

Statement by H.E. Mr. Juan Antonio QUINTANILLA ROMÁN

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland

Madam Special Rapporteur, distinguished panelists and participants:

I would like to begin by thanking the Special Rapporteur for the invitation to take part in this panel.

I think it is very positive that the Human Rights Council is promoting spaces such as this one, which highlight the harmful nature of multilateral coercive measures for the enjoyment of all human rights, especially the right to development.

It is no surprise that the combined effects of a multidimensional global crisis in the energy, food, environmental and transportation sectors, and the cumulative impact of two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, impose major challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

In the midst of this challenging international scenario, my country is a small island developing state, with a limited economic structure, a geographical location with higher levels of exposure to the effects of climate change and natural hazards, as well as an insufficient access to sources of financing for development.

Moreover, Cuba has been under the impacts, for more than six decades, of the longest system of unilateral coercive measures ever applied against any country.

I can assure you with complete sincerity that the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade constitutes the main obstacle to the economic and social development of the country, as well as to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

At current prices, the accumulated damages during 60 years of this policy amount to over **154 billion dollars**.

If we take into account the behavior of the dollar against the value of gold on the international market, this figure would increase considerably to more than **1,391 trillion dollars**.

How much could my country have achieved in terms of sustainable development if this cruel and inhumane policy had not existed?

Although these figures could be stratospheric, I assure you that they would never measure the human damage inflicted by this genocidal policy on the Cuban population, 80% of whom, at present, have never known a Cuba without the blockade.

There are countless sectoral effects of the blockade on Cuba's actions to achieve the implementation of the SDGs.

Just to mention a few examples, in the area of healthcare (**SDG 3**), the blockade considerably affects the national production of antibiotics, analgesics, hypotensive drugs,

cancer and heart disease treatments. It impedes international market access to medical supplies, equipment, as well as Insulin and anti-cancer and cardiopathic treatments for children.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, not a single measure to alleviate the blockade was applied. The arrival of donations, the acquisition of cylinders, spare parts and other components necessary for the supply of medical oxygen, as well as the arrival of syringes to the country to support the vaccination process were obstructed by this policy.

Furthermore, the United States resorted to the extreme action of trying to hinder the South-South Cooperation projects that Cuba carried out with numerous countries around the world and which have contributed to improving the health conditions of millions of people on the planet.

Although Cuba has made significant achievements in field of education, the full implementation of **SDG 4** is affected by the Blockade policy.

Between January and July 2021, the damage caused to the education sector amounted to more **than US \$30 million**. This made it difficult to obtain the basic study materials, furniture and equipment necessary for the school system, especially for special education.

In the field of food security (**SDG 2**), the impact on production and services in the agricultural sector is extremely high. The blockade financially persecutes Cuban food importers. It forces them to look for food in very distant markets, which increases the cost of maritime transportation.

Cuba's commitment to continue working to achieve the targets proposed in **SDG 6** is largely hindered by the U.S. blockade policy, which prevents access to financing, new technologies and other capabilities necessary to achieve universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services.

The blockade is the main impediment to the economic growth of my country (**SDG 8**).

The inclusion of Cuba on the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism has reinforced the impact of this policy and generates additional difficulties for my country to enter international trade and carry out financial operations.

Between August 2021 and February 2022 alone, this policy caused losses to Cuba in the order to **3,8 billion dollars**. If the blockade had not existed, in that period our GDP could have grown by 4.5%.

As a direct consequence of the blockade, Cuba's capacity to implement **SDG 17** is considerably reduced.

My country's access to international public financial flows is greatly restricted, since it is not part of multilateral financing schemes such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) or the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), due to this cruel policy.

This prevents the country from benefiting from the necessary resources for the implementation of sustainable development projects, which are channeled through the concessional window of these mechanisms.

The U.S. blockade against Cuba poses serious challenges to the complete materialization of **SDG 9**.

From January to July 2021, the economic damages and losses caused by the U.S. blockade to the IT and communications sector amounted to over **37million dollars**.

Likewise, access platforms and updates from the country of various applications have been affected for Cuba. This was evidenced by the US government's refusal to establish a submarine cable connection between Florida and Cuba in December 2022.

Nowadays, one of the SDGs where the impact of unilateral coercive measures against Cuba is most evident is in the energy sector (**SDG 7**).

Between August 2021 and February 2022 alone, damages to the energy and mining sector amounted to over **185 million dollars**.

The U.S. persecution has interrupted the link with foreign companies that provided technologies and spare parts for Cuban power plants.

The few suppliers that have decided to maintain the supply of these products to Cuba, have increased their prices considerably, due to the country risk.

In spite of this aggressive policy and in the context of limited financial resources, Cuba is not renouncing to pursue the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

We will continue to develop domestic and foreign alliances to face the existing challenges, with the purpose of achieving the integral development of the human being, under the premise of leaving no one behind.

Furthermore, we will also carry on denouncing the genocidal and illegal nature of the US blockade against Cuba.

Every single year, there is almost international consensus in the UN General Assembly room when the Cuban resolution “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba” is overwhelming approved, excepting for a reduced number of isolated states, that continue to deny the legitimate call of the international community and the Cuban people.

I thank you.