

Cuba's President Díaz-Canel at United Nations: "A new and fairer global contract is urgently needed"

written by Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez
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Díaz-Canel at the General Assembly, September 19, 2023: 'There is not a single

measure or action by Cuba to harm the United States, or its economic sector, or its social fabric.' Photo: UN

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez said that "a new and fairer global contract is urgently needed." He spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, an organization of which Cuba holds the pro tempore presidency in 2023.

He referred to the results of the recently held Summit of Heads of State and Government of the G77 and China in Havana, where member countries approved a political declaration advocating changes in the international financial architecture in a way that allows all countries to advance more justly on the path to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.

The voice of the South, diverse peoples with common problems, has been heard from Havana, said Díaz-Canel, noting that more than 100 representatives of the 134 countries that make up the G77 and China "demanded changes that can no longer be postponed in the unjust, irrational and abusive international economic order, which has deepened year after year the enormous inequalities between a minority of highly developed nations and a majority that fails to overcome the euphemism of developing nations."

"We are not asking for handouts or begging for favors. We are calling for a profound transformation of the current international financial architecture because it is deeply unjust, anachronistic and dysfunctional."

"Cuba is the country that has endured unilateral coercive measures for the longest time.

We were not the first, and we are not the last. The pressures to isolate sovereign states today also affect Venezuela, Nicaragua...".

He referred to the words of the UN Secretary-General when he stated in Havana that the G77 was founded 60 years ago to remedy centuries of injustice and neglect and that in today's turbulent world, these nations are entangled in a tangle of world crises, where poverty is increasing, and hunger is growing.

The Group of 77 was united -the Cuban leader said- by the need to change what has not been resolved and the condition of main victims of the current multidimensional global crisis and the current abusive unequal exchange, of the technological scientific gap and the degradation of the environment.

"But we have also been united, for more than half a century, by the inescapable challenge and determination to transform the prevailing international order, which, in addition to being exclusive and irrational, is unsustainable for the planet and unviable for the well-being of all".

The countries represented in the G77 and China are where 80% of the planet's population lives, and "not only have we faced the challenge of development, but also the responsibility to modify the structures that marginalize us from global progress and turn many countries of the South into laboratories of renewed forms of domination," said Díaz-Canel before the plenary of the General Assembly, which is holding its 78th session.

"A new and fairer global contract is urgently needed," the Cuban president stressed.

He warned that, at the current pace, countries will fail to achieve any of the 17 SDGs, and more than half of the 169 targets agreed in 2015 will be missed. "The outlook is discouraging," he said.

"In the midst of the 21st century, it offends the human condition that nearly 800 million people suffer from hunger on a planet that produces enough to feed everyone," he stressed. "Or that in the age of knowledge and the accelerated

development of new information and communications technologies, more than 760 million people, two-thirds of them women, do not know how to read or write."

He said that "the efforts of developing countries are not enough to implement the 2030 Agenda.

He stressed that these efforts must be backed up by concrete actions in terms of market access, financing with fair and preferential conditions, technology transfer, and North-South cooperation.

"We are not asking for handouts or begging for favors," said Díaz-Canel, and insisted that the G77 demands rights and will continue to demand a profound transformation of the current international financial architecture "because it is deeply unjust, anachronistic, and dysfunctional."

Díaz-Canel pointed out that today's prevailing financial architecture was designed to profit from the reserves of the South, perpetuate a system of domination that increases underdevelopment, and reproduces a model of modern colonialism.

"We need and demand financial institutions in which our countries have real decision-making capacity and access to financing.

"A recapitulation of multilateral and development banks is urgently needed to radically improve their lending conditions and meet the financial needs of the South," he said.

The G77 countries have had to allocate \$379 billion of their reserves to defend their currencies by 2022, almost double the amount of new special drawing rights allocated to them by the IMF, he said, and he considered it necessary to rationalize, review and change the role of credit rating agencies.

"It is also imperative to establish criteria that go beyond GDP to define developing

countries' access to concessional financing and appropriate technical cooperation," he added.

"While the richest countries fail to fulfill their commitment to allocate at least 0.7% of their national GDP to official development aid, the nations of the South have to spend 14% of their income to pay interest associated with foreign debt."

The Cuban president stressed that the G77 reiterates its call to public, multilateral and private creditors to refinance the debt through credit guarantees, lower interest rates and longer maturities.

"We insist on the implementation of a multilateral mechanism for the renegotiation of sovereign debt, with the effective participation of the countries of the South, which will allow a fair, balanced and development-oriented treatment".

The president denounced onerous credits and cited that most G77 countries are obliged to allocate more to debt servicing than to investments in health or education. "What sustainable development can be achieved with such a noose around our necks?" he asked, calling on creditors to refinance the debt on terms that do not stifle the progress of nations.

On the effects of climate change on developing nations, Díaz-Canel recalled that they are the main victims, while industrialized countries, "voracious predators of resources and the environment", evade their responsibilities and fail to fulfill their commitments.

"With a view to COP28, the G77 countries will prioritize the global stocktaking exercise, the operationalization of the loss and damage fund, the definition of the framework for the adaptation objective and the establishment of a new climate finance target, in full compliance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities," he said.

He informed that the G77 is convening a summit of leaders from the South, to be held on December 2 in the context of COP28, in Dubai. "It will be a space to articulate the positions of our group at the highest level in the context of climate negotiations."

He added that for the G77 it is a priority task to change once and for all the paradigms of science, technology and innovation that are limited to the environments and perspectives of the North, depriving the international scientific community of considerable intellectual capital.

"The successful summit in Havana launched an urgent call to integrate science, technology and innovation around the unrenounceable goal of sustainable development (...) We urge richer nations and international organizations to participate in cooperation projects," he said when commenting on the initiatives presented during the conclave held on September 15 and 16 in the Cuban capital.

The Cuban president also criticized the imposition of unilateral punitive measures, "practices of powerful States to try to subdue sovereign States".

He also recalled that Cuba is the country that has endured unilateral coercive measures for the longest time.

"I cannot pass through this world platform without denouncing, once again, that for 60 years Cuba has been suffering a suffocating economic blockade, designed to depress its income and standard of living, cause continuous shortages of food, medicines and other basic supplies and restrict its development potential," said Díaz-Canel.

He denounced that pressures to isolate and weaken economies also affect nations such as Venezuela and Nicaragua, and that before and after they have been the prelude to invasions and overthrows of uncomfortable governments in the Middle

East.

"We reject the unilateral punitive measures imposed on countries such as Zimbabwe, Syria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, among many others whose peoples suffer the negative impact of these."

On the policy of economic coercion and maximum pressure applied by the U.S. government against Cuba, in violation of international law and the UN Charter, he emphasized that "there is not a single measure or action by Cuba to harm the United States, to damage its economic sector, its commercial activity or its social fabric.

"There is no act by Cuba that threatens the independence of the United States or its national security, that undermines its sovereign rights, interferes in its internal affairs or affects the welfare of its people. The U.S. conduct is absolutely unilateral and unjustified".

He also criticized the internal destabilization plans against Cuba promoted from Washington and Florida, as well as the unjustified inclusion of the country on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

"Despite the hostility of your government, we will continue to build bridges with the people of the United States, as we do with all the peoples of the world," he said.

"Cuba will not relent in its efforts to boost the creative potential, influence and leadership of the G77," he assured while commenting on the country's intention to present its candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council for an upcoming term. "Our group has much to contribute to multilateralism, stability, justice and rationality that the world requires today."

Here is the link to [Diaz Canel's speech at the UN](#) with simultaneous translation into English:

Source: [Cubadebate](#) translation [Resumen Latinoamericano – English](#)

