



DELEGATION OF CUBA

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H. E. MR. FELIPE PÉREZ
ROQUE, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CUBA, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE 61st SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
HUMAN RIGHTS**

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Excellencies:

The Commission on Human Rights – despite the efforts by those who honestly believe in its importance and wage a battle to return it to the spirit of respect and cooperation of its founders – has lost legitimacy. It is not credible. It allows the impunity of the powerful. It is handcuffed. In it, there are plenty of lies, double standards and empty speeches by those who, while enjoying their wealth, squander and pollute, look the other way and pretend not to see how millions of human beings endure the violation of the right to life, the right to peace, the right to development, the right to eat, to learn, to work; in brief, the right to live in dignity.

We all knew that the Commission on Human Rights was victim to the political manipulation of its work because the Government of the United States and its allies have used the Commission as if it were their private property – and have turned it into some sort of inquisition tribunal to condemn the countries of the South and, particularly, those who actively oppose their strategy of neocolonial domination.

But in the course of the last year, two events took place that change the nature of the debate that we will hold these days.

The first was the European Union's refusal to co-sponsor and vote in favor of the draft resolution that proposed to investigate the massive, flagrant and systematic human rights violations still committed today against over 500 prisoners at the naval base that the United States keeps, against the will of the Cuban people, in the Harbor of Guantánamo. The European Union, that always objected to no-motion actions, was willing this time to present it in order to even prevent any investigations whatsoever against its ally. In terms of hypocrisy and double standards, it was the straw that broke the camel's back. What will it do this year, after the dissemination of the heinous pictures of tortures at the prison of Abu Ghraib?

The second event was the release of the report presented by the High-Level Group on Threats, Challenges and Change, set up at the initiative of the UN Secretary-General. It categorically states that "the Commission cannot be credible if it is seen to be maintaining double standards in addressing human rights concerns." Should we then wait for the representatives of the United States and its allies to come up with self-criticisms at this plenary session and undertake to work with us, Third World countries, to rescue the Commission on Human Rights from disrepute and confrontation?

Mr. Chairman:

The guarantee of the enjoyment of human rights today depends on whether you live in a developed country or not – and it also depends on the social class that you belong to. Therefore, there will be no real enjoyment of human rights for all as long as we fail to achieve social justice in the relations among countries and within countries themselves.

For a small group of nations represented here – the United States and other developed allies – the right to peace has already been achieved. They will always be the attackers and never the ones under attack. Their peace rests on their military power. They have also achieved economic development, based on the pillage of the wealth of the other poor countries that were former colonies, which suffer and bleed to death for those to squander. However, in those developed countries, incredible as it may seem, the unemployed, the immigrants and the impoverished do not enjoy the rights that are most certainly guaranteed for the rich.

Can a poor person in the United States be elected Senator? No, they cannot. The campaign costs, on average, some US\$ 8 million. Do the children of the rich go to the unjust and illegal war in Iraq? No, they do not go. None of the 1,500 American youths killed in that war was the son of a millionaire or a Secretary. The poor die there defending the vested interests of a minority.

If you live in an underdeveloped country the situation is worse, because the overwhelming majority, poor and hopeless as it is, cannot exercise their rights. As a country, there is no entitlement to peace. It can be attacked under the accusation of being terrorist, of being an “outpost of tyranny” or under the pretext that it is going to be “liberated.” It is bombed and invaded to “liberate it.”

Nor can the over 130 countries in the Third World exercise the right to development. Beyond their efforts, the economic system imposed on the world prevents so. They have no access to markets, to new technologies; they are handcuffed by a burdensome debt that has already been paid off more than once. They just have the right to be dependent countries. They are led to believe that their poverty is the result of their mistakes. In those countries, the poor and the indigent, who account for the majority, do not even have the right to life. For that reason, every year we see the death of 11 million children under five years of age, a portion of which could be spared with barely a vaccine or oral rehydration solutions – and also the death of 600,000 poor women at childbirth. They have no right to learn to read and write. It would be dangerous for the owners. They are kept in ignorance to keep them docile. That is why this Commission should be ashamed of the nearly 1 billion illiterate people in the world. That is why in Latin America 20 million children endure ruthless exploitation as they work on the streets instead of going to school.

The Cuban people strongly believe in freedom, democracy and human rights. It took them a lot to achieve them and are aware of its price. It is a people in power. That is the difference.

There cannot be democracy without social justice. There is no possible freedom if not based on the enjoyment of education and culture. Ignorance is the cumbersome shackle squeezing the poor. Being cultivated is the only way to be free! – that is the sacred tenet that we Cubans learned from the Apostle of our independence.

There is no real enjoyment of human rights if there is no equality and equity. The poor and the rich will never have the same rights in real life, proclaimed and recognized as these may be on paper.

That is what we Cubans learned long ago and for that reason we built a different country. And we are just beginning. We have done so despite the aggressions, the blockade, the terrorist attacks, the lies and the plots to assassinate Fidel. We know that the Empire is chagrined by this. We are a dangerous example: we are a symbol that only in a just and friendly society; that is, socialist, can there be enjoyment of all rights for all citizens.

Therefore, the Government of the United States attempts to condemn us here at the Commission on Human Rights. It is afraid of our example. It is strong at the military level but weak on the moral front. And morality, not weapons, is the shield of the peoples.

Perhaps this year President Bush will find some Latin American country – of the few docile ones that are left – to present the notorious resolution against Cuba. Or perhaps it will return to a Eastern European government like the Czech, which enjoys as nobody else its condition of satellite of Washington and Trojan Horse within the European Union. Or perhaps it will be presented by the very Government of the United States, which is now blackmailing, threatening and counting endorsements to know if Cuba's condemnation can be achieved.

Everybody in this hall knows that there is no reason to present a resolution against Cuba at this Commission. In Cuba, there is not a single – and there has not been ever in 46 years of Revolution – an extrajudicial execution or a missing person, not even one! Let anyone come up with the name of a Cuban mother who is still looking for the remains of her murdered son or daughter! Or a grandmother searching for her grandchild handed over to another family following the parents' murder! Let anyone here come up with the name of a reporter killed in Cuba – and 20 of them were murdered in Latin America only in 2004! Let anyone come up with the name of a prisoner vexed by his keepers, a prisoner ordered down on his knees, prey to terror, in front of a dog trained to kill!

Excellencies:

President Bush has a plan for Cuba, but we Cubans have a plan of a different sort. We Cubans have a clear idea about our course. And nobody will move us away from it. We will build an even more just, more democratic, more free and more cultivated society. In brief, more socialist.

And we will do so although President Bush threatens us with aggressions, to return to colonized Cuba, to oust Cubans from their homes, their land and their schools to turn them over to the former Batista-style owners who would come back from the United States. We will do so despite his plan to privatize health and turn our doctors into unemployed beings; we will do so despite the plan to privatize education and make it accessible only to the elite, as it was in the past; we will do so despite the plan to auction off our wealth and the heritage of all

the people to US transnational corporations. Despite the plan to remove the rewards from our retirees and pensioners to force them back on a job, according to the so-called Plan of Assistance to a Free Cuba.

The Cuban people are entitled to defend themselves from aggression and they will. And I must say it clearly: in Cuba, we will not allow the establishment of organizations and mercenary parties financed by and at the service of the US Government. We will not allow newspapers and TV networks funded by the US Government to uphold its policies of blockade and its lies among ourselves. In Cuba, the press, the radio and the TV are owned by the people and serve and will serve their interests.

We will not cooperate with the Representative of the High Commissioner or with the spurious resolution behind her. Why is it not such a prestigious lawyer appointed Special Representative of the High Commissioner to the Guantánamo Naval Base? Why is she not asked to investigate the flagrant violations of the rights of five courageous and pure Cuban youths imprisoned in the United States and their families? Because it cannot be done. Because it is about the human rights violations committed by the United States and they are untouchable. It can be done against small Cuba but not against the United States.

But Cuba will not give up on its fight, Excellencies. Nor will it surrender. Nor will it make concessions or betray its ideals.

And we will see if a free, cultivated and united people can be defeated! We will see if they can overthrow a government of the people, whose leaders walk among them with the moral authority derived from the total absence of corruption and the full dedication to their duties!

We will see if they can deceive everybody all the time!

Excellencies:

The Commission on Human Rights before us today is illustrative of the unjust and unequal world in which we live. There is no longer nothing left in it from the friendly and respectful spirit that brought its founders together after the victory over fascism.

Therefore, the Cuban delegation will cease to insist that we must transform the Commission. What we have to change is the world, go to the roots. A Commission on Human Rights without selectivity, politicization, double standards, blackmail and hypocrisy will only be possible in a different world.

Cuba does not consider that to be a dream, but a cause well worth fighting for. That is why it fights and it will continue to do so.

Thanks.