

June 27, 2017

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Montreal picket against U.S. blockade of Cuba, June 17, 2017.

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Building and Deepening Canada-Cuba Solidarity **Canadian Network on Cuba Holds Eighth Biennial Convention**

From June 3-4, Canada-Cuba solidarity and friendship organizations from across the country held the very successful 8th Biennial Convention of the Canadian Network on Cuba in Toronto City

Hall. After the acknowledgment that delegates and guests were meeting on traditional and unceded Indigenous territory, Chief Stacey Laforme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation opened the convention with a powerful message on the unity and fraternity of the world's peoples.



The Convention then paid homage to the late Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution. The tribute was rendered through a poignant and moving video, followed by all delegates and guests rising for a minute of silence.

Invited guests included Deborah Ojeda (Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Cuba), Tania López Larroque (Cuban Consul General in Toronto), Sandra Ramírez (Director, North American Desk of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples -- ICAP) and other Cuban diplomats and guests. Messages of greetings were received from among others, Canadian Senator Pierrette Ringuette, co-chair of the Canada-Cuba Inter-Parliamentary Group; the U.S. National Network On Cuba; and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, who were unable to attend the Convention.



Luis Morlote Rivas, Vice-President, Cuban Union of Writers and Artists and a member of the Cuban National Assembly speaks at June 3 evening event, "Cuba Moving Forward in 2017."

The Convention also had the distinct honour and privilege of hosting Luis Morlote Rivas, Vice-President, Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) and a member of the Cuban National Assembly. At the Saturday, June 3 evening public event, "Cuba Moving Forward in 2017," he spoke to a packed audience at Friends House. Morlote Rivas arrived in Toronto after participating in the profound and detailed discussions by Cuba's parliamentarians on the nation's social and economic development. During his presentation, he emphasized Cuba's determination to renew its revolutionary and nation-building project, while preserving its independence and sovereignty. He

also stressed that Cuba would continue on its path of building a society of ever greater equity and justice. World famous photographer Roberto Chile also spoke. His acclaimed exhibit on Fidel Castro is now on display at the Embassy of Cuba in Ottawa and there are plans for a Canada-wide tour.



Pre-convention event June 2, 2017 "Fidel! Cuba! Africa! Africa's Children Return!"

In addition to plenary sessions, a pre-convention public lecture and three convention panels were also held. The Friday, June 2, pre-convention event, "Fidel! Cuba! Africa! Africa's Children Return!" took place in front of a full house at A Different Booklist, where historian and Cuba specialist Isaac Saney explored the history and impressive dimensions of the Cuban Revolution's solidarity with Africa.

The first Convention panel, "Updating the Cuban Economy," featuring Deborah Ojeda and Isaac Saney, underscored the extensive democratic participation of the Cuban people as the country updates and renews its economy. On the second panel, "Defend Cuba and Latin American Sovereignty and Independence," Sandra Ramírez and Felipe Stuart (Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network) outlined the historic victory for democracy, sovereignty and peace embodied in the Cuban Revolution. On the third panel, "Building Solidarity with Cuba in Canada," panelists Nino Pagliccia (Canada-Cuba Friendship Association-Vancouver), Don Foreman (Canadian Union of Postal Workers), and Yamil Martínez (ICAP) emphasized that despite the restoration of diplomatic relations between Havana and Washington, the U.S. economic war against Cuba

continues unabated, and that opportunities exist to expand and elaborate solidarity with Cuba throughout Canadian society, especially amongst workers.



Panellists (top left to bottom right): Isaac Saney, Deborah Ojeda, Sandra Ramírez, Felipe Stuart, Nino Pagliccia, Yamil Martínez and Don Foreman.

During the plenaries and panels, delegates reaffirmed the CNC's commitment to continue to deepen the ties of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Canada and Cuba, resolving to do the utmost to defeat the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, end its ongoing campaign of subversion and ensure the return to Cuba of the illegally occupied territory of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay. Delegates also highlighted the importance of the Canada-Cuba solidarity movement in ensuring that Canada-Cuba relations remain based on the international norms of mutual respect and equality between nations.

Toward these ends, steps were taken to strengthen the CNC's work. Several resolutions and initiatives were adopted that established the priorities for the next two years, including mobilizing Canadian public and political opinion against U.S. policy and acts of aggression against Cuba, organizing and supporting activities commemorating the 50th anniversary of the death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and strengthening the work with members of parliament and legislatures. Under this mandate a new seven-member executive was elected: Iris Cogger, Julio Fonseca, Don Foreman, Elizabeth Hill, Michael O'Neill, Isaac Saney and Saleh Waziruddin. Elizabeth Hill and Isaac Saney were re-elected as the co-chairs of the new executive. Subsequently, Isaac Saney, Elizabeth Hill and Saleh Waziruddin were, respectively, re-appointed National Spokesperson, Treasurer and Secretary.

At the Convention's closing, the CNC expressed its deep confidence that the Cuban people will overcome any challenges that they face. The CNC also reaffirmed that the Cuban people can count on the ongoing and undiminished solidarity and friendship of Canadians. This solidarity and friendship is rooted in the overwhelming respect of Canadians for Cuba's right to independence and

self-determination, and a profound admiration for what the Cuban people have accomplished despite facing the unceasing aggression of the United States. This respect and admiration have forged unbreakable ties of friendship and solidarity between the people of Canada and Cuba.



(Canadian Network on Cuba, June 11, 2017)



U.S. Imposes Draconian Fine for Transaction Conducted in Canada

No to Extraterritorial Application of the U.S. Blockade! No to U.S. Violation of Canadian Sovereignty!

- Isaac Saney, National Spokesperson, Canadian Network on Cuba -



June 17, 2017 picket in Vancouver against U.S. blockade of Cuba. Pickets take place monthly.

The Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) denounces the violation of the sovereignty of Canada by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Treasury Department. OFAC fined the American Honda Finance Corporation (AHFC) \$87,255 for approving and financing between February 2011 and March 2014 the leasing by Honda Canada Finance Inc. of 13 cars to the Embassy of Cuba in Canada.

This is an unambiguous act of hostility against Cuba carried out within Canada by Washington. The extraterritorial application of the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba targets not only Canada, as the AHFC is a subsidiary of the American Honda Motor Company, which is itself owned by Honda Motor Co. Ltd. and based in Japan, not the U.S.

Because Honda Canada Finance Inc. is a majority-owned subsidiary company of American Honda Motor Company, Washington insists that it follow U.S. law as demanded by the *1992 Torricelli Act* and the *1996 Helms-Burton Act*.

In short, U.S. law supplants Canadian law within Canada!

Not only is this a violation of the sovereignty of Canada, it contravenes the *Canadian Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act* (FEMA).

In response to the *Torricelli Act* and the *Helms-Burton Act*, the Government of Canada specifically amended FEMA in order to protect Canada against the increasing extraterritorial nature of the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba. Thus, FEMA prohibits Canadian corporations from complying with the extraterritorial measures of U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba

This violation of Canadian sovereignty by the U.S. Treasury Department illustrates that Washington not only wages an economic blockade against Cuba but also a diplomatic and political blockade.

Is this extraterritorial interference in Canadian sovereignty a warning that Canada-Cuba relations is now a direct target of the Trump administration?

The CNC calls on the Government of Canada to uphold the country's sovereignty and reject this or any other effort to implement in Canada the internationally condemned and illegal U.S. economic blockade of Cuba.

The CNC urges the Canadian government and parliamentarians not to allow Canada's policy towards and relations with Cuba to be targeted or undermined.

(June 15, 2017)



Statement of Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Treasury Department levied a new fine upon American Honda Finance Corporation (AHFC), which amounts to \$87,255 for violating the regulations of the U.S. blockade against Cuba.

OFAC claimed in this case that one of Canada's AHFC subsidiaries approved and financed 13 car lease arrangements between a Honda dealer and the Cuban Embassy in Ottawa between February 2011 and March 2014.

The sanction to AHFC, the first of its kind under Donald Trump's Administration, shows the persistence of the economic, commercial and financial blockade and its extraterritorial scope, with the consequential negative implications on Cuba's economic and social development as well as external economic relations.

Since the announcements of 17 December 2014, the United States government has fined 11 entities -- seven American and four foreign companies -- with a value of \$2,842,429,064. This new fine is added to the long list of extraterritorial sanctions imposed by the U.S. government, under the framework of laws governing the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba.



This not only hampers the work of Cuban diplomats in a third country, but also harms Canadian citizens and companies that maintain relations with Cuban entities.

(June 9, 2017)



U.S. Administration's New Hostile Measures

Declaration of Revolutionary Government of Cuba



Monthly picket at U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, June 17, 2017

On June 16, 2017, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, in a speech full of hostile rhetoric that recalled the times of open confrontation against our country, announced in a theatre in Miami his government's policy towards Cuba. The policy reverses the advances made in the last two years since Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama announced on December 17, 2014 the decision to re-establish diplomatic relations and begin a process towards the normalization of bilateral ties.

In what constitutes a setback in relations between the two countries, Trump made a speech and signed a directive policy called "Presidential Memorandum of National Security on Strengthening U.S. Policy towards Cuba," stating the elimination of individual "people-to-people" educational exchanges and greater oversight of U.S. travelers to Cuba, as well as the prohibition of the economic, commercial and financial transactions of U.S. companies with Cuban companies linked to the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Intelligence and security services, all with the aim of depriving us of income.

The U.S. president justified this policy with alleged concerns about the human rights situation in Cuba and the need to rigorously apply the laws of the blockade, conditioning its lifting, as well as any improvement in bilateral relations, for our country to make fundamental changes to its constitutional order.

Trump also repealed the Presidential Policy Directive "Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations," issued by President Obama on October 14, 2016, which, while not obscuring the intrusive nature of U.S. policy, nor the goal of advancing its interests in the pursuit of changes in the economic, political and social order of our country, had recognized the independence, sovereignty and self-determination of Cuba and the Cuban government as a legitimate and equal interlocutor, as well as the benefits it would bring to both countries and peoples a relationship of civilized coexistence within the great differences that exist between the two governments. He also admitted that the blockade was an obsolete policy and should be eliminated.

The Government of the United States has once again resorted to the coercive methods of the past, adopting measures to reinforce the blockade in place since February 1962, and which not only inflicted damages and deprivation upon the Cuban people and constitutes an undeniable obstacle to the development of our economy, but also impacts the sovereignty and interests of other countries, prompting international condemnation.

The announced measures impose additional obstacles to the very restricted opportunities that the U.S. business sector had to trade and invest in Cuba.

In turn, they further restrict the right of U.S. citizens to visit our country, already limited by the obligation to use discriminatory licenses, at a time when the United States Congress, as a reflection of the broad sectors of that society, calls not only for an end to the travel ban, but also for the lifting of restrictions on trade with Cuba.

President Trump's announcement contradicts the majority support of American public opinion, including that of Cuban emigration in that country, in favour of the total lifting of the blockade and normal relations between Cuba and the United States.

Instead, the U.S. president, again badly advised, made decisions that favour the political interests of an extremist minority of Cuban origin in the state of Florida, and who for petty reasons will not give up their claim to punish Cuba and its people or permit them to exercise the legitimate and sovereign right to be free and take the reins of their own destiny.

Later on we will provide a more thorough analysis of the scope and implications of this announcement.

The Cuban Government denounces the new measures to tighten the blockade, which are destined to fail as was shown repeatedly in the past, and which will not achieve their purpose of weakening the Revolution or defeating the Cuban people, whose resistance to aggression of any type and origin has been proven over almost six decades.

The Government of Cuba rejects manipulation for political purposes and double standards in the treatment of human rights. The Cuban people enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms, and demonstrate achievements of which they are proud and which are only a dream for many countries in the world, including the United States itself, such as the right to health, education, social security, equal pay for equal work, children's rights and the right to food, peace and development. With its modest resources, Cuba has also contributed to the improvement of human rights in many parts of the world, despite the limitations imposed by its status as a blockaded country.

The United States is not in a position to give us lessons. We have serious concerns about the respect for and guarantee of human rights in that country, where there are numerous cases of murder, brutality and police abuses, particularly against the African-American population; the right to life is violated as a result of gun deaths; child labour is being exploited and there are serious manifestations of racial discrimination; there are threats to impose more restrictions on health services, which would leave 23 million people without health insurance; there is wage inequality between men and women; migrants and refugees are marginalized, particularly those from Islamic countries; there is an intent to erect walls that denigrate neighbours as well as to abandon international commitments to preserve the environment and address climate change.

Human rights violations committed by the United States in other countries, such as the arbitrary detention of dozens of prisoners in the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Navy Base in Cuba, where they have even been tortured, are also a matter of concern; as are extrajudicial

executions and the deaths of civilians caused by bombs and the use of drones; and the wars unleashed against various countries like Iraq, based on lies about the possession of weapons of mass destruction, with dire consequences for the peace, security and stability of the Middle East.

We recall that Cuba is a state signatory of 44 international instruments on human rights, while the United States belongs only to 18, so we have much to show, speak up about and defend.

In confirming the decision to re-establish diplomatic relations, Cuba and the United States ratified their intention to develop respectful and cooperative ties between the two peoples and governments, based on the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In its Declaration, issued on July 1, 2015, the Cuban Revolutionary Government reaffirmed that these relations must be based on absolute respect for our independence and sovereignty; the inalienable right of every state to choose the political, economic, social and cultural system, without interference in any way; and sovereign equality and reciprocity, which are inalienable principles of international law, as endorsed by the Latin American and Caribbean Proclamation as a Zone of Peace, signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), at its II Summit, in Havana. Cuba has not renounced these principles and will never give them up.

The Government of Cuba reiterates its willingness to continue a respectful dialogue and cooperation on issues of mutual interest, as well as the negotiation of pending bilateral issues with the United States Government. In the last two years, it has been demonstrated that the two countries can coexist, as the President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Army General Raul Castro Ruz has repeatedly expressed, can cooperate and coexist civilly, by respecting our differences and promoting everything that benefits both nations and peoples, but it should not be expected that Cuba will make concessions with regards to its sovereignty and independence, nor will it accept any kind of conditionality.

Any strategy aimed at changing the political, economic and social system in Cuba, whether it seeks to achieve this through pressure and force, or by using more subtle methods, will be doomed to failure.

The changes that are necessary in Cuba, such as those made since 1959 and those that we are undertaking now as part of the process of updating our economic and social model, will continue to be decided by the sovereign Cuban people.

As we have done since the triumph on January 1, 1959, we will confront any risk and continue to stand firm and confident in building a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation.

(Granma, June 16, 2017)



Press Conference by Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations

***Cuba will not make concessions essential to its sovereignty and independence,
nor will it negotiate its principles or accept conditions***

TML Weekly is publishing below a transcript of the press conference held by Cuba's Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla in Vienna, Austria on June 19. Rodríguez elaborates the position of the Cuban government and people with regards to the new hostile measures announced by the U.S. administration on June 16.

Moderator: Welcome to this press conference which has been called by the Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Cuba, the honorable Bruno Rodríguez Parilla. The Minister will presently make a statement in the Spanish and English languages, and then take a few questions.

We would like to inform all those present that interpretation services in English are available at this conference. That said, Minister, over to you.



Bruno Rodríguez: Thank you very much.

I wish to express my condolences to the people and government of Portugal for the disaster which has cost dozens of human lives; as well as to the government and people of the United Kingdom following recent events in London.

I convey our most heartfelt condolences to the people and government of Colombia regarding the terrorist attack which has led to several deaths.

Last June 16, the President of the United States Donald Trump announced in Miami the policy his government has decided to implement with regard to Cuba.

The Cuban government, meanwhile, issued an official statement. Cuban civil society organizations have also made declarations.

Among others, the President of the United States approved the following measures: the prohibition of economic, commercial and financial relations between U.S. companies and Cuban entities linked to the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior; the prohibition of individual travel by U.S. citizens under the category of "people-to-people" exchanges, and greater monitoring of all travelers; as well as a review of all the programs directed against Cuba's constitutional order, to supposedly ensure their effectiveness.

Also repealed was the Presidential Directive issued by President Barack Obama in October 2016, which despite being profoundly interventionist, and aimed at changing the constitutional order of the Republic of Cuba, did however recognize our country's independence, sovereignty, and self-determination; Cuba's revolutionary government as a legitimate and equal interlocutor, and also proposed a new civilized relationship intended to benefit both peoples.

The Directive, which has now been vacated, also recognized the blockade as a failed policy, which has been unsuccessful, failed to achieve its objectives, and should be eliminated.

All of these measures were announced in a theater named after Manuel Artime, civilian leader of the mercenary brigade that invaded our country at Playa Girón or the Bay of Pigs. It was a grotesque Cold War-era spectacle, made before a small audience, composed of old henchmen and

thieves of the Batista dictatorship, mercenaries from the Playa Girón brigade, terrorists, demagogues and "lackeys."

President Trump greeted several of these individuals by name, and was surrounded or accompanied by others at the time of the signing. These included a terrorist arrested in 1995 in California, with an arsenal of weapons to be used to commit violent actions, and who was implicated in an assassination attempt on President Fidel Castro Ruz in 1997. Another was part of a 1974 armed infiltration in Cuba; a third was the author of terrorist actions and pirate attacks at sea on Cuban fishing boats, between 1972 and 1975.

Also present was the spouse of a sergeant who committed acts of torture during the Batista dictatorship, and one of those responsible for financing the planting of bombs at tourist locations in Cuba which exploded in 1997, as revealed by infamous terrorist Posada Carriles in an interview with the *New York Times*. As we know, Posada Carriles was the author of the mid-flight bombing of a Cubana de Aviación civilian aircraft in 1976, the first terrorist act against an aircraft in flight.

Many of these individuals worked for the CIA at some point.

I strongly protest the United States government given such derision, and implore it to confirm or deny if the terrorists I have mentioned were beside President Trump or not. This is an affront to the Cuban people, to the people of the world, and to the victims of international terrorism across the globe.

When, during this show, the President of the United States alluded to the father of the out-of-tune violinist who played the U.S. national anthem, he failed to state that Captain Bonifacio Haza, mentioned on several occasions by the President of the United States, was directly responsible for the murders of Carlos Díaz and Orlando Carvajal toward the end of the Batista dictatorship, and personally participated in the murder of well-known revolutionary fighter Frank País, as well as his comrade Raúl Pujol, and later, Frank País' younger brother, who was only 19 years of age at the time.

This is an outrage our people will never forget.

The packed audience was completed by several foreign agents who are paid by U.S. government agencies in Cuba. These are the new mercenaries.

It was outrageous to see this annexationist and Plattist audience respond to every phrase against Cuba, chanting "USA, USA."

President Trump's policy without a doubt marks a step back in bilateral relations, as has been recognized by countless voices within and outside of the United States, the majority of which outrightly reject the announced changes.

I anticipate that said measures will affect relations between the government of the United States and those of Latin America and the Caribbean, and will severely damage the credibility of its foreign policy.

These frankly unpopular measures ignore overwhelming support for the lifting of the blockade and the normalization of relations with Cuba by members of the U.S. Congress, many of whom are Republicans; the country's business sector; various civil society organizations; the Cuban émigré community; the press; social networks; and public opinion in general.

President Trump -- once again ill-advised -- who lost the vote of Cubans in the counties with the highest concentration of Cuban residents during the Presidential elections in Florida; who lost the Cuban vote in Florida, is making decisions which only benefit the petty interests of an aging, extremist minority of Cuban origin and a handful of politicians.

Any measured analysis leads one to anticipate that, as in the past, the announced measures will not meet the proclaimed objectives, but rather the opposite: they will restrict the freedoms of U.S. citizens, cost taxpayers more money, reduce the opportunities of companies and business people against their competition, lose income and jobs.

It is necessary to wait until the government of the United States reveals the regulations that will implement these measures before expressing an opinion on their scope and depth.

These measures also ignore the overwhelming majority view of the Cuban people, who wish to have a better relationship with the people of the U.S. They will cause human harm and deprivation; they will affect Cuban families. They will bring economic damage not only to state-owned enterprises in Cuba, but also to cooperatives, and will especially harm self-employed or private workers. They will also harm and increase discrimination against Cuban émigrés settled in the United States.

It seems childish to predict that, with this policy, they will be able to separate the people from the government, or the citizens from our glorious Revolutionary Armed Forces and Ministry of the Interior, who are the uniformed people. On the contrary, these measures reinforce our patriotism, our dignity, our determination to defend national independence by all means, in the spirit of José Martí, Antonio Maceo and Fidel Castro Ruz.

Cuba vigorously rejects the new measures that strengthen the blockade, which we will denounce in the next United Nations General Assembly, because it is unjust, inhumane, genocidal, extraterritorial, and in violation of International Law and the sovereignty of all states.

I firmly reject the political manipulation and double standards in addressing the issue of human rights by President Trump. The United States government has no moral authority, it cannot give lectures on human rights or on democracy. Cuba has much to show and say on this matter.

The new measures are not at all democratic. According to recent U.S. surveys, 73 per cent of U.S. citizens, 63 per cent of Cuban residents, and 62 per cent of Republicans support the lifting of the blockade -- curious that: 62 per cent of Republicans. The normalization of bilateral ties is favored by 75 per cent, three quarters, of U.S. citizens; 69 per cent of Cuban residents, and 62 per cent of Republicans.

Among Cubans in the United States, the younger they are, the more support there is for the lifting of the blockade and normalization.

However, the new measures reinforce the ban on U.S. citizens traveling as tourists to Cuba, and restrict their civil liberties; they limit the freedom of U.S. citizens to travel.

As regards human rights, in the United States there are numerous and systematic murders, brutality, and abuses by police, particularly against Afro-Americans. The limits on the right to healthcare, pay inequality for women, the lack of educational access, the almost absent unionization, the repression against immigrants and refugees, the marginalization of minorities and the increasing discrimination against Islamic culture and religion are well known.

The war crimes and the killing of civilians in U.S. military attacks and interventions are frequent. The imprisonment, without trial, and the massive and systematic use of torture in the Guantánamo Naval Base are brutal.

I reiterate Cuba's willingness to continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest and to negotiate pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the basis of equality and absolute respect for our independence and sovereignty.

As demonstrated by the advances achieved in the last two years, Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist in a civilized manner, respecting the profound differences between our governments and promoting all that benefits both countries and peoples.

We will continue our efforts together with people of good will in the United States, who are the vast majority. But I advise you: Cuba will not make concessions essential to its sovereignty and independence, will not negotiate its principles or accept conditions, as it has never done, never, throughout the history of the Revolution. As the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba establishes, we will never negotiate under pressure or threats.

We will act invoking the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by heads of state and government of the region in Havana in January 2014, which recognizes the inalienable right of heads of state to decide their political, economic, social and cultural system; rejects foreign intervention and interference in internal affairs, and opposes and condemns the threat and use of force.

It will not be a Presidential Directive of the United States that will thwart the sovereign course of Cuba, as they have been unable to do in more than 50 years of aggression, state terrorism, blockade, media war, and subversion. We have been through it all, our people has already been through it all, and have run the risk. What could they threaten us with today that they haven't already, and failed?

In Cuba, by the way, no one was on tenterhooks waiting for this imperialist announcement. Our people worked as normal, foreign policy functioned, we demonstrated respect for Europe on this visit. In fact, the Cuban people, closely linked to their Communist Party, recently debated and amended the draft Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development and the National Development Plan through 2030, and the upcoming People's Power general elections were called.

The changes that may be necessary in Cuba will be independently decided by the Cuban people: only by the Cuban people, as they have always done. We will not ask anyone else for their opinion or permission.

Many thanks.

Moderator: The Minister will take some questions. Please, we remind you to identify yourselves, use the microphones that we have placed at both sides of the room. We open the session.

George Jahn (AP): I have a question related to the ban on U.S. citizens from engaging in relations with the Army. Is Cuba willing to impose new taxes on those wishing to do business in Cuba, and will it agree to return Assata Shakur to the U.S. as requested?

Bruno Rodríguez: The measures announced, as I have said, will fundamentally harm U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. The Cuban government will consider the measures to be taken in a timely manner. It will be necessary to wait for the United States government to issue the relevant

regulations to analyze the scope of these measures.

Contrary to the objectives invoked, the measures are not only a setback in bilateral relations, but will damage the sectors with which U.S. businesspeople prefer to deal with in our country.

Regarding the issue of the so-called "U.S. fugitives in Cuba," I can reaffirm that, under our national law and international law and the Latin American tradition, Cuba has granted political asylum or refuge to U.S. civil rights fighters. Of course these people will not be returned to the United States, which lacks the legal, political, and moral foundation to demand this.

Secondly, U.S. citizens who committed crimes in Cuba, such as the hijacking of aircraft, were sentenced by Cuban courts and served long prison terms in Cuba. By unilateral decision, and in an act of goodwill, the Cuban government in recent years has returned to the United States 12 U.S. citizens who were fugitives from the U.S. justice system.

Vincent Montagud (teleSUR): I wanted to ask you, Minister, it's been a long time, they are two different historical moments, but why do you think that President Trump is now returning to this clearly Cold War rhetoric? Secondly, if I may, paradoxically, President Trump himself has said that he could study improvements in relations if concrete progress is made -- and I quote -- "in certain domestic matters." The question is: would the government of Cuba be willing to negotiate a new treaty with the Trump administration?

Thank you very much.

Bruno Rodríguez: One would have to ask President Trump what his real motives are for having performed these latest acts. I do not know if he could say why in public. I do not know if the President of the United States has been badly advised and whether someone has "sold" him the idea that he won the Florida vote with the Cuban vote or due to the Cuban vote. If he has been told that, he has been deceived. The figures exist related to the result of the elections in the five counties with the highest concentrations of Cuban voters in Florida, and in all of these President Trump lost the majority vote, that is, he lost the elections in the counties with citizens of Cuban origin. There is survey data and the election results themselves. It can be categorically stated that President Trump did not win the Cuban vote, and he did not win Florida because of the Cuban vote, but due to other electoral sectors.

As I have said, Cuba is ready for dialogue, cooperation, and the negotiation of pending bilateral issues, just as it will refuse to negotiate any issue affecting the sovereignty, independence, and self-determination of the Cuban people.

Just as the Cuban government will not demand of the U.S. government, as a condition for negotiation, that it change elements of its domestic policy that are very unpopular, and that we do not like at all, or that it cease the international wars in which it is involved, or that it have a better standard of protection for the exercise of human rights in its own country, or that it stop violating human rights across the world.

We hope that the U.S. government does not make the mistake of expecting that Cuba make internal changes to favor agreements or negotiations.

President Trump consistently said throughout the election campaign that he supported the change of policy toward Cuba; but that he would seek "a better arrangement," a better deal with our country. A better deal would mean lifting the blockade, returning the territory of the Guantánamo Naval Base, accepting the concept of mutual compensation that would greatly benefit certified U.S.

property owners, due to the nationalizations of the 1960s.

On the other hand, it is false to affirm that President Barack Obama made concessions to Cuba. He maintained the fundamental elements of the blockade of Cuba, and attempted to advance U.S. interests, including the subversion of the constitutional order of our country. President Trump should recognize, or should know that a favorable change, the continuity of the normalization process, the lifting of the blockade, are in the national interest of the United States, in the interest of U.S. voters, in the interest of those who pay taxes in the United States, who sustain the government, and therefore he would not be doing Cuba any favor, but rather attending to the United States' own interests and international law.

To that extent, yes, there is a willingness to negotiate with the U.S. government, to attempt to resolve bilateral issues that affect both countries, but on the basis of absolute, sovereign equality and full respect for our sovereignty and independence.

Luisa María González García (*Prensa Latina*): Good afternoon, Minister, if you would allow me, two questions:

The first, as you have said in your speech, numerous surveys show the growing desire of U.S. society to advance in rapprochement with Cuba. Given this context, do you believe that the measures announced by Trump are sustainable over time?

The second concerns Cuba's position. Cuba has reiterated its willingness -- you just reaffirmed this -- to dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and equality of conditions. Why maintain this position when the interlocutor is not disposed to talks on these terms?

Thank you very much.

Bruno Rodríguez: The measures which President Trump just announced, the scope of which must be seen in the regulations, are absolutely unsustainable. First, because there is a historical tendency that defines the era in which we live. The blockade is a piece of the Cold War; it is criminal, genocidal, according to the Geneva Convention on Genocide. In the second place, it is absolutely unjust and arbitrary. It is a crude, systematic violation, flagrant and systematic, of the human rights of all Cubans, hurting Cuban families, causing damage and deprivation.

On the other hand, the blockade infringes on the interests of U.S. citizens, of its companies, of its business people, and also constitutes a violation of the civil liberties and political rights of U.S. citizens who are prohibited from traveling to Cuba, exclusively Cuba.

Thus there is a historic tendency. Will it be during the Trump administration, or during a subsequent one? But there is no doubt that history, the era, will oblige the United States government to lift the blockade and normalize relations with Cuba. And we have all the patience, the endurance, and the will to wait for that moment to arrive, and above all, to work actively to make it happen, in the company of the vast majority of the U.S. people, of Cuban émigrés, and the international community -- on the basis of the sovereign decision and very broad, majority support of our people.

It is not known if this administration will be an acceptable interlocutor or not. That will be a decision which must be made by the U.S. government, which will act to the country's benefit or to its detriment, however it decides, but Cuba is ready to dialogue, to cooperate, to negotiate on the basis of absolute equality and respect.

Brinley Bruton (NBC): Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Would you do me the favor of answering in English. I am going to ask the question in English, too, thank you.

This past week, NBC broadcast an exclusive report on the extensive cooperation between Cuba and the United States which allowed the Department of Homeland Security in the U.S. to combat illegal credit card use. Could this change as a result of the decisions made by President Trump?

Bruno Rodríguez: I don't have any new information that the decisions of the U.S. government include the repudiation of the dozens of agreements signed over the last two years between the two governments. Nor have I heard of any measure directed toward impeding bilateral cooperation, in particular in the area of national security and law enforcement. It would do no good; it would seriously damage the very interests of the United States and of its citizens, if the U.S. government prevented or disassociated itself from cooperation with Cuba, which is a neighboring country and contributes to stability in the region, to the solution of regional and hemispheric problems, which has been a victim of, and actively fights, international terrorism, as well as drug trafficking; trafficking in persons; cyber-crime; against the use of digital media from one country to surreptitiously attack another; against crimes of fraud, money laundering, in which, necessarily, the interests of the continent's countries coincide.

Thus I can reaffirm that Cuba will attend to, honor, the agreements signed, and I reiterate our willingness to negotiate and sign new cooperation agreements in other areas. Because our way of thinking is to respect, in a civilized manner, the great differences which exist between our governments, but to advance in all that can benefit the two peoples, in our national interest and that of the Cuban people.

Moderator: Minister, we have received a question from Havana. It's the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, which has sent you an e-mail. If you would allow me, I'll read it: "Minister, the President of the United States would like to present itself as the defender of the Cuban people and alleges that the measures just adopted, as part of its policy toward Cuba, will not affect the Cuban people, but rather only state enterprises linked to the Revolutionary Armed Forces or the Ministry of the Interior. Nevertheless," *Juventud Rebelde* asks, "Does the tightening of the blockade perhaps not affect the economic and social life of the country in general? For example, won't more limitations on travel to Cuba from the U.S. affect all economic management modalities in Cuba, including the self-employed sector?"

Bruno Rodríguez: Well, they have a great sense of humor. It is clear that the measures being implemented by the U.S. government will harm the Cuban people, and especially harm sectors with which the U.S. government has expressed the most interest in building relations. In Cuba, it would be impossible to hurt the state sector of the economy without seriously hurting the cooperative sector, the self-employed, or small private businesses, in particular in the areas that some of these measures address, like the ban on individual travel by U.S. citizens under "people-to-people" licenses.

One would think that the U.S. government would pay greater attention to the interests of its citizens, than those of Cubans, as has always occurred in the past, but these measures, no doubt, prejudice U.S. interests.

The paradox is strange, because the U.S. President has said that his priority is the U.S. citizenry, the creation of jobs, seeking opportunities for U.S. companies and businesses, making them more competitive.

With these measures, he is doing exactly the opposite. What is his motivation? Thinking perhaps of the votes of some Cubans in the United States, of an aging, illegitimate minority? Does he want to win some indispensable votes in the Senate? That would be a good question to ask the President of the United States.

But there is no doubt that these measures contradict the very platform which the President proposed to voters, and presumably the reason he won the Electoral College vote, because we must remember that President Trump did not win the popular vote, he won the election with fewer votes than his opponent. That's the way democracy works in the United States.

Boris Kuznetsov (RT): Good afternoon, Mr. Minister.

My question is: Taking a step backward in the normalization of relations with Cuba, Donald Trump has in fact resuscitated the old political rhetoric of the Cold War. In this sense, other countries must react in some way to respond to this aggressive policy of Donald Trump. Russia, for example, yes, has declared that all of this leads to a new Cold War, this counterproductive policy toward Cuba.

Bruno Rodríguez: President Trump has presented himself as a renovator, he won the U.S. elections offering a change to the U.S. people. What he has done with Cuba is not innovate, nothing creative, what he has done is return to the policies of 10 other U.S. administrations, that is, moreover, to a policy that has failed, over time, to bring the U.S. closer to the objectives it has proposed. A well known Republican Senator said: Well, 50 years of a policy that doesn't get results is reason enough to change it. And this is what President Obama did.

The famous adage that trying, trying, and trying, again and again, to do the same thing, expecting to get different results, makes no sense at all, Einstein said.

Thus there is no doubt that these policies resurrected ice floes from the Cold War.

One could ask if this is only in policy toward Cuba. I see alarming signs in the international situation, growing threats to peace and international security, growing instability, the proliferation of conflicts, an increase in nuclear arsenals and military spending.

I also see profound ignorance of the way in which the causes of these problems must be addressed, including international terrorism, the only solution to which lies in international cooperation, not war. In the same way, these policies related to the egotistical, brutal restriction of trade, and the rejection of the Paris Accord on climate change, which threatens the existence of the human race, indicate that the planet is, in fact, approaching a tempestuous situation.

His Holiness Pope Francis has said, with good reason, that the world is already in a Cold War by stages. There is, no doubt, reason to be worried, and above all to act, to increase international cooperation, mobilize the world's conscience for the survival of the human race, and to change an international order that is incompatible with this survival, which is totally irrational, unsustainable, and seriously threatens world peace.

Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you very much for attending this press conference.

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