



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(63rd Session)

STATEMENT

By

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PERMANENT MISSION OF GUYANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
(**CARICOM**)

on

**“NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND
FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA AGAINST CUBA”**

October 29, 2008

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which also aligns itself with the Statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, CARICOM would like to express its concern and solidarity with the people of Cuba as they struggle to rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna and Ike, which battered the island and our region in quick succession. Indeed, it is in these times of natural disaster and national crisis that the fundamental unjustness of the Embargo is brought into sharpest relief. Cuba's safety, advance preparedness and pace of recovery are compromised by the Embargo's many direct and indirect effects. When viewed in light of Cuba's own sacrifice and selfless assistance to other States in times of crisis, such an Embargo seems particularly ill conceived.

The punitive Embargo is of particular concern to CARICOM, which shares a history, culture and brotherhood with the people of Cuba. Cuba is the most populous State of the Caribbean region, and an integral part of the Pan-Caribbean process. Caribbean ties with Cuba have historical significance, cemented by years of active cooperation at various levels. The Member States of CARICOM continue to maintain close relations with Cuba through a wide range of programmes of cooperation in areas including trade, health care, infrastructure, and human resource development. Our future regional development is, in many ways, reliant upon our collective advancement and progress. In that context, we view the Embargo not just as a punitive act against Cuba, but as an impediment to our shared regional development.

Mr. President,

This year's *Report of the Secretary-General* on the implementation of resolution 62/3, like previous reports on this matter, outlines responses from an overwhelming majority of member States that share a common perspective as to the continued unilateral Embargo against Cuba.

CARICOM member States continue to reiterate their unequivocal opposition to the imposition of this Embargo, which has been repudiated by the overwhelming majority of the international community for the past 16 consecutive years. The unilateral imposition of extraterritorial laws on third States is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter, and the Embargo itself runs counter to the principles of multilateralism, international law, sovereignty, and free trade that this Body traditionally champions.

CARICOM States therefore reaffirm the positions of the Group of 77 and China, and the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries in opposing such unilateral actions, and we maintain the position that constructive engagement and peaceful negotiations remain the only acceptable means for advancing long term peace and stability.

Mr. President,

The significance of the Embargo on the Cuban economy continues to be of great concern to CARICOM, and the humanitarian impact on the people of Cuba, especially in the area of health care and food, is saddening. The inability of Cuba to acquire necessary medical equipment, spare parts, and latest generation medications, because of the Embargo, continue to affect the health care system, where treatment remains free of charge to the Cuban people. With the strengthening and more frequent storms and hurricanes wrought by climate change, and Cuba's geographic susceptibility to these natural disasters, the unacceptable humanitarian impact of the Embargo becomes even more acute.

It is remarkable that, even as Cuba struggles with its recent unfortunate string of natural disasters, it continues to assist other nations in the developing world, starting with its immediate Caribbean neighbours. Thousands of CARICOM students have attended Cuban universities without charge, thousands have received free surgeries and medical assistance in Cuba, and thousands more have been treated in their home countries by Cuban doctors and nurses. We have benefitted from technical expertise, capacity building programmes, infrastructural assistance, and from the selfless generosity of the Cuban people. The people of Cuba have threatened no one, and neither the Embargo nor its deleterious side effects has prevented them from continually extending a hand of friendship and solidarity – even across ideological divides.

Given Cuba's peaceful, generous and cooperative international stance, it should not be isolated or excluded from participation in regional and hemispheric processes. CARICOM reiterates its unwavering support for the right of the Cuban people to self-determination, in a manner beneficial to their social and economic development. The embargo imposed against Cuba is increasingly anachronistic, and serves no useful purpose in the 21st Century. It has only served to preserve a state of tension between two neighbouring countries, and to generate concern, disquiet and discomfort throughout the Caribbean.

Mr. President,

CARICOM States continue to enjoy friendly relations with both Cuba and the United States. These two neighbours – a mere 90 miles apart – have produced great scholars, scientists and global leaders. The two countries possess proud and noble histories, and are populated by friendly, open and loving peoples. We call for a new beginning between the governments of these two great nations, one large and one small, akin to similar initiatives taken for negotiation of far more difficult issues of international relations between member States of the United Nations. We can only imagine the positive outcome of a rapprochement between the based on the fundamental principles of the self-determination of peoples.

It is within this context that CARICOM States support the draft resolution on the *Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba* contained in Document A/63/L.4.

I thank you.