

STATEMENT BY MR. MOHAMMAD SALIM, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 21:
NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL
EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST
CUBA AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 30, 2007

Mr. President,

We align ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77. The nearly five-decade old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America has been the subject of debate by this august body annually since 1991. The embargo has been reinforced by domestic laws of the United States of America, through which the extra-territorial reach of the embargo encompasses foreign companies as well as foreign subsidiaries of US companies doing business with Cuba or Cuban entities. Such domestic laws include the Cuba Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

Mr. President,

The international community has been categorical in repeatedly expressing its opposition to the extra-territorial aspect of the embargo that has been implemented in accordance with US domestic laws and regulations. We fully share this call by the international community. This Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extra-territorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures. Through its resolutions, it has called upon all States to respect their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have "extraterritorial effects" affecting the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

The continuation of the embargo on Cuba, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, has hampered the country's ability to pursue its development imperatives. It has also caused hardship on its population in a variety of ways. The impact of the embargo has been particularly severe in the area of medical care through reduction in access to medical equipment, medicines, and diagnostic aids. Other affected areas include food aid deliveries, educational sector, international trade and investment, transportation and access to financial markets. In addition, an indirect negative extra-territorial impact of the embargo has been on Cuba's efforts to provide assistance under South-South cooperation in the field of medicine, particularly to African countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concludes in the report of the Secretary-General that the embargo by the United States of America has led to an adverse impact on gross domestic product growth, export revenues, industrial and agricultural production, trade and social sectors such as food, health, education, communications and science and technology, as well as trade diversion.

These embargoes and economic blockades are against the spirit of unhindered trade and commerce without barriers. The embargo has achieved nothing except creating hindrances in the path of development for the people of Cuba. The continuation of the policy of sanction and blockade against the opinion of the overwhelming population of the world is nothing but a desire to continue an age old unjust arrangement. This is all the more untenable in an era of 'globalisation' when its advocates are loudly proclaiming and working for barrier free trade and commerce and seamless movements of goods and services around the world.

Mr. President,

Given their geographical proximity, the United States of America and Cuba should be natural partners in trade, commerce and investment. We believe that a considerable part of the business sector in the United States of America would like to benefit from unhindered access to the Cuban market and that many US citizens would like to establish greater contacts with Cuba through tourism. The exports of agricultural and medical products from the United States of America to Cuba, insofar as permitted by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, is testimony to the interest and potential of trade and business contacts between the two countries. Various legislative attempts in the United States of America to relax the embargo also support this view. We, therefore, look forward to the lifting of sanctions and embargoes against Cuba.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me reiterate India's opposition to unilateral measures by countries, which impinge on the sovereignty of another country, including attempts to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations. The international community must work towards creating a just international economic environment conducive to development for all countries, free from sanctions and embargoes.

Thank you.

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