

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. FELIPE PÉREZ ROQUE, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, AT THE 59TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 24, 2004

Mr. President:

Every year at the United Nations we go through the same ritual. We attend the general debate knowing beforehand that the clamor for justice and peace by our underdeveloped countries will be ignored once again. However, we persist. We know that we are right. We know that one day we will accomplish social justice and development. We also know that such assets will not be given away to us. We know that the peoples will have to seize them from those who deny us justice today, because they underpin their wealth and arrogance on disdain for our grief. But it will not be always like this. We say so today with more conviction than ever before.

Having said this and knowing – as we do – that some powerful persons, just a few, present here will be chagrined, and also knowing that they are shared by many, Cuba will now tell some truths:

First: After the aggression on Iraq, there is no United Nations Organization, understood as a useful and diverse forum, based on the respect for the rights of all and also with guarantees for the small States.

It is living through the worst moment of its already forthcoming 60 years. It pales, it pants, it feigns, but it does not work.

Who handcuffed the United Nations named by President Roosevelt? President Bush.

Second: US troops will have to be withdrawn from Iraq.

After the life of over 1,000 American youths was uselessly sacrificed to serve the spurious interests of a clique of cronies and buddies, and following the death of more than 12,000 Iraqis, it is clear that the only way out for the occupying power faced with a people in revolt is to recognize the impossibility of subduing them and to withdraw. In spite of the imperial monopoly over information, the peoples always get to the truth. Someday, those responsible and their accomplices will have to deal with the consequences of their actions in the face of history and their own peoples.

Third: For the time being, there will be no valid, real and useful reform to the United Nations.

That would require the superpower, which inherited the immense prerogative of the sole use of an order conceived for a bipolar world, to relinquish its privileges. And it will not do so.

We now know that the anachronistic privilege of the veto will remain; that the Security Council will not be democratized as it should or expanded to include Third World countries; that the General Assembly will continue to stand ignored and that at the United Nations there will be more actions driven by the interests imposed by the superpower and its allies. We, as non-aligned countries, will have to entrench ourselves in defending the United Nations Charter – because, otherwise, it will be redrafted with the deletion of every

trace of principles such as the sovereign equality of states, non-intervention and the non-use or the threat to use force.

Fourth: The powerful collude to divide us.

The over 130 underdeveloped countries must build a common front for the defense of the sacred interests of our peoples, of our right to development and peace. Let us revitalize the Non-Aligned Movement. Let us strengthen the G-77.

Fifth: The modest objectives of the Millennium Declaration will not be accomplished. We will reach the fifth anniversary of that Summit in a worse situation.

We wished to halve by 2015 the 1.276 billion human beings in abject poverty that existed in 1990. There had to be a yearly reduction of 46 million poor people. However, excluding China, between 1990 and 2000 extreme poverty rose by 28 million people. Impoverishment is not declining, it is growing.

We wanted to halve by 2015 the 842 million starving people recorded in the world. There had to be a yearly reduction of 28 million. However, there has barely been a reduction of 2.1 million hungry people per year. At this rate, the goal would be attained by 2215, two hundred years after the envisaged date – and only if our species survives the destruction of its environment.

We proclaimed the aspiration to achieve universal primary education by 2015. However, more than 120 million children, 1 in every 5 at that school age, do not attend primary school. According to UNICEF, at the current rate the goal will be accomplished after 2100.

We proposed to reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate in children under five years of age. The reduction is symbolic: out of 86 children who died per 1,000 live births in 1998, now the figure is 82. Every year, 11 million children continue to die of diseases that can be prevented or cured, whose parents will rightfully wonder what our meetings are for.

We said that we would pay attention to the special needs of Africa. However, very little has been done. The African nations do not need foreign advice or models, but financial resources and access to both markets and technologies. Assisting Africa would not be an act of charity, but an act of justice; it would be tantamount to settling the historical debt resulting from centuries of exploitation and pillage.

We undertook to put a halt to and start reverting the AIDS pandemic by 2015. However, in 2003 it claimed nearly three million lives. At this rate, by 2015 some 36 million people will have died of this cause.

Sixth: Creditor countries and the international financial agencies will not seek a just and lasting solution to the foreign debt.

They prefer to keep us in debt; that is, vulnerable. Therefore, even though we have paid off US\$ 4.1 trillion in debt service over the last 13 years, our debt increased from US\$ 1.4

trillion to US\$ 2.6 trillion. It means that we have paid three times what we owed and now our debt is twice as much.

Seventh: We, as underdeveloped countries, are the ones that finance the squandering and the opulence of developed countries.

While in 2003 they gave us US\$ 68.400 billion in ODA, we delivered to them US\$ 436 billion as payment for the foreign debt. Who is helping who?

Eighth: The fight against terrorism can only be won through cooperation among all nations and with respect for international law, and not through massive bombings or preemptive wars against "dark corners of the world."

Hypocrisy and double standards must cease. Sheltering three Cuban-born terrorists in the United States is an act of complicity to terrorism. Punishing five Cubans who were fighting terrorism, and punishing their families, is a crime.

Ninth: General and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is impossible today. It is the responsibility of a group of developed countries that are the ones that most sell and buy weapons.

However, we must continue to strive for it. We must demand that the over US\$ 900 billion set aside every year for military expenditures be used on development; and

Tenth: The financial resources to guarantee the sustainable development for all the peoples on the planet are available, but what is lacking is the political will of those who rule the world.

A development tax of merely 0.1% on international financial transactions would generate resources amounting to almost US\$ 400 billion per annum.

The cancellation of the foreign debt incurred by underdeveloped countries would allow these to have available for their development no less than US\$ 436 billion on a yearly basis – money that is currently used to pay off the debt.

If developed countries complied with their commitment to set aside 0.7% of their Gross National Product as ODA, their contribution would increase from the current US\$ 68.400 billion to US\$ 160 billion per annum.

Finally, Excellencies, I want to clearly express Cuba's profound conviction that the 6.4 billion human beings on this planet – who have equal rights according to the United Nations Charter – urgently need a new order in which the world is not left in suspense, as is the case now, awaiting the outcome of the elections in a new Rome in which only half the voters will participate and nearly US\$ 1.5 billion will be spent.

There is no discouragement in our words, I must say so clearly. We are optimistic because we are revolutionaries. We have faith in the struggle of the peoples and we are certain that we will accomplish a new world order based on respect for the rights of all; an order based on solidarity, justice and peace, resulting from the best of universal culture and not from mediocrity or brute force.

About Cuba, which cannot be detoured from its course by blockades, threats, hurricanes, droughts or human or natural force, I will not say anything.

Next 28 October, for the thirteenth time, this General Assembly will debate and vote on a resolution concerning the blockade imposed against the Cuban people. Once again, morality and principles will defeat arrogance and force.

I would like to conclude by recalling the words spoken right here 25 years ago by President Fidel Castro:

"The noise of weapons, of menacing language, of prepotency on the international scene must cease. Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant, but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance. Nor can bombs kill the righteous rebellion of the peoples..."

Thank you very much.