba's Foreign Minister Says Embargo Breaches 'Elemental' Rules International Law

The United Nations General Assembly once again today adopted a resolution calling on the United States to end its 46-year-old trade embargo against Cuba, following a debate, during which many delegates emphasized how the measure had only intensified the human suffering created by successive hurricanes that struck the island nation and wider Caribbean region earlier this year.

By the resolution, adopted in a recorded vote of 185 in favour to 3 against (Israel, Palau, United States), with 2 abstentions (Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands), the 192-member Assembly urged the lifting of the stiff commercial, financial and economic sanctions that were slapped on Cuba in the aftermath of the Cold War. This marked the seventeenth year the Assembly had adopted similar resolution on this issue.

A burst of applause greeted the Assembly's passage of text that again reaffirmed the sovereign equality of States, the non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, and the freedom of international trade and navigation.

The resolution reiterated its call upon all States to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures such as that promulgated in the 1996 "Helms-Burton Act". That would be in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Further, the text once again urged States that continued to apply such laws and measures to take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate them as soon as possible, in accordance with their legal regime.

As he introduced the resolution, Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, said the Assembly's consideration took place under very special circumstances: barely a few months after successive powerful hurricanes had buffeted Cuba; amid global economic and financial crises; and just six days before the United States voters headed to the polls to elect a new President. In contrast to the ample solidarity received in the Assembly, the United States Government had responded with its customary cynicism and hypocrisy.

"The Bush Administration has lied, yet again, to the international community," said Mr. Roque. If the United States Government was truly concerned about the Cuban people's well-being, the only moral and ethical behaviour would be to lift the blockade, which it had imposed in violation of the most elemental regulations of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Openly contemptuous of the international community's will and 16 consecutive Assembly resolutions, the United States adopted new and tougher economic sanctions against Cuba over the past year, Mr. Roque charged. It had unleashed a "mad hunt" against Cuba's international financial transactions, for example, and its viciousness even reached to the blocking of Internet sites with ties to Cuba. At the same time, the United States had increased its financial and material support for actions to overthrow the Cuban constitutional order.

Speaking before the Cuban Foreign Minister, the representative of the United States said each Member State had the sovereign right to conduct trade with another country as it saw fit, subject only to its treaty obligations. That was a bilateral issue stemming from the United States' efforts to mitigate the impact of the Cuban government's repressive policies against its own people.

The United States believed it was highly inappropriate for the Assembly to consider this resolution. There was no doubt that the Member States gathered here today would vigorously defend their right to determine their own national trade policy if it was questioned, he added. In addition, United States trade policy towards Cuba was carefully designed to give Cubans access to food and humanitarian goods, as it limited the ability of Cuba's repressive Government to consolidate power through its authoritarian control over the Cuban economy.

In response to the numerous statements concerning the impact of the recent hurricanes on a country already suffering economically under the embargo, he said that the United States had been especially sensitive to the plight of the Cuban people. The Government had offered, on four separate occasions, to provide the Cuban people with up to \$5 million in emergency humanitarian assistance. The Cuban Government had rejected the offers, he said. He also noted that United States law permitted the sale of medicine, medical supplies and agricultural products to Cuba, and the United States was Cuba's top supplier of food.

South Africa's delegate said 2009 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. He recognized Cuba's notable work around the world in the health, education and biotechnology fields. In addition, the island nation had helped developing countries, including South Africa, correct their skills shortages with bilateral cooperation projects.

In its explanation of vote, the French delegate spoke on behalf of the European Union and said United States trade policy towards Cuba was a bilateral issue. Yet, his delegation had clearly opposed the extraterritorial extension of the embargo, as contained in the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act.

The goal of the European Union's policy towards Cuba, outlined in a 1996 Common Position, was to encourage a peaceful transition to a pluralist democracy, with respect for human rights and improved living standards. Last June, the European Union had decided to lift restrictive measures against Cuba and had proposed a dialogue, without preconditions, to authorities in Havana. The Cuban Government accepted this offer and a 16 October ministerial meeting addressed all issues of common interest, including human rights. The European Union expected concrete action from Cuban authorities in this area.

The representative of Venezuela said the United States Government had repeatedly disdained the majority will of the Assembly and had refused to heed worldwide clamour against its embargo. That showed the need to reform the United Nations so Assembly resolutions were welcomed and respected by all States.

The enduring embargo ran counter to “the spirit of our times”, and the measures were “undeniably a criminal mechanism”, meant to force a country and a people to submit through hunger and disease, he added. For more than four decades, the imperialist Government had flagrantly violated the rights of the people, and the rights and norms of international law that governed relations among States.

This was the seventeenth year that the United Nations had considered the issues in this resolution, the representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines said. When the debate began in 1992, it had seemed an apt postscript to a troubling chapter in world history, as the Berlin Wall had fallen two years earlier, the Soviet Union had disbanded, and the so-called “Iron Curtain” had been lifted. The developments over the past 17 years begged the question: Why was Cuba still the subject of a Cold War embargo, when the Cold War itself had long ended?

Seldom had a more ill-conceived, illogical and illegal measure been applied so punitively, and for so long, to a people so wholly undeserving of such punishment, he said. The Member States of the Caribbean Community and Common Market, all staunch friends of the United States, had suffered from the embargo as it impacted Cuba’s ability to act as an economic engine for the region.

Also speaking today was the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of the “Group of 77” and China), Egypt (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Guyana (on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)), Mexico, Viet Nam, Sudan, China, Algeria, Iran, India, Russian Federation, Angola, Zambia and Nicaragua.

Speaking in explanation were the representatives of Brazil (on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)), Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Myanmar, Belarus, Ecuador, Syria, Norway and Uganda.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 10 a.m. on 30 October to take up the reports of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Background

For the seventeenth consecutive year, the General Assembly met today to debate “the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba”, and was expected, as has been the world body’s tradition, to take up a similarly titled draft resolution.

Member States had before them the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of last year’s resolution, 62/3, Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (document A/63/93), which includes information offered by 118 Governments, as well as 22 organs and agencies of the United Nations system, on implementation of the text “in light of the purposes and principles of the Charter”.

According to the submission by the Government of Cuba, the embargo has not only accumulated direct economic damage to the Cuban economy of more than \$93 billion, but it also is the biggest impediment to Cuba’s social, health, economic, energy, and technological development and advancement. Indicative of the spirit of the embargo, among many examples, was the denial of technical assistance and parts to Hola Airlines by Boeing, unless Hola Airlines ended its relationship with Cuba. This would result in the termination of its flights for Operation Miracle, a humanitarian programme for low-income patients.

There has also been economic damage, such as the cancellation of 270 tons of sugar from the Cuban-Canadian joint venture Coracan by the Brazilian exporter Cosan S.A., when Cosan went

public on the New York Stock Exchange and, thus, could no longer trade with Cuba. The industry was paralyzed for a week and thousands upon thousands of dollars lost.

The 100-page response also reviewed the myriad of issues and areas of concern facing Cuba that resulted from the embargo, the opposition within the United States to end the embargo, and the impact on international agencies and organizations.

Statements

JOHN W. ASHE (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the “Group of 77” developing countries and China, said his delegation had repeatedly condemned the use of coercive measures preventing countries from deciding their own economic, political and social systems. He called on all nations to not recognize unilateral extraterritorial laws that imposed sanctions on other States and foreign companies.

The Group of 77 also recognized that the embargo continued to cause economic and financial damage against Cubans, and reiterated its call for the United States to end the measures. The promulgation of such acts undermined the United Nations Charter and international law, and severely threatened the freedom of trade and investment. He urged the United States to effect change with Cuba by ending the embargo.

His delegation was committed to working towards a better world, in which all nations would coexist peacefully, he said, which required adherence to the rule of law, including international law. The embargo contravened international law, international humanitarian law and the norms governing peaceful State relations.

The replacement of the embargo with diplomatic dialogue and cooperation would promote meaningful exchange among countries. As the embargo had impacted lives of Cubans, the overwhelming majority of States were here today to end the embargo. In closing, he said the Group of 77 would again support the resolution.

MAGED A. ABDELAZIZ (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said his delegation stood against the embargo against Cuba, and did not support the recognition, adoption or implementation of such extraterritorial or unilateral coercive measures or laws. Such measures included unilateral economic sanctions, arbitrary travel restrictions and other “intimidating” measures, which sought to pressure Non-Aligned Countries by threatening their sovereignty and independence, freedom of trade, and right to decide on their own political, economic and social systems.

Because such measures or laws were “flagrant violations” of the Charter, international law and the multilateral trading system, the Non-Aligned Movement opposed and condemned those measures and their continued application. Therefore, he urged other States to take action to reverse or fully revoke such laws.

Stating continued imposition of such laws hindering the well-being of the Cuban population and its full realization of their human rights, he supported the claim of affected States to compensation for damages of such measures. He also called on the United States Government to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo, since it was a unilateral action taken against international law, the United Nations Charter and the principle of “neighbourliness”, which has caused substantial material losses and economic damages.

He also expressed concern about the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo against Cuba, and rejected the reinforcement of such measures aiming to tighten the embargo. In conclusion, he called for strict compliance with various General Assembly resolutions related to the embargo.

GEORGE WILFRED TALBOT (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed his concern for and solidarity with the people of Cuba, as they struggled to rebuild their communities after successive Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna and Ike. The punitive embargo particularly concerned CARICOM, which shared a history, culture and brotherhood with the people of Cuba. The region's development relied on the collective advancement and progress of all countries, and in that context, CARICOM viewed the embargo as a punitive act against Cuba and an impediment to shared regional development.

CARICOM Member States reiterated their unequivocal opposition to the imposition of the embargo, which had been repudiated by the overwhelming majority of the international community for the past 16 years. The unilateral imposition of extraterritorial laws on third States was contrary to both the letter and spirit of the Charter.

The embargo ran counter to the principles of multilateralism, international law, sovereignty and free trade that the Assembly traditionally championed. States of the Caribbean reaffirmed the positions of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, in opposing such unilateral actions. Constructive engagement and peaceful negotiations were the only acceptable means for advancing long-term peace and stability, he said.

The economic impact of the embargo was of great concern to CARICOM, and the humanitarian impact on the Cuban people, especially in the area of health care and food, was saddening. It was remarkable, he said, that Cuba continued to assist other developing nations even as it struggled with its recent unfortunate natural disasters. Given Cuba's peaceful, generous and cooperative international stance, the country should not be isolated or excluded from participation in the regional and hemispheric process.

The embargo was increasingly anachronistic and served no useful purpose in the twenty-first century. He called for a new beginning between the Governments of Cuba and the United States, akin to similar initiatives taken for negotiations of far more difficult international issues between Member States of the United Nations. In that context, the CARICOM States supported the draft resolution before the Assembly.

JORGE VALERO BRICEÑO (Venezuela) said that, this time last year, 184 Member States had voted in favour of the draft resolution calling for the lifting of the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. That had showed that nearly all of the international community rejected the interventionist policy against the brotherly people of Cuba. Ever since the first resolution on the topic, the Assembly had systemically adopted, with an overwhelming majority, resolutions that demanded that the Government of the United States end its hostile policy against Cuba. Nevertheless, that Government had repeatedly disdained the majority will of the Assembly and had refused to heed worldwide clamour against the embargo.

That showed the need to reform the United Nations so the Assembly's resolutions were welcomed and respected by all States. The enduring embargo ran counter to "the spirit of our times". The measures, "undeniably a criminal mechanism", were designed to force a country and a people to submit through hunger and disease, he said. For more than four decades, the imperialist Government had flagrantly violated the rights of the people, and the rights and norms of international law that governed relations among states. Over the past year, the embargo had intensified.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba was a criminal punishment imposed systematically against the Cuban people. It was rejected by the Cuban people and by a majority of world public opinion, including people in the United States. He was happy to see an approach of a constructive dialogue initiated by the European Union, with no conditions. He appealed for the embargo to be lifted.

He aligned his statement with the Group of 77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement and the upcoming statement of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). He hoped that today the overwhelming majority of countries would raise their voices against a measure that was an aggression against a people.

CLAUDE HELLER (Mexico), noting that his country had disapproved of the embargo against Cuba for 17 years, reiterated opposition to the use of coercive actions that were not supported by the United Nations Charter. Since 1992, Mexico had restated its vote in favour of General Assembly resolutions adopted on the matter, and also expressed its full opposition to the exercise of national norms that ran counter to international law in other countries.

Reiterating his strong opposition to the embargo, which had affected its population in a “silent” and cumulative manner, he said the overwhelming “international outcry” reminded Member States that any sanctions could only derive from the Assembly or the Security Council. Several United Nations agencies and entities had addressed the negative impacts of the embargo on the economic and social development of Cuba, which also had consequences on other countries that could not interact with the island.

He reiterated Mexico’s opposition to the exercise of national norms that violated international laws in other countries, noting that Mexico had supported Cuba’s integration into all regional mechanisms to encourage economic and commercial exchange. Mexico published a law that prohibited individuals or organizations from participating in any act that affected commerce, if those acts bore on the application of laws in foreign countries.

Mexico also promoted economic and commercial contacts with Cuba, and, by focusing on dialogue, the two countries had strengthened their ties, as exemplified by an instrument to restructure debt, he said. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed on 20 October to secure the legal and safe migration between the countries. The relationship had been ratified with the visit of Cuba’s Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His Government supported bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in line with international principles regulating civilized coexistence among sovereign States, he said. Observance of international law, and respect for rules governing States’ coexistence was needed to overcome differences and ensure a climate of international peace. In closing, he said Mexico would again support the resolution.

LE LUONG MINH (Viet Nam), fully aligning himself with the Group of 77 developing countries and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement, said the United States’ unilateral commercial and financial embargo was a violation of international law, and ran counter to universally recognized norms governing relations among sovereign countries. The prolonged embargo had wrought serious economic and trade damage, worth “scores of billions of dollars”, on Cuba, as well as on other countries that wished to conduct normal trade relations with that peace-loving island nation.

The “unjustifiable” embargo was affecting Cuba’s efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, he said, explaining that Viet Nam was against the imposition of any coercive unilateral and extraterritorial embargo by one State against another. Disputes should be resolved through peaceful dialogue on the basis of equality, and he demanded that the United States end its embargo, the continuation of which served no other purpose than to increase tension between the two neighbours. Reaffirming Viet Nam’s support for Cuba, he said his Government would once again vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Assembly today.

ABDALMAHMOOD ABDALHALEEM MOHAMAD (Sudan) stressed that the Assembly was debating the embargo against Cuba, and said there was a growing awareness in the international community that such unilateral measures and other “unjustifiable” sanctions must be rejected. Noting the long-standing suffering of the Cuban people, which cries out to the international

community for actions against “unfair” sanctions which threaten international legitimacy, he said that such unilateral measures severely impacted people by depriving them of basic needs.

Further, as a country also suffering from the impact of the embargo, and on behalf of other States adversely affected, Sudan expressed full solidarity with Cuba and called on all States to stand “against this policy of hegemony”. He also urged the international community to reaffirm the Charter’s humanitarian principles by rejecting the embargo and similar unilateral measures. Such repudiation would send an important message about the international community’s attitude towards the unjust use of force.

DUMISANI SHADRACK KUMALO (South Africa) said 2009 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. Yet, three years after that victory, Cuba was hit by a commercial, economic and financial embargo imposed by the United States; meaning that Cubans had known no life other than one under coercive measures. Throughout the unilateral embargo, Cubans had responded by “extending a hand of friendship” to other peoples around the world, and it was not unusual to find Cuban doctors and nurses throughout Latin America, he said.

Cuba’s work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology was internationally recognized, and through bilateral cooperation projects, Cuba had assisted developing countries, including his own, in addressing skills shortages. More importantly, Cuba had supported struggles for freedom around the world, and Southern Africa recognized Cuba’s contribution to the subregion. Cuba’s role in South Africa’s own liberation history had been recognized this year in celebration of the anniversary of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, a decisive turning point in the struggle against apartheid.

South Africa consistently opposed all aspects of the embargo, he said, explaining that his country was committed to working towards a better world for all. Achievement of peaceful coexistence among nations required adherence by all to the rule of law and respect for territorial integrity. South Africa had repeatedly expressed its opposition to all aspects of the embargo and believed that constructive dialogue could foster mutual trust. Expressing South Africa’s firm opposition to coercive economic measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries, he said his delegation would join the majority in supporting the draft resolution, as such a “relentless and unilateral action” had caused untold suffering to Cubans.

LIU ZHENMIN (China) said the embargo had had an extensive impact on Cuba, particularly by compromising the right to survival and development of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, which had, in turn, evoked “broad sympathy” and drawn equally broad attention to the matter.

Though the Assembly had adopted a resolution annually for the past 16 years, by an overwhelming majority, to repeal or invalidate all laws and measures with extraterritorial effect compromising the sovereignty of other States and affecting their freedom of trade and navigation, he said the long-term economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba still remained in place. Here, he stressed the importance of dialogue, communication and harmonious coexistence as the mainstream of international relations, along with mutual respect and equality among countries.

Not only did it harm the interests of Cuba and other affected countries, the embargo also contravened the principles of democracy, freedom, the rule of law and human rights. Attempting to force another country to give up its right to decide its path of development — even to “overthrow its Government” — constituted a serious violation of the purposes of the Charter. The extraterritorial nature of the sanctions violated international law, as well as the principle of trade liberalization. The measures also stood in the way of the Cuban people in achieving their Millennium Development Goals, in areas such as the eradication of poverty, improvement of living standards, and pursuit of economic and social development.

He also highlighted the worsening problems of hunger and malnutrition, resulting from the current global food crisis, which made the embargo and sanctions more “unreasonable” than ever. In closing, he said, the Chinese Government supported the resolution submitted by Cuba, and requested the ending of the embargo at an early date, through dialogue versus confrontation, and engagement and exchanges in lieu of the sanctions.

MOURAD BENMEHIDI ([Algeria](#)) expressed, once again, his country’s profound concern at the continuation of the unilateral embargo against Cuba and reiterated that it be lifted. His delegation believed that such a blockade violated sovereign equality among States, and the right of people to development and sovereignty. The extraterritoriality of that action denied Charter principles and ran counter to international law.

Reiterating Algeria’s position, which rejected coercive economic measures, he requested lifting the embargo. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of States were in favour of lifting it, and Algeria would vote in favour of the resolution.

ESHAGH AL HABIB ([Iran](#)) said the resolution, supported by 184 votes last year, clearly reflected the global community’s position on the United States’ embargo against Cuba. The embargo ran counter to principles of international law governing States’ relations and the spirit of the Charter, which called for friendly relations among nations. Such measures adversely impacted Cubans’ human rights, and hampered Government efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and therefore, to eradicate poverty and promote health.

Citing paragraphs 101 and 102 of the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to support an open global economic system, he said resorting to unjustifiable coercive measures against other States on the basis of “political observations” was not acceptable. The extraterritorial application of such internal laws as the Helms-Burton Act created an “antagonistic environment” and affected world security. The blockade violated internationally agreed principles, such as non-intervention in internal affairs, and his delegation had repeatedly stressed that such coercive policies be regarded as major impediments to pursuing common interests. The Assembly’s adoption of 17 resolutions was a wise reaction to such unacceptable measures. In closing, he sincerely hoped that States that continued to apply unilateral coercive measures would take steps to repeal them at the earliest opportunity.

RAJEEV SHUKLA ([India](#)) noted that though it was the seventeenth year the General Assembly was debating the 46-year-old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, its resolutions on the matter remained unimplemented in contravention of world opinion, and the embargo, particularly its extraterritorial aspects, continued to remain in force. In particular, he said, domestic United States laws such as the Cuba Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 had enhanced the extraterritorial reach of the embargo, encompassing foreign companies, as well as foreign subsidiaries of United States companies doing business with Cuba or Cuban entities.

India backed the international community’s categorical rejection of such domestic laws, which had extraterritorial impact, because they adversely affected the Cuban people and the country’s development efforts. Further, the embargo seriously affected the implementation of the United Nations projects and programmes in Cuba, including travel of United Nations staff.

Despite the embargo, the United States continued to be a major source of imports for Cuba, insofar as permitted by the United States Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, he observed. That only served to confirm the potential for trade, commerce and investment between the two countries. The embargo also had significant detrimental impact on United States trade and business opportunities, he said, adding that various efforts in the United States to relax or lift the ban indicated the substantial interest, particularly in the business sector, for unhindered access to the Cuban market or contact with the Caribbean island nation.

VITALY I. CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said his delegation agreed with the overwhelming majority of Member States, who had absolutely condemned the embargo against Cuba and called for its end. Since 1994, Russia had supported the resolution at successive Assembly sessions.

In an appeal to parliaments of Member States and international parliamentary organizations, that was adopted on 17 October by the Russian Parliament, Russia emphasized that the “continuing economic blockade against the Republic of Cuba is an act of crude pressure by the United States of America against a sovereign State.”

The continuing commercial, economic and financial blockade of Cuba was counterproductive and out of step with the spirit of the times, he continued. It was also a remnant from the Cold War and prevented the creation of a new, just world order in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The continuation of the blockade was also incompatible with efforts to reform the United Nations, because it ignored the unanimous view of Member States, regarding the need to work together to implement the principles that underpinned collective efforts to abandon confrontation and embrace cooperation. That was based on respect for the rights of nations to choose, for themselves, their political, economic and social systems. The Russian Federation would continue its policy to vote in favour of the draft resolution calling for an end to the blockade.

ISMAEL ABRAÃO GASPAR MARTINS (Angola) said that, in the current era of economic globalization, exchanges and cooperation, along with global economic, commercial and financial ties among countries, were in the interest of all countries. Yet, there had been no improvement towards ending the embargo after many years, and existing sanctions had been applied “with vigour”. In Cuba, that had resulted in enormous social and material loss, economic damage, hunger and disease, and had affected third countries’ relations with the island nation.

The sovereignty of States and legitimate interests of persons, entities and institutions, under their jurisdiction, were threatened by the extraterritorial policy of the embargo. In addition, he said, the freedom to establish economic, commercial, financial or scientific-technical relations with Cuba were also being pressured. Therefore, the issue of the embargo was not important just to Cuba but to everyone in the international community. “The embargo has gone on for far too long,” he said, adding that it did not benefit either the United States or Cuba, but had only served to maintain a high level of tension in the region. It had caused severe suffering of the Cuban people, whose situation was exacerbated by the recent intense hurricane season. For those reasons, and because the embargo went against the “very core” of the Charter and other similar, pertinent decisions and resolutions already adopted by the Assembly, Angola supported Cuba’s draft resolution to end the embargo.

LAZAROUS KAPAMBWE (Zambia) said that, last year, his country was among those in the overwhelming majority that had voted in favour of the Assembly resolution calling for lifting the embargo on Cuba. Zambia had consistently expressed concern at that embargo, not only as it was unjust to Cubans, but because its unilateral extraterritorial effects breached international principles of free trade espoused by the United Nations.

He said Zambia would again vote in favour of the draft, based on its firm commitment to strengthen universal respect for international law, in the conduct of relations among sovereign States and its belief in the sanctity of the United Nations Charter. Indeed, differences between the United States and Cuba should be solved through dialogue. In closing, he reiterated Zambia’s appeal for the immediate lifting of the United States embargo on Cuba.

RONALD GODARD (United States) said his country’s position on the resolution was well known, and recalled that each Member State had the sovereign right to conduct its trade with another country as it saw fit, subject only to the treaty obligations it had freely undertaken. As a bilateral issue relating to the United States’ efforts to mitigate the impact of the Cuban Government’s repressive policies towards its own people, the United States believed it was highly inappropriate

that the Assembly consider the resolution. "There is no doubt that Member States here today would vigorously defend their right to determine their own national trade policy if it were called into question," he added.

As the United States had conclusively demonstrated since the Assembly first debated the text in 1992, its trade policy towards Cuba was carefully designed to permit the Cuban people access to food and humanitarian goods, even as it limited the ability of Cuba's "repressive Government" to benefit and consolidate power through its authoritarian control over the Cuban economy. He said the United States trade policy sought to prevent Cuban leaders from having access to resources that they could use to strengthen their repressive political and economic system.

He went on to say, the American people remained the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people and last year had provided some \$240.5 million in private humanitarian assistance. That had been in the form of gift parcels filled with food and other basic necessities (\$179.4 million), non-agricultural humanitarian donations (\$20.6 million), and medical donations (\$40.5 million).

Referring to the devastation wrought by successive Caribbean hurricanes this year, he said the United States had been especially sensitive to the plight of the Cuban people. The Government had offered -- on four separate occasions -- to provide the Cuban people with up to \$5 million in emergency humanitarian assistance. The Cuban Government had rejected the offers, he said. United States law permitted the sale of medicine, medical supplies and agricultural products to Cuba, and the United States was Cuba's top supplier of food.

He said United States agricultural producers had sent \$446 million in agricultural products to Cuba in 2007. Despite clear demonstrations of United States interest in the welfare of the Cuban people, Cuban officials continued to make outrageous statements about the nature of United States sanctions. It revealed the Castro regime's lack of interest in the well-being of its own people, that it would refuse sincere offers of assistance, choosing instead to prolong the people's suffering as a pretext for proposing resolutions "such as this one before us today."

He reminded the Assembly that the real reason that the Cuban economy was in terrible condition and so many Cubans were mired in poverty was that Cuba's regime continued to deny its people their basic human and economic rights. He invited Member States to reject the false arguments of the Cuban Government and focus on effecting a transition in Cuba that would restore its people's fundamental rights.

Calling the United States embargo an "imperialist need" of North America to impose its will against the "heroic and generous" people of Cuba, MARÍA RUBIALES DE CHAMORRO (Nicaragua) voiced support for the adoption of the resolution to end the "criminal and inhuman" embargo against the island nation. Noting that "no other country in the world" supported the measures and recalling the usual generosity of the United States, she expressed regret that its government could be "so small-minded and stingy" in its attempt to repress the "spirit of solidarity" present in Cuba. She called on the international community to end the suffering caused by these policies, and to end the continued manipulation of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Cases such as the one under consideration today highlighted the imperative need to make General Assembly resolutions mandatory and binding, to protect and deepen democracy around the world, she said. Nicaragua had been a victim of the United States too, in terms of an embargo and in past military aggressions, and therefore, felt solidarity with Cuba. She called for the immediate lifting of the embargo, and all embargos, stating that differences must be dealt with thorough dialogue without prerequisites. In conclusion, she noted the generous assistance of Cuban physicians to people worldwide in times of need and distress, and said Fidel Castro was one of the "greatest fighters" for peace and solidarity.

CAMILLO GONSALVES (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) said 2008 marked the seventeenth year that the United Nations was considering the subject matter of the resolution. At the time the debate had begun in 1992, it had seemed to be an apt postscript to a troubling chapter in world history. The Berlin Wall had come down two years earlier, the Soviet Union had disbanded, and the so-called “Iron Curtain” had been lifted. The Cold War logic of dividing the world in competing spheres, and separating ideological foes and friends through blockades, walls and embargoes was giving way to an understanding of the interconnectedness of the world, and a commitment to link society and markets through globalization, trade and tighter coordination.

The developments over the past 17 years begged the question: Why was Cuba still the subject of a Cold War embargo, when the Cold War itself had long ended? Seldom had a more ill-conceived, illogical and illegal measure been applied so punitively, and for so long, to a people so wholly undeserving of such punishment, he said. The extraterritorial application of domestic law was a violation of the Charter, and a contravention of the underpinnings of the modern notions of global trade and international relations.

It also violated the rights of self-determination and sovereign equality. The Member States of the Caribbean Community and Common Market, all staunch friends of the United States, had suffered from the embargo, as it impacted Cuba’s ability to act as an economic engine for the region. The necessity of ending the embargo was a fair idea, and he asked the Assembly to agree collectively to “move on and look to the future with hope, and correct this historical travesty”.

SEIF ALI IDD, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of United Republic of Tanzania, said the Assembly had, for years, called for an end to the embargo against Cuba, and today, for the seventeenth time, his country would join others to appeal for its lifting. Aligning himself with the Group of 77 developing countries and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement, he said the Secretary-General’s report clearly showed that the global community did not support the embargo against Cuba.

He was seriously concerned at the embargo’s effects on the economic, social and human development of Cuba, particularly as it impacted the most vulnerable groups, who had also suffered most from the devastating recent hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Further, he was seriously concerned about the measure’s impact on United Nations projects in Cuba, particularly at a time when the world sought to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Ending the embargo should be seen on moral and humanitarian grounds, as it would help alleviate suffering, and promote development, peace and security.

“The Assembly cannot afford to remain indifferent to the people of Cuba,” he stressed, explaining that there was a need for dialogue between the United States and Cuba. In addition, approaches, other than passing resolutions, should be explored to end the embargo. In closing, he reiterated his country’s sympathy with Cuba, and would join others in calling for an end to the embargo.

Action on Draft Resolution

FELIPE PÉREZ ROQUE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, said the upcoming vote was taking place under very special circumstances: barely a few months after the devastating passage of two powerful hurricanes through Cuba, just six days before the United States elections and in the midst of profound international economic crisis.

In contrast to the ample solidarity received in the Assembly, the Government of the United States had responded with its customary cynicism and hypocrisy. It had refused to accede to Cuba’s request to buy food and essential materials for reconstruction with private credits, even for six months, from American companies. On the other hand, it had attempted to orchestrate a blatant

propaganda campaign, with which it tried to accuse Cuba's Government of not looking after its people.

Cuba had acted according to its traditional principles and could not accept alleged assistance from those who had intensified the blockade, sanctions and hostility against its people. Cuba had not asked the United States Government for any gifts, but had asked to make purchases, he stressed.

"The Bush Administration has lied, yet again, to the international community," he went on. If the United States Government was truly concerned about the well-being of the Cuban people, the only moral and ethical behaviour would be to lift the blockade it had imposed on Cuba, in violation of the most elemental regulations of international law and the Charter. In open contempt of the express will of the international community and 16 consecutive Assembly resolutions, the United States had adopted new and tougher economic sanctions against Cuba over the past year.

He said Washington had also intensified persecution against the activities of Cuban companies and those companies of other countries. It had unleashed a "mad hunt" against Cuba's international financial transactions, including its attempts to pay United Nations bodies. Its viciousness had reached such lengths that it had blocked Internet sites that had ties to Cuba. On the other hand, the United States had increased its financial and material support for actions to overthrow the Cuban constitutional order.

He said the new President of the United States should decide whether he would admit that the blockade was a failed policy that had created greater isolation and discrediting for his country.

Continuing, he rejected, word for word, the statement made by the representative of the United States, "who should feel a sense of shame". The United States was completely and deeply isolated. The entire world supported Cuba's small, rebellious island. Cuba was not anti-American; it was anti-imperialist. And the American people were a victim of the absurd and illegal policy implemented by their own. He said the United States had the strength, but Cuba had the resolve, and was right. Every year, The United States repeated the same set of disconnected arguments, but the valid arguments were on Cuba's side.

The President leaving office would be the tenth United States leader who was a proponent of the illegal and failed policy. The United States needed change and the world needed change. He said the United States cannot sue its own businessmen and other businesses in order to keep them from doing business with Cuba. The Assembly needed to consider this resolution for everybody's sake, not just Cuba's. He respectfully called upon the Assembly to support Cuba and its rights and vote in favour of the resolution.

The General Assembly then adopted draft resolution on the "necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (document A/63/L.4) by a recorded vote of 185 in favour to 3 against (Israel, Palau, United States), with 2 abstentions (Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia). (See Annex for voting results).

The representative of France, speaking after the vote, on behalf of the European Union and candidate countries, said the United States' trade policy towards Cuba was a bilateral issue. Notwithstanding that, his delegation had clearly opposed the extraterritorial extension of the embargo, as contained in the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act. He could not accept that unilateral United States measures limited the Union's economic and commercial relations with third countries, in this case, Cuba.

As such, the European Union Council of Ministers adopted, in 1996, a joint action to protect natural or legal residents in the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of that legislation. Moreover, at a 1998 United States-European Union Summit, a package was agreed

covering waivers to titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, and he urged the United States to implement its side of that understanding.

Noting that the European Union's policy towards Cuba was outlined in a 1996 Common Position, he said the goal was to encourage a peaceful transition to a pluralist democracy, with respect for human rights and improved living standards. While reaffirming that position, the European Union, last June, had decided to lift restrictive measures against Cuba, and had proposed a dialogue without preconditions to authorities in Havana -- an offer which the Cuban Government accepted. A 16 October ministerial meeting addressed all issues of common interest, including human rights, an area in which Europeans expected concrete action from Cuban authorities.

While human rights in Cuba had seen positive developments -- including Cuba's signing of the United Nations Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights -- the situation had not fundamentally changed, he said. The Government continued to deny its citizens globally recognized civil, political and economic rights, he said, urging again the unconditional release of all political prisoners. To the United States, he rejected all unilateral measures against Cuba, which were contrary to commonly accepted rules of trade. Despite criticism of Cuba's human rights record, the European Union had voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), in explanation of the vote, MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI ([Brazil](#)) stated that her delegation had voted in favour of the resolution, because it believed the embargo was in violation of international law and contrary to the United Nations Charter. The embargo's condemnation by the General Assembly, as well as by other international forums, served as an indication that multilateralism and peaceful settlements to disputes were preferable to the imposition of unilateral measures. Further, the embargo was not in keeping with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) international trade laws and its binding agreements.

This unilateral course of measures had caused irreparable damage to the Cuban people's welfare, she stressed, along with damage to the process of integration in the region. She concluded by reiterating continued commitment to the utilization of multilateralism as an effective tool in dispute settlements between States, and for the advancement of human rights and understanding amongst peoples.

Also speaking after the vote, the representative of the [Lao People's Democratic Republic](#) said her delegation opposed the continued unilateral embargo against Cuba. The embargo directly violated the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter. It also continued to cause undue suffering and hardship to the Cuban people, and hindered their socio-economic development.

Noting the overwhelming support for the resolution by the Assembly, over many consecutive years, including its adoption today, she said such support confirmed the friendship and solidarity of the international community with the Cuban people, and the call for an immediate, unconditional lifting of the embargo against Cuba.

The representative of [Indonesia](#) recognized the importance of adopting the draft resolution, and aligned herself with the Group of 77 developing countries and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Indonesia had voted in favour of the draft resolution, and strongly believed that actions outlined in the draft ran counter to the Charter principles, and the rights to life, well-being and development. Fully agreeing with the global community on the issue, she urged an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Next, [Myanmar's](#) representative, recalling the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence; a cornerstone of Myanmar's foreign policy; said it was his country's belief that peace, security and stability could be promoted only through mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and non-

interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The Cuban embargo, which went against the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, also violated the fundamental principle of sovereignty, equality and the rights of all nations to development, as well as international law.

He called on the United States to heed the call from the international community and immediately end its embargo against Cuba. As the unilateral measures did not promote peace and stability in the region, and had severe negative impacts on the social, political and economic development of the Cuban people, Myanmar had voted in favour of the resolution calling for the embargo's end.

The representative of Belarus said that once again, the Assembly had expressed a virtually unanimous view on the need to lift the embargo against Cuba. Belarus opposed sanctions and coercive measures. Sanctions were especially inappropriate in a time of financial crisis, slowing economic development, and interdependence in such areas as international trade and climate change. In that new global context, there was no place for unilateral sanctions, and Belarus, by its vote, called on the United States to end its embargo.

The representative of Ecuador, supporting the Group of 77 developing countries and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement, had voted in favour of the resolution to end the embargo against Cuba, in keeping with international law. She condemned the use of coercive measures and threats to solve disputes, and affirmed such principles as non-intervention. Expressing solidarity with the people of Cuba, whose basic rights had been violated, she called for an end to the blockade.

The representative of Syria said that, despite the Assembly's past appeals over 16 years, the United States had not taken any measures to meet its wishes. It had persisted in its "erroneous position", and had introduced new measures to tighten the blockade against the sovereign State of Cuba, in direct threat to regional stability.

He called for ending "antagonistic American policies against its neighbours", and an end to all forms of blockades imposed by the United States, both against Cuba, and his own country. As such, he had voted in favour of the resolution. It was striking to note Israel's anomalous vote against the overwhelming majority, which included it in an isolated minority of the global community.

Consecutive American policies had violated international law, he said, and history would not "turn a blind eye" to the military invasion of States, the changing of Governments by force, the arming of aggressors and the imposition of unjust blockades. The question was: were such erroneous American practices in line with the noble principles of the United States' founding fathers, including Abraham Lincoln? That answer could only be given by American officials.

The representative of Norway said the embargo was fundamentally a bilateral issue. While Norway supported sanctions adopted through the United Nations, it could not accept that unilateral United States measures should undermine Norway's relations with Cuba. She was encouraged by human rights developments, including Cuba's signing of the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, she reiterated the call for Cuba to unconditionally release all political prisoners. Isolation was not the appropriate response to developments in Cuba. For such reasons, Norway had voted for the draft resolution, as in past years.

Uganda's representative said his country opposed the embargo and had consistently voted in favour of the resolution. The embargo was unjustified and had had an adverse impact on the Cuban people for far too long. Uganda did not support unilateral measures with extraterritorial application, which it believed were inconsistent with the United Nations Charter, international law and humanitarian law.

Closing Remarks

In concluding remarks, General Assembly President MIGUEL D'ESCOTO BROCKMANN, of Nicaragua, pointed out that once again the international community had rejected the "illegal, criminal" embargo imposed on Cuba, calling the island nation a "heroic country of unflinching solidarity". To ensure that the overwhelming opinion expressed in the vote was no longer flouted, the embargo, which had been unanimously repudiated and condemned, must be ended forthwith, "once and for all".

Calling the embargo against Cuba an "act of cruelty", especially after recent hurricane damage, President d'Escoto expressed his unwavering solidarity to all Cuban people and to Cuban President, Fidel Castro, as a "hero of international solidarity". "Viva Cuba," he exclaimed, to the applause of the Assembly.

ANNEX

Vote on Necessity of Ending the Embargo against Cuba

The draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (document A/63/L.4) was adopted by a recorded vote of 185 in favour to 3 against, with 2 abstentions, as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel, Palau, United States.

Abstain: Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of).

Absent: El Salvador, Iraq.