



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. VIRACHAI PLASAI, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON AGENDA ITEM 39: "NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA," AT THE PLENARY OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 26 October 2016)

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 39: Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the item we are discussing today.
2. The Group of 77 and China would like to, first of all, sincerely welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Governments of Cuba and the United States of America. The Group also welcome the steps towards the elimination of the US's embargo against Cuba, which, among others, include the re-opening of respective embassies last year, President Obama's visit to Cuba in March this year, and the amendments made in 2015 and 2016 by the U.S. Treasury and Commerce Departments.
3. While these are positive steps, they remain inadequate to effectively end the impacts of the embargo. Much more remains to be done, especially actions by the U.S. Congress with regard to legislative bills proposing the lifting of blockade sanctions. The Group also believe that the future President of the United States can and should exercise more of his or her executive powers to further modify blockade regulations in light of the continued disregard on part of the U.S. Congress to end these punitive measures that are essentially in violation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

4. The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate our commitment to the principles, purposes and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as the freedom of international trade and navigation. The Group believe that it is the duty and responsibility of every Member State to strictly comply with these principles. The Group are of the view that any policy or action disregarding these principles, in this case, unilateral economic sanctions against Cuba, should be seriously considered for an immediate repeal.
5. Given the fact that the US embargo against Cuba has continued for over fifty years, the Group of 77 and China would like to express our deep concern about the prolonged negative effects that the economic sanctions and travel restrictions have had on Cuba and its people. From April 2015 to April this year, the impact of the US embargo on Cuba's foreign trade amounts to more than 4 billion US dollars. Limited foreign investment and difficult access to development credits translate directly into economic hardship and humanitarian impacts for the people of Cuba. The country's socio-economic reforms have also been hampered by the embargo.

6. The Group of 77 and China are concerned that, if these economic sanctions continue, Cuba's development potential, in both economic and human development terms, will be unfairly undermined and it would be impossible for Cuba to successfully embark on the path towards sustainable development, envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for which all Member States have pledged support.

Mr. President,

7. Over many decades, Cuba has extensively and continuously contributed to the international community, particularly through its remarkable supply of medical assistance to countries in need. Cuba's emergency assistance to the African countries affected by the Ebola crises in West Africa is a great example of its solidarity with the international community. The Group of 77 and China hereby commend Cuba's contribution in humanitarian assistance, and would like to express our hope that, with the permanent lifting of US embargo, Cuba would be granted the opportunity it has long deserved to fully cooperate with the global community and international organisations on health, environment and agriculture, among other important issues.

Mr. President,

8. The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate our strong support for the implementation of the recommendations of the General Assembly resolution 70/5, and would like to reiterate our call for the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the US against Cuba to cease. The urgency and necessity of our call is further highlighted by the ongoing global collective strive to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The Group of 77 and China, therefore, would like to appeal to the international community to further step up efforts in support for the lifting of the embargo, not only for the prospect of Cuba alone, but also for the full achievement of economic and social development of all members of the global community as a whole.

I thank you for your attention.