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Intervention of the Head of the Cuban delegation, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, president of the Republic of Cuba, at the 'United Against COVID-19' Virtual Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

May 4, 2020.

Your Excellencies:

Dear President Ilham Aliyev;

Honorable Heads of State and Government;

I must thank Azerbaijan, president of the Non-Aligned Movement, for setting up this meeting to exchange ideas about the urgent and necessary efforts that will allow us to face COVID-19.

I would also like to congratulate Uganda, which is the country that will take charge of the Presidency of the Movement in 2022. We hope the best to them in their term and they can count on Cuba's full support.

I must denounce, due to its seriousness, the terrorist attack performed against our Embassy in Washington with an assault rifle last April 30 that left more than 30 bullet impacts. I must also demand a full and quick investigation from the government of the United States of America, as well as a severe punishment for the culprit, and safety measures and assurances for our diplomatic missions in their territory, as established by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

Your Excellencies:

The Non-Aligned Movement has proven its relevance in the current situation. That is corroborated by the statements released in support of the World Health Organization and about COVID-19, in which global union, solidarity, and international cooperation are encouraged; making a call to set political differences aside and to eliminate unilateral restrictive measures that violate International Law and the Charter of the United Nations, and hinder the ability of the States to effectively counter the pandemic.

We acknowledge the role of the Azeri Presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement in the materialization of those initiatives.

COVID-19 has been proven to be a global challenge. It does not take into consideration borders, ideologies or development levels. Therefore, there should be a global joint response, overcoming all political differences.

It is not possible to accurately predict the dimension of its consequences. The high numbers of infected people and the significant loss of human lives are evidence of its devastating impact on a world that is more interconnected each day; however, the world has not been able to implement such interconnection in a solidary way and is paying the price of its inability to correct serious social inequities. Let us say honestly: if we had globalized solidarity in the same way that the market has been globalized, history would have been different.

There's a lack of solidarity and cooperation. Those are values that cannot be substituted by the search for profit, a motivation that almost exclusively belongs to those who, by worshipping the market, forget about what human lives are worth.

When we review the events that have hurt humanity in the last four months, it is impossible not to mention

the costly mistakes that resulted from neoliberal policies that led to the reduction of the management abilities and capabilities of the States, to excessive privatizations and the neglect of majorities.

This pandemic has exposed the weakness of a shattered and excluding world. Not even the richest and most powerful people in the world could survive without those who create and uphold their wealth with their work.

The numerous crises that it is generating make us foresee devastating and long-lasting effects on the economy and on every sphere of society.

This pandemic aggravates the pressing problems of a planet swarmed by deep inequalities, a planet in which 600 million people live in extreme poverty and where almost half the population does not have access to basic health services, for whose management, the market constitutes a higher priority over the noble purpose of saving lives.

However, world military expenses exceed 1.9 million millions of dollars, from which more than 38%, specifically 732 billion dollars, belong to the United States of America in 2020.

I will now share the following phrase from the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, and I quote: “instead of investing so much in the development of the weapon industry, those who have the resources for it should foster medical research and put the fruits of science at the service of humanity, creating health and life tools instead of deadly ones”. End of the quotation.

Let us advocate, along with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the end of wars, including unconventional ones, to protect the right to be in peace.

We condemn the recent and serious military threats from the government of the United States against the brotherly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We reaffirm our solidarity with the people and the government of Nicaragua and denounce the measures that hinder their rights regarding their welfare, safety and peace.

The attempts to reestablish the neocolonial past in Our America by publicly declaring the validity of the Monroe Doctrine defy the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

In this complex situation, the United States of America are attacking multilateralism and unfairly discrediting the work of international organizations, especially that of the World Health Organization.

Your Excellencies:

At the 18th Summit in Baku, in October 2019, we made a call to strengthen the Movement in the midst of international challenges, remaining convinced about the fact that only cohesion could save us. It is part of the Non-Aligned Movement's responsibilities to lead the actions toward the elimination of the unpayable external debt that our countries have and toward the discontinuation of the unilateral coercive measures that are enforced against some of us, which, altogether with the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19, threat the sustainable development of the peoples.

We must fight selfishness and be aware of the fact that the help coming from the industrialized North will be insufficient, that is why we must supplement it and share what we have, support each other and learn from successful experiences. A useful option could be to resume, in the future, the annual meetings of Health Ministers from the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, in the context of the World Health Assembly.

Cuba is willing to share its experiences with the countries of the Movement, to which we are bound by historic bonds of friendship.

For Cuba, it has been a massive challenge. Several months before the appearance of the COVID-19

pandemic, we were already facing a brutal intensification of the economic, commercial and financial blockade policy of the United States of America, which is aimed at fully choking our trade and the access to fuel and foreign currency.

It is with great efforts and sacrifices that we have managed to keep, in such conditions, the universal Public Health system, free of cost and full of highly qualified and committed professionals who are internationally recognized in spite of the foul and slanderous discredit campaigns carried out by powerful adversaries.

In the midst of the oppressing context of an economic war, the first alarming signs about the possibility of COVID-19 becoming a pandemic arose, and that increased the complexity of the challenges.

An action plan was immediately devised and was based on our key strengths: An organized state, responsible for watching out for the health of its citizens, and a society with high participation rates concerning the decision making process and solution of its problems.

The work of many years focusing resources on the development and empowerment of the Health Sector and sciences, in general, has been put to the test, and the evolution of this pandemic in Cuba in the last two months is proving how deep is the impact of social investment policies when facing the biggest and most unexpected challenges.

In spite of the huge restrictions implemented against us through the sustained economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States of America, which makes the preservation of the public health system and, particularly speaking, the fight against this pandemic, a constant challenge, we have ensured the right of the Cuban people to health services with the full participation of society.

Scientific development has allowed us to successfully treat different transmissible illnesses nationally and internationally. In this situation, the pharmaceutical industry has increased the production of medications, which we have shared with other nations, and have proved themselves effective to prevent and fight COVID-19.

In response to the requests that have been received, 25 new brigades of Cuban health professionals have joined 23 countries in their efforts to counter the pandemic in the last month, in addition to those who were already offering their help in 59 States, many of which are members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Cuba will not abandon its humanitarian calling, even when the government of the United States of America, driven by political reasons, keeps attacking and hindering the international cooperation offered by our country, undermining the access of several millions of people to health services.

Your Excellencies:

It is our responsibility to join wills and efforts to face this huge challenge.

Let us promote international cooperation and solidarity. The determination of each of us will be crucial.

Let us do it for the right to health services, peace and the development of our peoples with a strict attachment to the foundational principles of the Movement. Let us do it for life.

Thank you

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