

# Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel at the UN General Assembly. Global Capitalism Triggers War and Poverty

By [President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez](#)

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*The Speech of the Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez at the United Nations General Assembly,*

Madam President:

Mister Secretary-General:

It is impossible to be here, speak from this rostrum on behalf of Cuba, and not recall historic moments of the General Assembly which are also part of our dearest memories: Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Raúl Castro and the "Chancellor of Dignity", Raúl Roa, just to mention the most significant, have brought here not only the voice of our people but also the voice of other Latin American and Caribbean, African, Asian, non-aligned peoples, with whom we have shared more than half a century of struggles for a fair international order, which is still far off being attained.

It is absurd but consistent with the irrationality of a world in which the richest 0.7% of the population owns 46% of all the wealth, while the poorer 70% of the population can access only 2.7% of it; 3.460 billion people survive in poverty; 815 million go hungry; 758 million are illiterate and 844 million lack basic services of drinking water. All these figures, by the way, are prepared and regularly used by global organizations, but it seems that they have failed to raise sufficient awareness of the so-called international community.

These realities, Madam President, are not the result of socialism, like the President of the United States said yesterday here. They are the consequence of capitalism, especially imperialism and neoliberalism; of the selfishness and exclusion that is inherent to that system, and of an economic, political, social and cultural paradigm that privileges wealth accumulation in the hands of a few at the cost of the exploitation and dire poverty of the large majorities.

Capitalism consolidated colonialism. It gave birth to fascism, terrorism and apartheid and spread wars and conflicts; the breaches of sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples; repression of workers, minorities, refugees and migrants. Capitalism is the opposite of solidarity and democratic participation. The production and consumption patterns that characterize it, promote plundering, militarism, threats to peace; they generate violations of human rights and are the greatest danger to the ecological balance of the planet and the survival of the human being.

No one should be deceived by anybody claiming that humanity lacks enough material, financial and technological resources to eradicate poverty, hunger, preventable diseases and other scourges. What is lacking is the political will of the industrialized countries, who have the moral duty, the historical responsibility and the abundant resources to solve the most pressing global problems.

The truth is that while it is claimed that there is a shortfall in funding to attain the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda or address the increasing impact of climate change, 1.74 trillion dollars were wasted in military expenditure in the year 2017, the highest figure since the end of the Cold War.

Climate change is another unavoidable reality and a matter of survival for the human species, particularly for Small Island Developing States. Some of its effects are already irreversible.

Scientific evidence indicates there is an increase of 1.1° C relative to pre-industrial levels, and that 9 out of 10 persons living in urban areas breathe polluted air.

However, the United States, one of the major polluters of yesteryear and today, refuses to accompany the international community in the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. It thus endangers the lives of future generations and the survival of all species, including humans.

In addition, and as if there were not enough threats to humanity and its dazzling creations, it is a fact that the military and nuclear hegemonism of imperialism is perpetuating itself and expanding to the detriment of the hopes of the majority of peoples for a general and complete disarmament. Cuba shares this ideal and, as testament of its commitment with this goal, on January 31, it became the fifth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In this organization that was born out of the human desire to overcome the destruction left by a terrible war with the dialogue between nations, it is not possible to keep quiet about the danger looming over all of us, with the exacerbation of local conflicts, wars of aggression disguised as “humanitarian interventions”, the forceful overthrow of sovereign governments, the so-called “soft coups” and interference in other States’ internal affairs, recurrent forms of action by some powers, using the most diverse excuses.

The international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all is a must. However, its discriminatory and selective manipulation with claims of domination, violates the rights to peace, self-determination and development of the peoples.

Cuba rejects the militarization of outer space and cyberspace, as well as the covert and illegal use of the information and communication technologies to attack other states.

The exercise of multilateralism and full respect for the principles and rules of International Law to advance towards a multipolar, democratic and equitable world, are required in order to ensure peaceful coexistence, preserve international peace and security and find lasting solutions for systemic problems.

Against that logic, the threat or use of force, unilateralism, pressures, retaliations and sanctions which increasingly characterize the behavior and rhetoric of the U.S. government and its abusive use of the veto power in the Security Council in order to impose their

political agenda, pose huge challenges and threats within the United Nations itself.

Why don't we just implement the promised strengthening of the General Assembly as the main organ of deliberation, decision and representation. The reform of the Security Council must not be delayed or prevented, as this organ is in need of adjusting to the times by democratizing its membership and working methods.

Today we have come to reiterate what Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz said on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the UN, which summarizes the most noble aspiration of the majority of humanity, and I quote: "We want a world without hegemonistic practices, without nuclear weapons, without interventionism, without racism, without national or religious hatred, without violations of the sovereignty of any country, with respect for independence and the free self-determination of peoples, without universal models that do not take into account the traditions and cultures of all components of humanity at all. Without cruel blockades that kill men, women, children, the young, and the elderly like silent atomic bombs".

More than 20 years have elapsed since that demand was made and none of those ills have been cured; in fact, they have exacerbated. We have every right to ask why. And we have the duty to insist on effective and equitable solutions.

Madam President:

Our America is currently undergoing a stage of persistent threats, inconsistent with the "Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace", signed in Havana by the Heads of States and Government on the occasion of the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, in 2014.

The current U.S. administration has proclaimed the relevance of the Monroe Doctrine and, in a new deployment of its imperial policy in the region, is attacking Venezuela with special cruelty.

It is in this threatening context that we wish to reiterate our absolute support to the Bolivarian and Chavista Revolution, the civic-military union of the Venezuelan people and its legitimate and democratic government, led by the constitutional President Nicolas Maduro Moros. We reject the intervention attempts and sanctions against Venezuela, aimed at suffocating her economically and hurting Venezuelan families.

We likewise reject the attempts at destabilizing the Nicaraguan government, a country of peace that has made remarkable social, economic and public safety progress in favor of its people.

We denounce the politically-motivated imprisonment of former president Luiz Incicio Lula da Silva, and the decision to prevent the people from voting and electing Brazil's most popular leader to the Presidency.

We stand in solidarity with the Caribbean nations who demand legitimate reparation for the horrible effects of slavery as well as the fair, special and differential treatment that they deserve.

We reaffirm our historic commitment with the self-determination and independence of our brother people of Puerto Rico.

We support Argentina's legitimate sovereignty claim over the Malvinas Islands, South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands.

We reiterate our unrestricted support to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of the creation of two States, allowing the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State based upon the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reject the unilateral action of the United States to establish their diplomatic representation in the city of Jerusalem, which heightens even more the tensions in the region. We condemn the barbarities of the Israeli forces against the civilian population in Gaza.

We reaffirm our steadfast solidarity with the Saharan people, and support the search for a final solution to the question of Western Sahara, which will allow the exercise of self-determination and to live in peace in their territory.

We support the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed in

Syria, without foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reject any direct or indirect intervention, carried out without the legitimate authorities of the country.

The continued expansion of NATO towards Russian borders is causing serious threats, worsened by the imposition of arbitrary sanctions, which we reject.

We demand compliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear deal.

We welcome the process of rapprochement and dialogue among the Koreans. This is the way to achieve a lasting peace, reconciliation and stability in the Korean peninsula. At the same time, we strongly condemn the imposition of unilateral and unfair sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and foreign interference in Korean internal affairs.

The violations of the rules of international trade and the sanctions against China, the European Union and other countries will bring about harmful effects, particularly for developing States.

We favor dialogue and cooperation, thanks to which we can report today that the Cuba-EU Agreement on Political Dialogue and Cooperation has provisionally entered into force and is a good foundation to develop beneficial ties between the Parties.

Madam President:

The government of the U.S. maintains an aggressive rhetoric towards Cuba and a policy aimed at subverting the political, economic, social, and cultural system in my country. Contrary to the interests of both peoples and giving in to the pressures of minority sectors, the new U.S. government has devoted itself to artificially fabricate under false pretexts, scenarios of tension and hostility that serve nobody's interests.

This in contrast to the fact that we have formal diplomatic relations and mutually beneficial cooperation programs in a limited number of areas.

Our peoples share increasingly closer historic and cultural bonds, which are expressed in the arts, sports, science, the environment, among others. The potential for a fluent business

relationship is well known and a genuine and respectful understanding would be in the interest of the entire region.

However, the essential and defining element of the bilateral relationship continues to be the blockade, which seeks to suffocate the Cuban economy in order to generate hardships and disrupt the constitutional order. It is a cruel policy, punishing Cuban families and the entire Nation.

It is the most comprehensive and long-standing system of economic sanctions ever implemented against any country. It has been and continues to be a major obstacle to the country's development and to the realization of the aspirations to progress and well-being of several generations of Cubans.

As has been said for so many years in this same place, due to its aggressive extraterritorial implementation, the blockade seriously damages the sovereignty and interests of all countries.

On behalf of the Cuban people, I would like to thank this General Assembly for the virtually unanimous rejection of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against my country.

Nevertheless, the actions of the U.S. government against my country go farther. They include public and covert programs of gross interference in Cuba's internal affairs. To this end, tens of millions of dollars that are officially allocated in its budget are used, in violation of the standards and principles upon which this organization rests, and in particular, of Cuba's sovereignty as an independent nation.

Cuba stands ready to develop respectful and civilized relations with the U.S. government on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect. This is the will of the Cuban people and we know this is a shared aspiration by most U.S. citizens and, particularly, by Cubans living there.

We shall continue to tirelessly demand the end of the cruel economic, commercial and financial blockade, the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base and adequate compensation to our people for the thousands of dead and disabled and for the economic and property damages caused to Cuba over so many years of aggression.

Cuba will always be willing to engage in dialogue and cooperate on the basis of respect and an equal footing. We shall never make concessions affecting our sovereignty and national independence, we shall not negotiate our principles nor shall we accept conditionalities.

In spite of the blockade, the hostility and the actions carried out by the United States to impose a regime change in Cuba, the Cuban Revolution is right here, alive and strong, faithful to her principles!

Madam President:

The generational change in our government should not raise the hopes of the enemies of the Revolution. We are the continuity, not a rupture. Cuba has continued taking steps to improve its model of economic and social development in order to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable Nations. This is the path that our people has freely chosen.

The country will not go back to the opprobrious past that it shook off with the greatest sacrifices during 150 years of struggle for independence and full dignity. By the decision of the overwhelming majority of Cubans, we shall continue the work that started almost 60 years ago.

In this conviction, we began a constitutional reform process, a truly participatory and democratic exercise, through popular discussion of the draft which will eventually be approved in a referendum. I am certain that there will be no changes in our strategic objectives and that the irrevocable nature of socialism will be ratified.

The principles of foreign policy will remain unchanged. As the First Secretary of our Party, Raúl Castro Ruz, said in his statement on the occasion of the 70 anniversary of the United Nations, and I quote: "The international community will always be able to count on Cuba's sincere voice against injustice, inequality, underdevelopment, discrimination and manipulation; and for the establishment of a fairer and more equitable international order, truly focused on human beings, their dignity and well-being".

The Cuba on behalf of which I speak today is the proud successor of that independent, sovereign, fraternal and solidarity policy with the poorest of this world, producers of all the wealth on the planet, although the unequal global order has sentenced them with dire poverty on behalf of words like democracy, freedom and human rights, words which the rich have actually emptied of meaning.

It has been exciting and pleasant to take the floor at the same rostrum from which Fidel expressed powerful truths 58 years ago that still continue to shake us, in front of representatives of more than 190 nations who, rejecting extortion and pressures, every year fill the voting screen of worthy green lights of approval for our demand for the end of the blockade.

I bid you farewell in the hope that the noble aspirations of most of Humanity will be achieved before younger generations take this rostrum to demand the same as we do today, and our historic predecessors did in yesteryear.

Thank you very much.

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